



Child Protection and Food Security linkages

A short argument for Food Security and Child Protection integrated analysis: toward collective outcomes

More than 20 million people were at risk of dying from starvation within the first six months of 2017¹, around half of these are children. Currently the world is facing four separate famines. Wars in Yemen, northeastern Nigeria and South Sudan devastated households have driven up food prices beyond affordability, while a drought in east Africa has destroyed the agricultural economy of Somalia and weakened food production in neighboring countries. Food prices have often risen drastically, such as in South Sudan where the price of food essentials doubled and even quadrupled in the year.² Families in crisis adopt different coping mechanisms, and these significantly impact upon children's lives.

Key impacts can be felt in education, early marriage and child labour. Three of the "4 Famine" countries ranked in the bottom 20 literacy rates globally by UNESCO's statistics center in 2013³. Nine out of the ten countries with the highest child marriage rates are considered either fragile or extremely fragile states with persistent humanitarian crises. All four of the "4 Famine" countries in 2017 are on that list. Child marriage rates are about 40% in Somalia, Ethiopia and Nigeria, above 50% in South Sudan and Mali, and almost 70% in Chad and Central African Republic. (Girls not Brides, 2017)⁴. Children in crisis-affected families are often pulled from school into livelihood activities. Of the 152 million victims of child labour globally, 73 million are engaged in hazardous child labour, 62% of whom are boys⁵. In Africa 19.6% of children are engaged⁶. Child labour is concentrated in agriculture (71%) including farming, fishing, forestry and livestock herding. For example in Ethiopia there are 15.9 million children engaged in child labour (9.8 million boys, 6.1 million girls, 8.7 million in hazardous work) and children combining work and school were working on average 28 hours a week⁷.

Agriculture has always been subject to unpredictable weather, but a rapidly changing climate is making agriculture an even more vulnerable enterprise. In some regions, warmer temperatures may increase crop yields. The overall impact of climate change on agriculture, however, is expected to be negative—reducing food supplies and raising food prices.⁸ Many regions already suffering from high rates of hunger and food insecurity, including parts of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, are predicted to experience the greatest declines in food production.⁹ Elevated levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) are also expected to lower levels of zinc, iron, and other important nutrients in crops.^{10,11} How we measure the

¹ <https://www.undispatch.com/four-famines-explained/>.

² <http://www.fews.net/east-africa/sudan/food-security-outlook-update/december-2017>.

³ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002174/217409e.pdf>.

⁴ Girls Not Brides, It Takes a Movement: Reflecting on Five Years of Progress Towards Ending Child Marriage, 2017.

⁵ <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>.

⁶ <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>.

⁷ Ethiopia National Child Labour Survey (NCLS) 2015.

⁸ Nelson GC, Rosegrant MW, Koo J, Robertson R. *Climate Change: Impact on Agriculture and Costs of Adaptation*. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute; 2009.

⁹ Gornall J, Betts R, Burke E, et al. Implications of climate change for agricultural productivity in the early twenty-first century. *Philos Trans R Soc B Biol Sci*. 2010;365(1554):2973-2989.

¹⁰ Schmidhuber J, Tubiello FN. Global food security under climate change. *Proc Natl Acad Sci*. 2007; 104(50).

¹¹ Myers SS, Zanobetti A, Kloog I, et al. Increasing CO₂ threatens human nutrition. *Nature*. 2014; 510:139-142.



social impact of food insecurity and the responses to is critical to building resilience to this forecastable crisis.

From food insecurity to Child Protection concern

The food insecurity and economic stresses fueled by these famines press families to make difficult survival decisions affecting their children. The choices available to meet immediate food security needs have lasting consequences on how well children and their families build capacities to overcome the shocks in their environments. When families prioritize short term survival needs, they may turn to strategies such as early marriage¹², child labor to reduce food scarcity in the household and withdrawing children from school so they can participate in income generation activities.

Such actions may impair the children's ability to break out of a cycle of vulnerability, as they lose protective factors (physical safety) and access to education¹³. Where acute needs arise swiftly and resilience is¹⁴ low, the survival choices made by households have negative consequences lasting far beyond the impact of the famine or the duration of the conflict, damaging a whole generation. For example, decisions to reduce the number and variety of meals has lasting impacts, as childhood stunting cannot be reversed. Also, basic schooling is rarely available to older or married children and adults, so they face ongoing lower literacy rates and livelihood prospects.

Famine also increases the likelihood of youth recruitment into armed groups¹⁵. When some form of relationship with combatants is essential for survival, youth are particularly vulnerable to recruitment.¹⁶ Armed actors are seen to not only provide security but also leverage when ensuring survival in a resource poor environment. In such contexts, for many, joining an armed group is seen as a positive coping mechanism as the impact on the household's welfare is immediate. Children orphaned in conflict are particularly susceptible, where armed group adults become parental care substitutes in terms of food provision¹⁷.

Conflict can affect the resilience and long- term food security of young people. A war traumatized generation runs the risk of being a "Lost Generation"¹⁸. It is less resilient, less able to organize productively to resume food production. It will be at a disadvantage when the next shock comes.

If survival where one is born is no longer plausible, moving is the next resort. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in displacement, both internal and across borders. Current data indicate that in 2016 there were 40.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide and 22.5 million refugees^{19,20}. Food insecurity-related displacement takes children away from school, friendships and

¹² <https://plan-international.org/food-crisis-increases-child-marriage-risk>.

^{13,14} <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2683035/>.

¹⁴ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/04/conflict-and-famine-time-for-honesty/>.

¹⁵ <https://www.soschildrensvillages.ca/child-soldier-recruitment-increases-due-famine-somalia>.

¹⁶ https://www.unicef.org/media/media_96651.html.

¹⁷ Singer, Peter W., *Children at War*, 2005, New York: Pantheon.

¹⁸ https://www.unicef.org/files/Syria_2yr_Report.pdf.

¹⁹ IDMC, 2017: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/>.

²⁰ UNHCR 2017: <http://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/stories/2017/6/5941561f4/forced-displacement-worldwide-its-highest-decades.html>.



exposes them to significant protection risks including extortion, sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, bonded labor, slavery and death from exposure to the elements.²¹

Food Security and Child Protection: An integrated approach

Just as protection concerns can cause food insecurity, food insecurity can cause child protection concerns. In context of food insecurity, children are exposed to different risks and negative coping mechanisms. Food assistance is one of the key life-saving responses in humanitarian crises and one that can significantly improve the safety and wellbeing of children. When the food security intervention is well-planned and carried out integrating child protection within each of the four food security pillars – availability, access, utilization and stability – it notably contributes to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children affected by emergencies and crises.

Child protection encompasses not only addressing risks to which they are exposed, but all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for child rights. This includes the right under Article 12 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* for children to express their views in all matters affecting them, and these views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. This calls for greater inclusion of children in the design and implementation of humanitarian response, including food security. Children in trauma and displacement often feel comforted by eating familiar food and seeing family members having familiar routines. Providing food rations which reflect dietary practices, and moving promptly to cash-based transfers which enable families to shop for food, are two examples of this.

An integrated approach to food security and child protection can also support better tailoring to the needs of children of different ages. They have different needs and preferences, face different risks and have different vulnerabilities and capacities to contribute to their own food security and overall to the response. Older children often have strong commitment to seeing their community recover, an interest in helping older people and people with disabilities, and a significant desire to receive and share information, and each of these capacities, if harnessed appropriately, can support dignity and empowerment of children affected by conflict and disasters. There are already examples of older children being given smart phones and sharing pictures and video on progress plus serving as a conduit for community feedback,

EXAMPLE: ROHINGYA CRISIS 2017-18

The upsurge in persecution of Rohingya in northern Myanmar in August 2017 led to the cross-border displacement of over 700,000 into southern Bangladesh.

With 16% female-headed households and 4% child-headed households, it was common for children to take on adult gender roles in firewood and water collection and in seeking to collect food assistance, which raised child protection concerns.

Whilst food security actors provided portering to child-headed households and advised other children to bring their parents, coordination with child protection actors could have supported improved analysis, behavioural change communications, child protection around distribution points and in the early days, improved referral of separated and unaccompanied minors appearing at distribution points looking for food.

A success was close collaboration on children being enrolled for cash-based programming assistance, with agreement on default enrolment of child-headed households and child brides, with the option for case management follow up by members of the child protection sub-sector.

²¹ IOM, 2016: Iraq and Nigeria case studies. <https://publications.iom.int/books/assessing-risks-migration-along-central-and-eastern-mediterranean-routes-iraq-and-nigeria-case>.



enabling community members who do not have or are not confident in texting or calling to speak a language outside their traditional dialect.

There are many benefits of close collaboration between the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) and Food Security Cluster and individual food security actors such as the World Food Programme (WFP), in furthering outcomes for children throughout the response. Such collaboration under an integrated approach:

- Furthers the centrality of protection agenda by placing child protection concerns at the very start of the program cycle;
- Allows to assess the scale of the threat vectors and the effectiveness of existing systems that contribute to the protective environment of the child;
- Presents the opportunity to have food security humanitarian actors collaborating in the identification and joint analysis of child protection needs;
- Encourages an integrated approach for the food security and child protection responses by working together in targeting of most vulnerable households and in a joint situational analysis and response monitoring; and
- Places the vulnerabilities of children in the context in which they occur so that durable solutions can address root causes.

Integrated approach in practice: The Child Protection Needs and Identification Framework (CP NIAF)

Key to an integrated approach is conducting and using an analysis on child protection which is disaggregated based on sex and age. The CP NIAF is the approach that the CP AoR has designed to bring in data from other sectors and return common joint analysis and a shared understanding of the evolution of the humanitarian situation between children protection and the other humanitarian sectors.

The CP NIAF products are a combination of information management and analysis tools available to any humanitarian actor that wants to make use and adapts them to their needs. They are defined to foster the collaboration and joint analysis across sectors without aiming to modify existing sector-focus methodologies, but to encourage joint process and collaboration, particularly at the time of the joint analysis.

The CP NIAF follows three basic principles:

Data usefulness: All data produced with a minimum level of reliability and methodology sound is valid. The CP NIAF focuses on making it useful for the humanitarian response. All datasets will face limitations, but this should not be a reason for excluding them in the humanitarian analysis. The CP NIAF frames them and defines how each of the information sources should be considered within the process.

Complementarity: Data and findings are complementary between them. However, often, datasets are not often prepared for being automatically comparable between them facilitating a systematic analysis. In order to cope with this situation, the CP NIAF works within its framework to ensure that conflicting datasets can be comparable (i.e. aggregating or disaggregating datasets for ensuring comparability regardless the unit of analysis initially taken during the data collection; community, sub-district etc.).



Context-based tailored approach: The Framework is a methodological approach adaptable to each context and reality. The CP NIAF must be tailored to every context highlighting what will be possible to achieve with the available information. Before starting an CP NIAF process in any country, it is critical to analyse the type of information available and the use it can be done with it.

Bibliography child marriage in humanitarian contexts and linkages with FSL

- USAID Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Resource Guide. On page 59 you can find an analysis of the connection between Child marriage and agriculture/food security
https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/USAID_CEFM_Resource-Guide.PDF
- Vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon 2017 – UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP. In this specific case Child Marriage is the least recurring coping strategy, but I think it is interesting as an integrated approach to look at the issue <http://www.wfp.org/content/2017-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon>
- Girls not Brides - brief on Taking action to address child marriage: the role of different sectors: conflict and humanitarian crisis, which is highlighting the need for integrating child marriage prevention and response into conflict and humanitarian crisis programmes and a good list of resources
<https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/5.-Addressing-child-marriage-Crisis-and-Humanitarian-Conflict.pdf>
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<https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Child-marriage-and-humanitarian-crises-June-2016.pdf>
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