The impact of conflict and displacement on food security in developing regions.

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Introduction

Food security remains a persistent challenge in many developing regions, particularly where conflict and forced displacement are widespread. Armed conflicts disrupt agricultural systems, displace millions of people, and undermine the ability of governments and humanitarian agencies to deliver aid. The result is a multifaceted crisis that affects food availability, access, utilization, and stability the four core pillars of food security Understanding the relationship between conflict, displacement, and food insecurity is essential for developing effective, sustainable interventions in fragile contexts [1].

Conflict often leads to the destruction of farmlands, irrigation systems, and storage facilities, directly affecting food availability. In regions such as South Sudan, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), agricultural productivity has plummeted due to ongoing violence. Landmines and unsafe conditions also prevent farmers from accessing their fields, leading to a reliance on food aid and reduced self-sufficiency [2].

In conflict zones, markets collapse or become highly volatile, impeding food distribution and inflating prices. For example, the civil war in Yemen has severely disrupted food supply chains, leading to exorbitant costs and leaving 17 million people food insecure. Transportation routes are often unsafe or blocked, while fuel shortages hinder movement and storage of goods. The weakening of local currencies further limits purchasing power, especially for displaced populations [3].

According to UNHCR, over 114 million people globally are forcibly displaced due to conflict and persecution. Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) often settle in camps or host communities where resources are limited. These populations frequently lack access to land, income, or formal markets, making them heavily dependent on humanitarian food aid. Malnutrition rates among displaced children are especially alarming in regions like the Sahel and Horn of Africa [4].

Conflict-induced displacement disproportionately affects women and girls, who are often responsible for food preparation and household nutrition. Gender-based violence, early marriage, and lack of access to services further compromise their ability to provide food. Women-headed households in refugee settings often struggle with reduced access to food assistance and livelihood opportunities [5].

In developing regions, conflict is often exacerbated by climate-related stressors such as drought, desertification, and floods. The combination of environmental degradation and armed conflict intensifies competition for natural resources and worsens food insecurity. For example, in the Lake Chad Basin, climate change has contributed to displacement and food crises alongside ongoing insurgency [6].

While humanitarian organizations such as the World Food Programme (WFP) provide critical lifelines, aid delivery is often obstructed in active conflict zones. Restricted access, attacks on aid workers, and politicization of food assistance hinder operations. Additionally, prolonged reliance on external food aid can reduce resilience and discourage local food production [7].

In places like Somalia and northern Nigeria, stunting and wasting rates among children under five exceed emergency thresholds. The long-term social and economic costs of under nutrition can span generations [8].

To address food insecurity in conflict-affected regions, a multi-sectoral approach is needed: Peacebuilding and conflict resolution to restore stability. Investment in climate-resilient agriculture and local food systems. Cash-based assistance to empower displaced people and stimulate local economies. Support for women's participation in food production and distribution [9].

Inclusion of displaced communities in national food security planning. Children in conflict-affected and displaced populations face acute and chronic malnutrition, which has irreversible consequences on cognitive development and future productivity [10].

Conclusion

Conflict and displacement are among the most severe threats to food security in developing regions. By destroying agricultural systems, displacing populations, and undermining markets, violence creates a complex and enduring cycle of hunger and dependency. While humanitarian aid provides short-term relief, sustainable food security requires long-term investment in peace, resilience, and inclusive development strategies. Governments, humanitarian actors, and the international community must work collaboratively to ensure that no one is left behind in the fight against hunger.

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