

# **Food Aid**

**An ActionAid Briefing Paper**

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## 1. Summary

The shortcomings of programme food aid and the increased need for relief food aid is increasingly recognised by the large majority of countries and reflected in the patterns of international food aid flows. International institutions, however, have so far failed to reflect these developments appropriately. This paper aims to assess the role international food aid plays in the promotion of the right to food. The different types of food aid, recipients, practices of major donors and international institutions are presented and the evidence regarding the impacts and experiences with the provision of food aid are reviewed.

In theory, food aid should ensure people's food rights but in practice it often undermines the right to food. The paradox here is that food aid often becomes a factor contributing to regular lack of access to food. Besides providing food in emergencies and saving the life of the sufferer, in some cases the nature and process of current food aid practices have violated the right to food. For the last two decades the provision of food aid to developing countries has been controversial. This paper examines in particular the mechanisms that have resulted in such. It is intended as a background briefing paper on food aid and the institutions that govern food aid.

This paper does not address the Food Aid - GM debate. For an in-depth analysis of the GM debate refer to ActionAid's paper: 'GM – going against the grain' May 2003. This can be downloaded at <http://www.actionaid.org/resources/foodrights/foodrights.shtml>

## 2. Food as a fundamental right

### The right to food and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

Access to food and control over it is recognised as a fundamental human right. Article 25.1 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights focuses on food rights of every individual.

The committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights affirms the linkages between the right to food and other development concerns. The right to adequate food is realised when every man, woman and child, alone or in a community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its production. The state has a core obligation to take the necessary action to mitigate and alleviate hunger even in times of natural or other disasters, as provided for in Para 2, of article 11 of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic Social Cultural Rights.

#### Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

##### **Article 25.1**

*'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control'.*

### Rights based concerns on food aid:

In line with humanitarian principles the right to food is a fundamental right and the provision of food is the obligation of the Government. The humanitarian charter reaffirms the fundamental importance of three key principles, one of which is the right to dignity of life. This is directly related to the right to food.

### The right to food as central to globalisation and trade.

The Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action 1996 laid the foundations for diverse paths to a common objective of food security, at individual, household, national, regional, and global levels

#### The World Food Summit 1996

The International Community declared:

*'we...reaffirm the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.'*

*'Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.'*  
(WFS, 1996)

## 3. Definitions of food aid: categories, types and purpose

Food aid is governed by activities of bilateral development co-operations agencies, multilateral institutions, and NGOs. It is used to support food assistance in countries eligible for aid. It is also used to fund general development through the balance of payment support by substituting for commercial imports or budgetary support from the revenue generated by selling food received from donor communities.

### 3.1 Categories

Food aid transactions can be divided into three broad categories

- **Relief food aid**, which is targeted and freely distributed to victims of natural and man-made disasters. This aid is also variously called emergencies or humanitarian food aid.
- **Programme food aid**, which involves commodities provided directly to a recipient government or its agent for sale on local markets to generate local-currency counterpart fund, usually under the control of the recipient government but in some form of agreement with the donor about their management and use.
- **Project food aid** provided on a grant basis to targeted groups to support specific development activities.

### 3.2 Types

Food aid usually targets vulnerable groups and is executed in three different ways:

- **General ration** (provided a complete basket of food commodities in quantities sufficient to meet requirement to targeted population)
- **Supplementary feeding** (specially targeted groups at risk of malnutrition, such as pregnant women and small children)
- **Therapeutic feeding** (usually in feeding centres or clinics, to people suffering from malnutrition)
- **Food for Work** (when a wage is paid in food in the food deficit area on a self-selection basis)

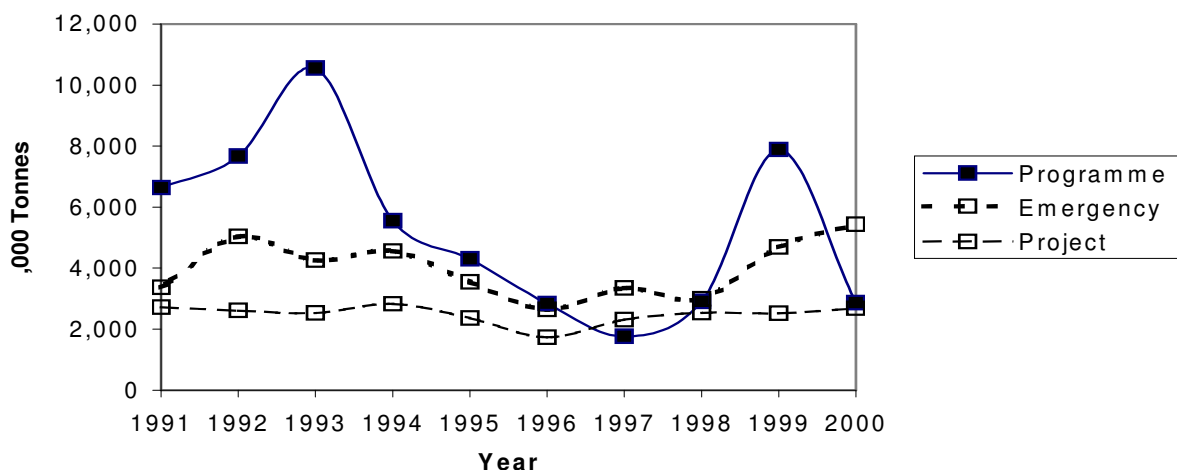
### 3.3 Purpose

The underlying purpose of food aid is based on the needs of the recipients.

- To provide a **short-term income transfer** or income substitution to people to allow household resources to be invested in recovery and longer-term development.
- To provide sufficient **food resources to eliminate the need for survival** strategies, which may result in long-term negative consequences for human dignity, household viability, livelihood security, and the environment.
- To sustain life by ensuring **adequate availability and access** to food by people affected by disaster.

Figure 1 shows the quantities delivered by types of food aid in the 1990s. It appears, that programme food aid is by far the most volatile category. Emergency food aid showed a steady increase since the mid 1990s, while project food aid remained relatively constant.

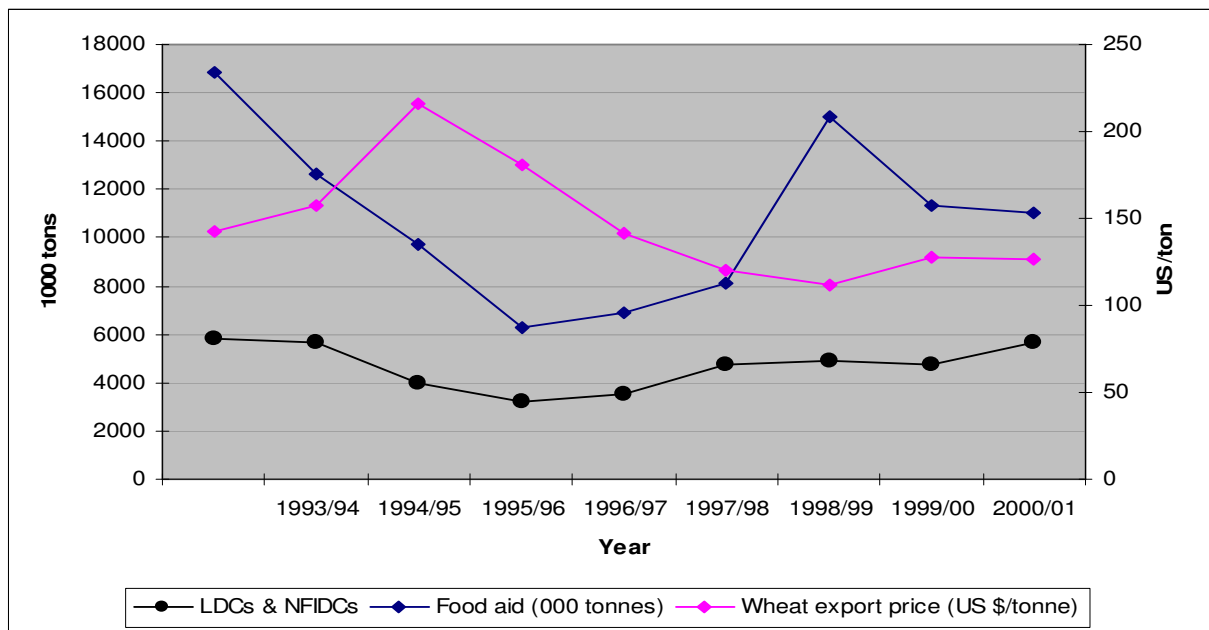
**Figure 1 Deliveries by Type of Food Aid – 1991-2000**



Source: WFP, "The Food Aid Monitor – 2000 Food Aid Flows", 2001 cited by Clark, 2002

In Figure 2 the wheat price, the total amount of food aid and food aid delivered to Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries (NFIDCs) are shown. It becomes clear that the amount of total food aid is closely linked to the wheat prices in the US. The amount of food aid delivered to the poorest countries, however, remained more stable. So it again becomes clear that programme food aid, provided on a bilateral basis is more supply than demand driven and hence not targeted towards the needs of the poor.

Figure 2: Total Food Aid and Food Aid for LDC and NFIDC compared to US export Wheat Price



#### 4. Principle donors

The USA and the EU together provide about two thirds of global food aid deliveries. The global impacts of food aid and the management of specific programmes are therefore largely determined by the practices of these major donors.

##### 4.1. European Union

The EU Commission’s position is clear: food aid in kind is not an appropriate instrument to create long-term food security. The EU has stipulated that food aid should, where possible, be sourced locally. The EU has 16 separate food aid programmes, one for the EU as a whole and one each for the 15 member states. In addition there are extensive liaison and management arrangements covering NGO involvement. This complexity has led to considerable operational problems (Clay, 2000).

**The EU's 1996 Regulation on Food Aid**

The following principles were established:

- food aid is an important feature of the Community's development cooperation policy;
- food aid must be integrated into the developing countries' policies for the improvement of their food security, in particular by the establishment of food strategies aimed at alleviating poverty and geared to achieving the ultimate goal of making food aid superfluous;
- food aid and operations in support of food security must be taken into account as objectives in all community policies likely to affect developing countries, in particular from the point of view of economic reforms and structural adjustment;
- food aid should avoid having adverse effects on local production, distribution, transport and marketing capacities;
- food security should help the populations of developing countries and regions at household, local, national and regional levels to improve their own food production;
- Early-warning systems concerning the food situation can be supported by the Community, along with food storage programmes to strengthen the food security in recipient countries.

**The framework of the rules on humanitarian aid policy (European Parliament, 2002)**

The framework governs food aid operations for humanitarian purposes.

In its resolution of 1996, the European Parliament insisted on coordination of development cooperation policies in relation to food aid and food security programmes of Member States and the different roles of women and men when it comes to preparing food security programmes.

*'Regional approaches to food security should be supported to take advantage of natural complementarities of countries in the same region, wherever possible, preference should be given to local purchases'* (EU, 2001).

**Level and Destination of EU food aid****Distribution of European Food Aid in 2000**

Delivered to	Amount of food aid	
	Cereal food aid	Non-cereals food aid
<b>Total</b>	<b>750,002</b>	<b>55,819</b>
Africa	634,020	29,386
Latin America and Caribbean	8,233	4,460
Asia	107,749	21,973

Source: FAOSTAT, 2002

In 1999, 55% (Euros 258.55 million) of the total aid budget was **direct aid** implemented. **Indirect aid** implemented through international organisations and NGOs represented 45% of the EU budget (Euros 214.64 million).

## 4.2 USA

The USA is by far the most important donor of food aid both for bilateral programme aid and is the main contributor to the WFP. The US government structure involves a division of powers that requires the administration to have a detailed legislative basis for its actions, and thereafter to be able to account to Congress for every dollar spent.

### Tied aid

The US government had been at the forefront of efforts to limit aid untying generally. It is the US government, which lobbied the strongest for food aid and technical cooperation exemptions within the current OECD aid untying policy.

The landmarks in US food aid are the intensively negotiated Farm Bills, which effectively tie all food aid to US exportable surpluses, require 75% of commodities (including that for relief purposes) to be shipped in US registered vessels, and allows NGOs to 'monetise' over only one third of commodities and use the proceeds for development projects (Clay, 2000).

#### US Departments governing food aid

**I US Agency for International Development (USAID)** implements Public Law (PL) 480

USAID's funds are around 1 billion US-\$ and are separated into three categories:

- **Title I** programme aid in form of loans
- **Title II** emergency food aid
- **Title III** programme aid in form of grant aid

**II US Department for Agriculture (USDA)** administers section 416 of the Agriculture Act

- Primarily aimed at stabilising the domestic market and opening new export markets for agricultural products
- 1999 Expenditure amounted to US \$ 1.2 Billion with US\$ 400m spent on distribution and transportation

**Title II Emergency Food Aid** is the preferred instrument of USAID. Under this title US food is donated to NGOs, the WFP and foreign governments. (Webb, 2000). Almost all the food donated consists of surplus stocks. (Garst and Barry; 1990). USDA's agenda has ensured that large amounts of food aid are supplied to potentially solvent markets such as South East Asia and transition economies such as Russia.

US imports of food aid have had huge impacts on local economies, particularly in Africa. Imported food aid can flood markets, lower prices and put farmers out of business. The shipping of corn from the US, where it is heavily subsidised, to African nations can serve to

increase poverty and dependence on aid by destroying domestic production. Regional purchasing of food aid was identified as best practice at the 1999 Food Aid Convention, but the US has so far ignored its responsibilities. Some maintain that by undermining recipient nations' domestic economies through food donations, the US has served to ensure market dominance for its own exports. Certainly, the dumping of subsidised surpluses on to Southern markets can no longer be viewed as "aid".

### Supply-orientated v. Recipient-orientated

Despite the fact that a substantially larger amount of food aid has been provided by USAID than through the WFP, a recent evaluation of the US Food Aid Programmes concluded that bilateral food aid from USAID was less effective than food aid delivered by the WFP in either stabilising food availability in recipient economies or in equalising food availability across low- and middle income countries. This is partly due to the largely political determination of bilateral food aid distribution patterns (Barrett and Heisey, 2002). This shows clearly that bilateral food aid is mainly supply-driven while multilateral food aid is more recipient-oriented.

## 5. International Institutions governing food aid

At the international level, food aid is governed by several multilateral organisations, the most important ones being the UN-World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO), the Food Aid Convention (FAC) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). All these organisations have different mandates and are concerned with different aspects of the provision of food aid.

### 5.1 The World Food Programme (WFP)

The WFP is the main international channel for food aid. It was established in 1963 to provide food aid to development projects through its regular programme as well as a modest amount of emergency aid (Clay, 2000). WFP has evolved from a joint UN/FAO programme into an international food aid agency. It is underpinned by the FAC because many donors commit part of all of their obligations to provide food aid to WFPs relief and regular activities. Its main objectives are laid out in its mission statement, which states that food aid is one instrument to promote food security.

#### **WFP's mission statement**

*This promises to avoid negative effects on local food production, consumption patterns and dependency on food aid as well as to design and implement the assistance programmes on the basis of broad based participation. The central role of women for food security is explicitly recognised.*

#### **WFP and NGOs**

The WFP works with more than 1,100 international, national and local NGOs worldwide.

NGO/WFP partnerships will be based upon "...what NGOs can do best", such as building community capacities at low cost and helping build a greater understanding of the livelihoods of hungry people.

WFP partnerships with NGOs in emergencies and protracted relief will continue to be essential for effective and cost-efficient assistance' (WFP, 2001).

However, the provision of food aid through NGOs does not automatically guarantee better practices. The impact of the activities of NGOs is largely determined by the conditions a donor government or institution attaches to the aid. This is especially the case when NGOs are involved in the monetisation of programme food aid to fund their projects in recipient countries.

**The core activities of the WFP are:**

- the provision of food aid to save lives in emergency and disaster situations
- to improve the nutritional status of the most vulnerable people
- to promote the self reliance of poor people, particularly through labour intensive work programmes.

The WFP is therefore supposed to provide exclusively project and relief food aid, while giving priority to the latter. According to WFP these types of targeted food aid are necessary to ensure access to food by those parts of populations who cannot purchase it on the market. On the other hand the WFP publicly condemns programme food aid as 'neither effective nor efficient' (WTO, 2002).

The share of WFP food aid delivered to LDCs increased from roughly half to more than 60% also as a result of increasing emergency food aid. With that, WFP governed about half of all food aid deliveries to this group of countries in 1998 and increased this share to almost 73% in 2001, hence being by far the most important donor for this group of countries. These developments are in line with WFP's priorities as set out in its mission statement.

**5.2 The FAO Consultative Sub-Committee on Surplus Disposal (CSSD)**

The principle aim of the FAO was to provide an outlet for structural surpluses of cereal products in the US. Soon after this new type of surplus disposal was introduced, intergovernmental consultations took place on its impacts on commercial trade and agricultural production in recipient countries. They resulted in a Code of Conduct for governments for the provision of food aid: The FAO Principles for Surplus Disposal. The Consultative Committee on Surplus Disposal (CCSD) was established in 1955 to oversee its implementation.

The Committee basically monitors food aid to safeguard export interests, ensuring that export prices do not fall. There is no structured policy concerned with the impact of such exports on local farmers and local prices. Historically, it has been largely concerned with programme aid, because relief and project food aid were considered additional to the so-called 'usual marketing requirements' for commercial food imports of recipient countries (Clay, 2000).

Today 41 countries have subscribed to the principles and are members of the CCSD, among them all the major donors of food aid and 15 important recipients including Bangladesh, Egypt and Malawi. However, the CCSD by no means monitors all food aid that is provided globally. In fact it refers the more comprehensive figures of the WFP to get an overview on the state of food aid in the world.

These complex arrangements make international action in the area of food aid and food security difficult to achieve beyond statements of problems, declarations of responsibility and setting global targets. This is one of the areas where the need for changes in global governance has been widely recognised (Clay, 2000).

**5.3 Food Aid Convention 1999**

The Food Aid Convention (FAC) was established in 1967 under the auspices of the International Grains Council. It has the primary objective of ensuring a minimum availability of food aid to meet emergency requirements and developmental activities in developing countries. In order to achieve this, the major donors of food aid commit themselves to the provision of a minimum annual amount of food aid irrespective of world food price and supply

fluctuations. The convention does not contain any maximum levels for the provision of food aid. During successive renegotiations the minimum level of food aid decreased from 7.6 m tonnes (1968-1980) to currently 4.9 m tonnes.

**FAC binding conditions**

- aid must be provided according to the FAO principles on surplus disposal and not tied to any commercial transactions between donor and recipient.
- all products provided shall be suitable for human consumption (except seeds)
- products must meet international quality standards, and be consistent with dietary habits and nutritional needs of recipients.
- At least 80% of the food aid shall be provided in grant form and all aid to LDCs shall be given as grant.

**FAC best endeavour clauses**

In addition to the binding commitments the Convention contains best endeavour clauses on the management and design of food aid programmes. These include:

- food aid should only be provided when it is the most effective and appropriate means of assistance and that the particular needs of women and children should be met.
- harmful effects on local production and eating habits of the beneficiaries should be avoided.
- donors shall give consideration to purchase food in the recipient country itself (local purchasing) to assist a deficit area in this country or from other developing countries (triangular transactions).

Given the large variations in the provision of Food Aid during the 1990s and especially the decrease in aid levels during the price spike, where donors hardly fulfilled their minimum commitments, the FAC can be judged as not very effective in increasing the predictability of food aid flows. The same holds true for encouraging the use of triangular trade transactions in food aid, which remained on a low level of 15% in recent years.

**5.4 WTO**

The World Trade Organisation, operational since 1995, deals with two different aspects of food aid. Firstly the Agreement on Agriculture seeks to avoid the possible negative impact of food aid on exporters of agricultural products. Secondly the “Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least-Developed and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries”, commonly referred to as the “Marrakech-Decision” considers food aid as one possible instrument to address the problem of increasing food import bills after the reduction of export subsidies mandated in the Agreement on Agriculture.

**5.4.1 Agreement on Agriculture (AoA)**

The aim of the Agreement on Agriculture is to make sure that food aid is not used to circumvent reduction commitments in export subsidies.

**Conditions for the donation of food aid (Article 10 of AoA):**

- (a) Aid is not tied directly or indirectly to commercial exports of agricultural products to recipient countries
- (b) Food aid transactions, including monetised ones are carried out in accordance with the FAO principles of Surplus Disposal and Consultative Obligations, including, where appropriate, the system of usual marketing requirements.
- (c) Such aid shall be provided where possible fully in grant form

The AoA therefore does not define additional disciplines for food aid, but refers to the already existing ones. It has not yet been tested if the enforcement of these is strengthened through the Dispute Settlement Mechanism of the WTO. According to the EU “this provision has clearly not been sufficient to stem the flow of subsidised exports which are clearly not genuine food aid but which have been diverted through the food aid complex” (EU, 2002).

**5.4.2 The Marrakech Decision of 1994**

The Marrakech Decision aims to ensure the availability of an appropriate level of food aid, which is increasingly provided in fully grant form or on concessional terms as specified in the Food Aid Convention. The decision makes commitments to assist developing countries affected by trade liberalisation. Food aid is one of the instruments intended to help least and net food importing developing countries that may be adversely affected by the WTOs reform process.

**Marrakech Decision: possible responses to different food aid needs** – four distinct sets of circumstances of ordinary emergencies needs:

	<b>High domestic production</b>	<b>Low domestic production</b>
<b>High world Price</b>	As the volume of imports of developing countries would be below normal, the needs under the Marrakech Decision might not be large. At the same time, low needs for ordinary emergencies would free up food aid resources to meet needs under the decision. The use of food aid could also be made as needed, of stand-by resources and calling forward arrangements.	The needs in the case would be high for both ordinary emergencies and under the Marrakech Decision. This is the most difficult case and would normally require the use all possible regular and complimentary resources. Beyond drawing on regular and stand –by resources, calling forward is likely to be needed, as well as release from any food aid supported reserves.
<b>Low world Price</b>	In this case, needs under the decision would be zero while ordinary emergencies needs would also be relatively low. Such emergencies need would easily be met. As food aid levels may be relatively high and the overall needs low, donors should be encouraged in such years to contribute towards a physical reserve and carry forward arrangements.	Again needs under the Marrakech Decision is would be zero while ordinary emergencies needs would be moderately high, as the low world market prices would permit the affected countries to respond partly from their own resources. Again, food aid resources above emergencies and project need should be contributed towards physical reserve and carry forward arrangements.

*Source Adapted from Uruguay round, the Marrakech Decision*

## 6. Problems and Impact of Food Aid

### 6.1 Impact of food aid

The main concerns about possible negative impacts of food aid arise with regard to its effect on domestic production. The four major disincentive effects are:

- (i) **lowering prices of the commodity supplied** or food in general on the domestic market, thus discouraging local production with the danger of prolonging the dependence on food aid deliveries
- (ii) adoption of policies of recipient countries which **neglect domestic food production** and the interests of small farmers and the rural population.
- (iii) **changing food habits** away from locally produced crops to those imported or provided as food aid
- (iv) **the disruption of labour supply to agriculture** if “wages” in Food for Work programmes are higher than those on neighbouring farms. This might inhibit agricultural production in regions where the Food for Work programmes are carried out.

Problems are most frequently the result of programme food aid, which at the same time is most inefficient in improving the nutritional status of those parts of the population most affected by food insecurity.

Project and relief food aid may, however, also have negative effects and it proves difficult in many cases to target the most affected groups effectively.

#### ***Learning from Case Studies?***

*A case Study on **Sudan** in the 1980s shows that food aid allowed the government to provide wheat at subsidised prices thus displacing sorghum as the major staple crop and increasing heavily the dependence on imports.*

*Similar observations were made in **Central America** where increasing food aid supplies led to higher wheat consumption and allowed the governments to neglect the problems of small farmers producing traditional staple crops such as maize (Garst and Barrv.1990).*

### 6.2 Practical problems with the provision of food aid

It is unquestionable that some form of assistance is needed in situations where a famine occurs or threatens to occur due to natural disasters like droughts or flood. Food aid in the form of direct deliveries to the affected regions is not always the most effective approach to deal with the problems (Dréze and Sen, 1989)

#### **Necessity for Greater community participation**

*“Power over food aid lies with those people who never spend a single day on the agricultural field planting, rearing or harvesting food crops. Those who spend dawn to dusk all year round in the agriculture fields are increasingly facing starvation. These peoples are hardly ever consulted about what types food aid they need and nor are they involved in decision-making processes. Due to a lack of access to information and a lack of community participation in the decision making process, the victims of disaster lose their rights.” (Khemraj Uphadhaja, ActionAid Nepal)*

Physical distribution of food e.g. in dealing with the food crisis in Africa in the 1980s suffered from major problems:

- indiscriminate, inequitable or unascertained distribution, resulting in too low support for the most vulnerable groups in spite of sufficient quantities of overall aid
- in several countries a large part of the aid arrived only after the next harvest, which happened to be a bumper harvest, thus aggravating the glut of local markets.

### **6.2.1 Food aid policy versus practice**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Marrakesh Decision (1995), World Food Summit (1999) all made commitments and set targets to feed the world's hungry including during emergencies. But over the past half-century, in spite of these commitments, strategies, policies, and targets, poor countries have been experiencing more and more difficulties in securing food. Especially during emergencies the poor and vulnerable are severely affected and little action under these decisions has so far materialised. Despite the universal recognition of everyone's right to food, food insecurity remains a reality in many parts of the world. FAO estimates that 792 million peoples in the developing countries are chronically hungry.

### **6.2.2 Food aid as a function of price rather than need**

The supply of food aid is not based on food requirement, but on the international wheat price, which is based on production. If there is less production, the price rises and there is less food aid. Lower prices equal more food aid and higher prices mean less food aid. The rhetoric is in policies and documents; food aid organisations are proclaiming food aid as safety against world hunger, however, in reality, the line between price and food aid reflects efforts to get rid of surplus rather than an attempt to feed the hungry.

In a period of low production, due to an increase in prices in the international market, poor people receive less food aid and become more vulnerable. During surplus production, due to the excess flow of food aid, poor people get more and more food, but far below the local price, which destroys the local economy and distracts people from agriculture. Imported food destroys the local culture and the local value of food. This inverse relationship between price and food aid leads to multiple denials of rights, as cause and consequence in a vicious circle of poverty.

### **6.2.3 Cash for Work programmes**

Alternative selection mechanisms are administrative procedures – food provided according to nutritional status, or “self-selection” such as Food for Work or Cash for Work programmes. In many cases the targeted provision of cash to poor parts of the population e.g. through Cash for Work programmes can be an effective instrument. While this will normally lead to an increase in food prices, the people most in need of food are still able to afford it as a result of their higher incomes. Furthermore, cash for work is considered a favourable option, as it allows local markets to operate and, gives people choice and reduces the role of outsiders. Programmes would have to be supplemented by free distribution of resources to those who are not able to work, like those living in a vulnerable household.

### 6.2.4 Vulnerable households

An increasing number of families and communities face hunger and destitution as a result of a vicious cycle: adults with AIDS become less and less productive; other family members must care for them instead of working; households become increasingly incapable of growing food for their own consumption or generating income. The issue explored in the context of Food Aid is *mitigation*; hence to improve the living conditions of people living with HIV/AIDS and enable their families to avoid some of the most serious negative long-term consequences of coping with the disease (Vivica, 2001).

Food Aid programmes targeted to meet the needs of these households face one problem at the beginning: how to identify them? Developing suitable programmes how to target vulnerable households could be a task for the WFP in the coming years.

#### ***Inappropriate Food Aid: Case Study***

*The flood in Zambezia river in February/March 2001 resulted in a food crisis in some areas. Food aid in response the situation was essential. A one-off WFP food delivery was made in early February. "After a time we had response by air which brought food like maize, sugar and beans. They could not imagine what was needed to grind the maize – maize grains in a water-logged place, without, a pestle or other utensils! – But despite this, we managed to make flour from the maize". Male farmer, Sirong.*

*Due to a lack of community decision-making participation, the food delivered was inappropriate and the recipients had to grind the maize grain while they were covered by water. (ActionAid)*

### 6.2.5 Intra-household distribution of food aid – gender issues

Additional problems frequently arise with the intra-household distribution of food aid especially concerning gender issues:

- Food for Work or Cash for Work often focuses on the employment of male members of the community. If females are employed they are frequently paid less than males.
- Females have to do the house-work even after working on a Food for Work scheme all day.
- Earnings or food brought into the home may not be under the control of the female members of the household.

### 6.2.6 Quality of food and appropriateness

In spite of international commitments to secure the quality of the food delivered in terms of suitability for human consumption, many practical problems exist

- Often dates of expiry are not labelled and the quality of food is not checked.
- Food provided may not be common in the recipient region hence there might be a lack of knowledge or equipment for the right preparation of food. For example some supplied food needs three times more water to clean and more fuel to cook. During drought, water and fuel are scarce, in such circumstances, this type of food aid does not help poor people properly.

### 6.2.7 Food in Emergencies

Especially in conflict areas, the food delivered is one of the most valuable assets. Consequently the conflicting parties have a big interest in gaining control over it. In more peaceful environments disaster projects frequently have a very high level of corruption (Kumar Kar, 2001).

**The four phases of food aid in an emergency project** (based on ActionAid's India's post cyclone work in Orissa)

The priority & pattern of security to lives and livelihoods needed in an emergency project has been articulated in four phases.

- **Phase I - Relief, Rescue, Reconstruction**  
The major focus is on the immediate needs of the community and the reconstruction of community assets.
- **Phase II - Reconstruction**  
The focus is on the repair of individual and community shelter.
- **Phase III - Reconstruction and Rehabilitation**  
The focus is on assistance to restart agricultural production, given through the provision of agricultural inputs like draught power and labour. Food or Cash are used as wages to pay farmers to work in their own field. Target groups could be landless, small and marginalized farmers.
- **Phase IV - Rehabilitation & Development**  
The focus now is to transform disaster mitigation projects into long-term development processes. The tertiary & service sector will be promoted to enhance non-farm employment so as to relieve burden on primary sector employment. The emphasis is on ensuring sustainable livelihoods and ensuring the producer's share through value addition and marketing. Through individual dialoguing and continuous social and participatory processes the project strives for security to lives and livelihood.

### 6.2.4 Food for Work and participation

Food for Work (FFW) is being used to repair community assets like road cleaning, school and road repairs, pond cleaning, child care centres, house repairing, straw cutting, destitute house construction, etc. A positive example for participation of affected communities is the mitigation of the damages of the super cyclone that hit Orissa coast, India on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1999 through a Food for Work programme implemented by ActionAid and a local partner organisation and documented by Kumar Kar (2001). See case study below.

### **Case Study: ActionAid India, Orissa Cyclone**

*Action Aid India considered FFW as an intervention to mobilize the community in addition to assuring their food security. FFW was planned, implemented and evaluated by the people through the hamlet level reconstruction committees. 350 committees were formed covering almost 30,000 households. These peoples' committee prioritized the work, which addressed the composite need of food security, institution building, livelihood, health including mental health & environment regeneration. Simultaneously, vigilance committees monitored the day-to-day work. It was ensured that vulnerable groups like Bengali immigrants, marine fisher folks, scheduled castes and tribes and women and children at risk and uncared aged, had the main decision-making power in the village committees. In some places only women committees were formed. Women participation in FFW was actively encouraged. Widows, disabled, uncared aged, were given FFW entitlements without having to do any work.*

*The role of the village committee is to maintain all the records and monitor the Food for Work. Advisory/ Vigilance committees were formed to guide the village committee in the process and monitor the programmes. Besides this volunteers were mobilised from the community to help in distribution of rice and money among the beneficiaries. In order to combat corruption, the project promoted "Social Audits in the villages in which it worked. The Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) members and sometimes the Government officials were present during the social audit.*

*After the fifteen months of super cyclone the Cash for Work option was preferred to FFW, as it seemed local market had revived and cash option would give a hike to the purchasing power of the beneficiaries. However the chances of corruption that used to bloat in Cash for Work, was negated in this project through strict measurement norms and social audit.*

*The design of the programme was guided by the following principles:*

- *An interim review showed that only 11% women participated in the FFW. The review was shared with the community. In order to increase women participation in FFW, a women empowerment wing was created in the organization structure. Favourable work for women such as construction of individual houses led to 32% women participating in FFW. By choosing work of women domain and strengthening institutions and setting differential norms for women could enhance the overall participation to 36%.*
- *Community Participation in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the program*
- *Institution Building: The hamlet level reconstruction committees and vigilance committees would be formed to take all decisions through participatory practices. This is to enhance social and human capital for good governance.*
- *Right quality of food*
- *Wage basket would be at par with Minimum Wages prevailing in the state.*

## **7. Conclusion: Towards a new institutional approach for international food aid**

The shortcomings of programme food aid and the increased need for relief food aid is increasingly recognised by the large majority of countries and reflected in the patterns of international food flows. International institutions, however, are not yet reflecting these developments appropriately. Much debate has ensued due to resource uncertainty and also wider questioning of the role of food aid apart from in humanitarian emergencies. There is a gradual recognition that food aid is no longer a major development resource but considerable adjustment is required on the part of all those institutions which are heavily involved with food aid, in particular WFP, some bilateral agencies and those international NGOs which rely heavily on food aid resource.

Distribution of food aid should be avoided where food is readily available and local markets are functioning. Reform of the International Institutions and their food aid policies is necessary to obtain a change of focus, with the prime objective of untying food aid to export interests. The operational rules of the WFP should put greater emphasis on monitoring the effects of its activities on local production, especially in the post-disaster rehabilitation phase, when food aid, including Food for Work programmes should be shifted as quickly as possible to the provision of financial aid including targeted Cash for Work programmes. A structured policy must be adopted, which concentrates on the impact of food aid on local prices and therefore local farmers. Emergency food aid must be appropriate, accessible and affordable to hungry people, irrespective of class, gender or generation. Food aid should address people's needs without disturbing food production systems.

ActionAid's policy position on food aid in emergencies is available to download from the ActionAid website.

## 8. Literature

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