

5.23: THE GLOBAL NETWORK AGAINST FOOD CRISES, AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO ADDRESS COMPLEX FOOD CRISES WITH INTEGRATIVE APPROACHES

(HDP nexus, Joint Area-based Interventions), shared information and driving causes

What problem is the solution trying to address?

Evidence shows that millions of people are increasingly exposed to food crises. According to the Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC), the number of people facing acute food insecurity between 2016 and 2019 consistently exceeded 100 million – with 135 million people in 2019; the figures for 2020, are expected to be close to 170 M. The great majority of food insecure people live in areas characterised by fragility in a broad sense (eco-systems, climate shocks, conflict and violence, weak institutions, weak taxation systems and limited national budgets, democratic deficits). Long-term displacement, political instability and conflicts, together with climate-related disasters, economic shocks and pests/diseases/pandemics are main drivers of all major food crises. Those compounded risks act simultaneously or sequentially, reinforcing each other in any case, creating a vicious circle that needs to be broken with a multi-dimensional approach.

As of today, 44 out of 55 food crises (82 percent) are occurring in countries that are included in the 2020 OECD states of fragility list. Seven out of the ten worst food crises are in states defined as "extremely fragile". Consequently, sustainable food systems in fragile contexts have been identified as a critical area of intervention to promote long-term food security and to contribute to peace and societal well-being. In such contexts, building resilient local food systems is key to alleviating humanitarian suffering, fostering development, preventing the outbreak or escalation of conflict, and promoting peace.

Challenges and relevant difficulties food systems have to confront in fragile states: (a) Significant territory with no State presence, and thus where Food Security public policies are implemented, (b) poor infrastructure (roads, communication, public health posts), (c) cross-boundary conflicts over resources (land, water, minerals, forests), (d) weak institutional architecture, (e) operational food/non-food agricultural chains despite state absence (no regulatory or taxation systems), (f) poor enforcement of proprietary schemes and trading power, (g) power imbalances or inequitable food systems (oligopolies, few commodity-exporting companies, land grabbing), (h) many fragile states are overwhelmingly rural, with a high proportion earning a living out of temporary labour, (i) occurrences of long-term displaced populations, (j) economic instability and international sanctions in some cases. Those features have been put under additional stress in 2020 with the COVID-19 global health crisis and the locust plague in Africa and Middle East.

Compounded risks to food systems also compromise adequate production and transport, food access (both physical and economic), dietary diversity, food safety for a significant proportion of the population.

Therefore, humanitarian, developmental or peacebuilding solutions to those multi-factored crises cannot achieve success working in isolation or when implemented in a strictly linear approach. There needs to be greater effort to layer and sequence linkages between humanitarian, development and peace programming to ensure that immediate humanitarian needs are met, while addressing the longer-term drivers of crises through development and peace approaches. This 'nexus approach' needs to be based on a shared understanding of risks and vulnerabilities and anchored in the respective comparative advantage of humanitarian development and peace actors to reduce needs over time before, during and after crises

What, in brief, is the solution?

As the drivers of complex and protracted food crises are diverse (acting simultaneously or reinforcing each other), the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) is an innovative mechanism to tackle the root causes of food crises and promote sustainable and long-lasting solutions through (a) shared analysis and knowledge, (b) strengthened coordination in evidence-based joint responses and collective efforts across the HDP nexus, both at policy and field level.

The GNAFC offers a framework, still to be fully developed, to support existing coordination and partnerships within existing architecture and to improve joint advocacy, decision-making, policy and joint programming. Achieving these objectives involves a systematic '3x3 approach', working at the global, regional and national levels along three interlinked dimensions: 1. Understanding of food crises through consensus-based analyses and coherent monitoring systems; 2. Leveraging investments in food security and nutrition by undertaking joint planning, programming and M&E, improving

coherence across humanitarian, development and peace actions; and 3. 'Going beyond food' by enhancing coordination with actors to address the overall political, economic, societal, environmental and security drivers of food insecurity thereby contributing to sustainable food systems and reduced hunger.

At country level, the GNAFC contributes to two of the AT5 specific objectives to "Build resilience", namely (1) ensuring the functionality of food systems in areas vulnerable to conflict or disasters as the GNAFC focuses on food crises in fragile settings, and (2) promoting global action to protect food supplies from the impacts of pandemics (by working at regional and global level).

What was/ were the source(s) from which this solution emerged?

The GNAFC was launched by the European Commission, FAO and WFP at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. Since then, other resource partners and UN agencies have engaged in the Senior Steering Group that now also includes USA, UK, Canada, Netherlands, the Global Food Security and Nutrition Clusters.

In the framework of the Food Systems Summit, the European Commission has also submitted the proposal on the GNAFC as a game-changing idea, and USAID has endorsed this proposal in the Food System Summit working groups.

How can this solution address that problem?

The theory of change departs from the complex multi-causality of food crises, with several stressors and risks affecting simultaneously and sequentially the livelihoods of vulnerable households.

Poor nutrition, knowledge, access to assets, empowerment and human rights affect individual and household resilience. Thus, any solution should be multi-pronged from the beginning, including simultaneous, sequencing and layering of HDP interventions. That approach should be implemented at national level generating collective outcomes between the UN system, bilateral donors, host government and implementing CSOs; and at field level leveraging joint area-based interventions. A consensus around drivers, key leverage points and priority interventions is necessary to agree on joint goals, actions and pooled resources. .

Only joint assessments will lead to joint or joined-up interventions. To this end:

1) The GNAFC convenes stakeholders from the humanitarian, development and peace-building realms to synthesize evidence on the underlying drivers of food crises in fragile settings, including the environmental, political, economic, societal and security risks that impact upon resilience of individuals, households and communities. The GNAFC supports the development of consensus-based tools and guidelines to shape investments around the transformation and resilience of food systems in fragile contexts. Specific tools include the Global Report on Food Crises, which provides global figures of acute food insecurity; the REDDI indicators "Resilience Evidence for Decision in Development Initiative"; and FAO-WFP [Early Warning Analysis of Acute Food Insecurity Hotspots](#).

2) The GNAFC can also support countries with food crises by a) leveraging investments in food security and nutrition, and b) by promoting joint planning, programming and M&E amongst HDP actors, both at national as well as field (area-based) level. The upcoming Global Network's analysis on "Financial flows and food crises" will provide overview of the international humanitarian assistance and official development assistance to food sectors in the 54 countries identified by the Global Report on Food Crisis with the aim to inform priority areas for investment in food crises. 3) Finally, in order to create resilient food systems in fragile settings, we need to go 'beyond food' solutions by improving resilience at different levels, addressing compounded drivers of food crises and reinforcing key elements that maintain food systems functional, protect food chains and enable the most vulnerable to steer their own development pathways. To this end, the GNAFC can support a) the design of investments to build resilient food systems in fragile contexts; b) identification of anticipatory actions; d) the monitoring and assessments on conflict and food security (such as support reporting against the UNSCR 2417 on Famine and Conflict), climate extremes, gender-balanced food security statistics and social cohesion.

Why does this solution align to the definition and criteria for a 'game changing solution' developed by the Summit?

There are active and valuable coordination platforms within the humanitarian and developments communities, both within the UN system and the bilateral donors and financing institutions. Those platforms are also mirrored within the

NGOs and CSO community. On the other side, peace building/peace making initiatives have been mostly addressed by diplomatic means and through the UN peacekeeping missions.

The GNAFC posits a paradigm change and a different operational mechanism to understand and address complex food crises. Promoting a common understanding of food crises, collective outcomes, joint programmes and M&E schemes, plus generating knowledge on drivers and pathways to resilient food systems, are innovative ways to address food insecurity and build resilience in food crises.

All in all, the Global Network's systemic, multi-level, multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approach based on shared principles, expertise and institutional mandates, and articulated through a concrete roadmap constitutes a powerful change of paradigm in the triple nexus approach to food resilience.

The systems approach of the GNAFC, along with the emphasis on supporting and strengthening nexus approaches can be scaled up if and when prove successful. Those approaches, requiring many actors to be aligned, take longer than usual to plan, appraise, budget and implement, but they consolidate trust, mutual accountability and long-term institutional suitability. Moreover, co-benefits are self-evident for humanitarian and developmental actors, as well as for non-food related domains of intervention. By combining humanitarian needs-based approaches with developmental rights-based approaches, the prospects for peace and social stability can be forged, transforming the vicious circle into a virtuous spiral.

What is the current and/or likely political support for this idea

In the framework of the Food Systems Summit, the European Commission has also submitted the proposal on the GNAFC as a game-changing idea, and USAID has endorsed this proposal in the Food System Summit working groups. Other countries such as UK, Canada or The Netherlands would be supportive.

Are there certain contexts for which this solution is particularly well suited, or, conversely, contexts for which it is not well-suited at all?

The GNAFC is appropriate as a coordinating mechanism to address complex and protracted food crises. According to the latest Global Report on Food Crises, there are 55 countries currently experiencing food crises (measured by absolute or percentual figures of acute food insecure people).

What do you think are the key actions required to address this solution?

The GNAFC already exists and has financial and political support to operate in those 55 food crises. So far, the European Union is providing financial support to the GBAFC activities.. Based on the rationality unfolded above, it could be good to have a multi-donor pool of funds, operating under flexible and adaptable rules, to support HDP nexus interventions at three levels (the "3*3").

At policy level, the GNAFC 's Senior Steering Group could be enriched and expanded to include International Financial Institutions that have strong interests in food crises and fragile settings, as well as other UN agencies that work across the HDP nexus and have signed off the OECD HDP guidelines.

Along the lines of the inclusive mechanism of the Committee of World Food Security (CFS), the Global Network could incorporate representatives from the private sector and the civil society, as well as from the UN Peace keeping Operations.