

THEMATIC HEA & Advocacy BRIEFING

World Vision

food in emergencies

Prepared by WVI HEA and Policy & Advocacy, Thematic Briefings are designed for World Vision staff who may be called upon to provide a "World Vision response" on emergency-related advocacy issues. If a more detailed or nuanced response is needed, please contact Jan Butter, Public Policy Communications Manager, or the people listed at the end of the Briefing.

- Every 6 seconds a child dies of hunger-related causes.
- There are 178 million under-fives who are stunted (chronically malnourished and not growing at the right rate).
- Hunger is extremely concentrated: 75% of hungry children live in just 10 countries and over 50% live in South Asia.
- The impact of hunger on children under age two is critical: malnutrition during this period results in irreversible damage to physical and cognitive development.
- Child hunger has very real impacts on a country's development; UNICEF estimates the cost of undernutrition to national economic development to be US\$20–30 billion a year.

overview

Despite global commitments to reducing poverty, hunger is getting worse. The right to food is recognised universally, yet an estimated 963 million people – one in seven – are chronically hungry. This number leaped by 90 million following the 2007–08 global food crisis, and without concerted action, hunger is likely to worsen in the context of the global financial crisis.

The solutions to hunger are known, simple and affordable, but child malnutrition is one of the most under-funded areas of global development. In 2008, only an estimated US\$300 million was spent on child nutrition programmes (not including food aid). Food aid has long been a donor response in times of emergency food shortage. It takes many forms, some not without controversy. In World Vision's development and humanitarian work, we choose to view food programming through a "Sustainable Livelihoods" lens.

International standards

Food as a human right was recognised formally in Article 25 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948): "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food." Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition* (1974) recognises that "every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop fully and maintain their physical and mental faculties." These articles received further legal force in Article 11 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1976), and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990), in Articles 24 and 27, confirms the legal obligation to support the right to food and adequate nutrition.

The First Millennium Development Goal (Target 3) commits the international community to halve hunger by 2015. Even with the recent increase in the number of hungry people this goal remains within reach – but only if urgent concerted action is taken.

▶ This family in Bangladesh, who lost their livelihood and home to Cyclone Sidr in 2007, received emergency food until the father could find new work.

Photo: Reena Samuel / World Vision



The right to food for people affected by disasters is well addressed in the *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* (Sphere Project), which defines operational standards and indicators to guide humanitarian actors. Also addressing humanitarian emergency contexts, the *Food Aid Convention* (revised in 1999) aims at contributing to world food security, and at improving the international community's ability to respond to emergency food situations and other food needs of developing countries by:

- (a) making **appropriate** levels of food aid available on a **predictable** basis [as determined by the Convention itself];
- (b) encouraging members to ensure that the food aid provided is aimed particularly at the alleviation of poverty and hunger of the **most vulnerable groups**, and is **consistent with agricultural development** in those countries;
- (c) including principles for maximising the **impact, effectiveness** and **quality** of the food aid as a tool in support of food security; and
- (d) providing a framework for **cooperation, coordination and information-sharing** among members on food aid-related matters, to achieve greater efficiency in all aspects of food aid operations and better coherence between food aid and other policy instruments.

World Vision programmes

In declared emergencies, food aid commonly will constitute 80% of World Vision's response because food aid is the donor community's primary tool in responding to acute humanitarian disasters. For World Vision, food is a resource that enables us to achieve a range of humanitarian and development outcomes. World Vision is advanced in the adoption of "Sustainable Livelihoods" as the lens through which we approach food programming, with three distinct objectives:

- **livelihood provision**

where a community is unable to provide for its basic daily needs without outside assistance. Food aid interventions in this category **address symptoms** by providing food and health access to maintain nutritional levels and save lives.

- **livelihood protection**

where a community potentially is able to provide for its basic needs but currently is unable to meet all of them. Food aid interventions in this category **address immediate causes** by protecting livelihood systems to prevent erosion of productive assets or to assist in the recovery. In this category the level of programming rigour is high: the organisation measures performance against indicators and expects real change to occur.

- **livelihood promotion**

where a community is able to provide for its basic needs but not in a sustainable manner. In this category, food is used to improve household resilience through strengthened livelihood systems. All interventions in this category aim to **address underlying/basic causes**; the level of programming rigour is very high as the organisation holds itself accountable for sustainable impact.

Examples of World Vision food programming in emergency responses

Afghanistan	<i>During the Taliban rule, female education was prohibited and persecuted. In 2004, World Vision Afghanistan, with funding from the USDA Food for Education and Child Nutrition program, began distributing monthly rations of rice, oil and lentils to some 70,000 students and 10,000 teachers and support staff in 230 schools. The take-home rations met children's health and nutrition needs and attracted school-age children, particularly girls, to school. The project also provided more than 5,000 teachers with basic or reinforcement training, distributed 180,000 student kits and 13,000 teacher kits, and built 40 new schools. Through this program, some 3,750 women finished the literacy classes, and the school became viewed as a key village asset.</i>
Northern Sudan	<i>Since 2003, thousands of Darfurians have died and millions have been displaced from their homes in a conflict that brought untold suffering and systematic violation of basic human rights. Living in crowded camps, these displaced people have to contend with total lack of basic amenities, and many have perceived a further loss of dignity from some traditional mechanisms of delivering humanitarian aid. To restore these communities' dignity and treat them as the most important stakeholders, World Vision Northern Sudan introduced Complaints and Response Mechanisms in our General Food Distribution programmes. Through Community Help Desks (CHDs), we aim to strengthen community engagement in information sharing, consultation and participation. [This complies with Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) Benchmark 5 which requires member agencies to establish and implement complaints-handling procedures that are effective, accessible and safe for intended beneficiaries.] Staff at each of World Vision's food distribution points are trained in complaints handling, and the mechanism ensures that complaints are received, documented and reviewed, and if necessary can be "escalated" to highest National Office level. CHDs also serve as deterrents against abuse, as communities know there is a safe, reliable mechanism through which they can lodge their complaints. Even though the most common complaints relate to beneficiary satisfaction with World Vision's service delivery, the CHDs have opened new ways for us to engage with communities in Sudan, and have brought people higher levels of awareness about their right to quality services and participation.</i>

Within the three Sustainable Livelihoods principles, World Vision implements a range of tools to address hunger in emergencies:

<i>Therapeutic feeding</i>	Provision of rations for severe, acutely malnourished children. (Usually, this type of intervention is not implemented directly by World Vision but by partner NGOs such as Médecins Sans Frontières, or else handled through CMAM – see below.)
<i>CMAM (Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition)</i>	Establishment of stabilisation centres, community mobilisation, provision of supplementary feeding, and Outpatient Therapeutic Programme (OTP).
<i>General food distribution</i>	Targeted provision of free daily/monthly food rations to large groups of people facing widespread acute food shortage, including refugees and IDPs, and those victimised by natural or man-made disasters.
<i>Supplementary feeding</i>	Targeted or general provision of daily/monthly food rations for moderately malnourished children.
<i>Vulnerable group feeding</i>	Targeted provision of daily/monthly food rations to special vulnerable groups, including orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, and people living with HIV/AIDS.
<i>Cash transfers</i>	Targeted provision of cash as grants or in exchange for work. In contexts where food is locally available and market systems are functional but local communities are unable to access/buy food due to poor infrastructure, acute widespread loss of household income, etc., cash is provided to enable them to purchase the food they need.
<i>Food for assets</i>	Provision of food as compensation/incentive to support development and/or the rehabilitation or protection of productive community assets directly linked to food security. This approach is mostly applicable where food needs are less urgent and where a developmental focus is possible.
<i>Food for work</i>	Provision of food as compensation and incentive for participation in productive community projects and activities, such as improving the environment and living conditions.
<i>Food for education</i>	Provision of food to children attending school, where food needs are less urgent and the main emphasis is on the educational outcomes, such as improved school attendance. Food can be provided as “wet” and/or as “dry”, take-home rations.
<i>School feeding</i>	Provision of food to school-going children where the food needs are urgent and in situations where there is less focus on the educational component. Food can be provided as “wet” and/or as “dry”, take-home rations.
<i>Maternal and child health</i>	Provision of daily/monthly food rations to under-five children and to pregnant and lactating women. This is called “Blanket Feeding” when it targets children who are malnourished and just coming out of therapeutic feeding centres, with the objective of preventing relapse.
<i>Monetisation</i>	Marketing and sale of donated food commodities in or near the programme country, to increase local market availability of those commodities and to raise funds for relief or development activities other than food distribution.

World Vision advocacy

While the international community (donors, humanitarian agencies and governments) agree on the right to food and the right to be free from hunger and malnutrition, there is still a long way to go to achieve this commitment. Amid the twin global food and financial crisis, World Vision believes all actors must renew this commitment and support adequately the fight against hunger.

Things to consider when planning your advocacy response:

- Acutely malnourished people cannot wait, so the **first focus** will be on addressing immediate needs.
- Beyond the acute phase, however, we need to address the **underlying factors**. In many of the contexts in which we work, food security emergencies are cyclical; we may be called to provide emergency assistance in several successive years. Why? What is the cause? Even if we are dealing with a natural emergency, could more have been done to avert it? Think of mechanisms like early warning systems. What is the country’s food security strategy? Does the government have a plan? Is it being implemented? If there is a good one in place, are the donors supporting it, or are they out of step with the government’s priorities? Is there a social protection strategy? Could we advocate for one? What changes are needed so that this food crisis doesn’t happen again?
- Right from the start we need to be thinking about the **transitional phase**. Experience tells us that this is when resources dry up, so it is critical that policies are in place to direct resources to the most vulnerable groups even when the crisis has peaked, or no longer has donors’ attention.
- What **data** can our advocacy response draw on? If there are operational Food Programs in your context, you may have data on household food security and market trends which will be valuable in describing trends and the extent of the need. You may also have useful data from the Monitoring and Evaluation team.
- Who are the most **vulnerable groups**? Always consider the vulnerable children, but are there others – rural or remote communities, refugees or IDPs, minority groups, etc.? Does the emergency response plan adequately address their needs?

Key advocacy positions and messages

food aid

World Vision has an agreed policy position on food aid. In summary, we argue that:

- **Achieving food security requires structural reform** of the global aid and economic architecture (increased investment in agriculture, market access for goods from developing economies, an end to Northern subsidies, an end to conditionalities which limit expenditure on essential services). Until that reform is carried out, food aid will be necessary to meet the right to food.
- **Food aid should continue in all its forms** – cash, in-kind, local purchase and monetisation. We call on the international community to **support context assessments** and to expand the range of tools available for addressing emergency responses, but we will use all the tools available to meet the needs of community members. World Vision is cognisant of the possible adverse impacts of food aid, and carries out market assessments to mitigate the likelihood of such impacts. [**Please note!** We recognise that food aid is a controversial issue within development circles. Critics claim that in-kind food aid displaces markets and generates dependencies, and that monetisation is a highly inefficient form of aid. World Vision has adopted a pragmatic position in relation to this debate. Please seek advice from FPMG if this is a controversial issue in your context.]
- **An integrated approach is needed.** Increasing food supply will not, by itself, result in a drop in malnutrition. Increased supply of food should be complemented by targeted nutrition programmes; nutrition education, clean water and hand-washing initiatives are often vital.

children

- **Children – particularly those under age two – should have priority** in emergency response planning, because of the particularly grave impacts that malnutrition has on children's development.
- **Planning should be led by the national government**, and supported by the international community. It should focus on addressing child hunger in its acute form (through community-based therapeutic feeding) and its chronic form (through scaling up proven interventions such as promoting breast feeding and micro-nutrient supplementation).
- **An immediate increase in funding** is needed to protect the food security of vulnerable communities (with a focus on preventing child hunger and under-nutrition).

livelihoods for the rural poor

- In the recovery phase, it is critical to invest in small-scale agriculture and other initiatives designed to promote the livelihoods of rural people living in poverty. This focus is justified by the fact that 70% of the poor still live in rural areas.

civil society participation

- World Vision calls on the international community to include civil society in the planning and implementation phases of response to humanitarian crises.

resources

FOOD AID GENERAL

- ELDIS, *Livelihoods Connect*, <http://www.eldis.org/go/livelihoods/>
- Food Security Network, <http://www.foodsecuritynetwork.org/index.html>
- Humanitarian Accountability Partnership, *Guide to the HAP Standard: Humanitarian accountability and quality management*, 2008, <http://www.hapinternational.org/>
- International Food Policy Research Institute, *Renegotiating the Food Aid Convention: Background, context and issues*, 2007, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/JBRN-6ZXLZQ?OpenDocument>
- International Grains Council, *Grains trade and food security cooperation*, <http://www.igc.org.uk/en/aboutus/default.aspx>
- The Sphere Project, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* (revised) 2004, <http://www.sphereproject.org/content/view/27/84/lang.English/>
- World Food Programme, *Food for assets*, <http://www.wfp.org/food-assets>

KEY WORLD VISION REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- World Vision & Humanitarian Policy Group, *Cash transfers in emergencies: A synthesis of World Vision's experience and learning*, S Bailey, K Savage & S O'Callaghan, 2008, <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/3674.pdf>
- "Regaining the focus of food aid: Giving children a chance to live life to its fullest," Dean Hirsch address to the 2008 International Food Aid Conference, <http://www.wvi.org/wvi/wviweb.nsf/webmaindocs/31846A62B3C7945F8825742C007EB9D0?OpenDocument>

WORLD VISION CONTACTS

(Please do not give a person's name or details to external media contacts before speaking with the person directly.)

- Mr Thabani Maphosa, Senior Director – Operations & Strategy, Food Programming Management Group (based in Johannesburg, phone +27 82301 8274, e-mail thabani_maphosa@wvi.org)
- Mr Walter Middleton, Vice-President, Food Programming Management Group (based in Johannesburg, phone +27 82561 1352, e-mail walter_middleton@wvi.org)