

## Review Article

# What Effects Does Food Aid Have in Ending Food Poverty?

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**Abstract:** In today's world, many people suffer from hunger due to food scarcity. This phenomenon is often observed in developing countries and is fueled by factors such as conflict and climate change. However, hunger crises can also occur in developed countries, as seen in the UK. In this article, I aim to examine the impact of food aid on reducing food poverty in a specific manner, focusing on Burundi and the United Kingdom. While there are numerous organizations worldwide that tirelessly provide food aid, it is clear that aid alone cannot end food poverty. People cannot rely on aid indefinitely. Food aid is crucial in emergency situations, but aid agencies should also consider changing their strategies. They should prioritize teaching the targeted population how to improve their agricultural techniques, enabling them to overcome such circumstances with the support of their governments.

**Keywords:** Burundi, U.K., food, poverty.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is hard to believe that at a time there has never been so much wealth produced on earth, millions of people are still living in extreme poverty. Although there are many different types of poverty, I am going to talk more specifically about food poverty which is commonly defined as the inability to acquire or consume an adequate or sufficient quantity of food to meet the energy and nutrient needs of its body. In spite of the numerous existing food aids and their daily and recurrent actions trying to end to this problem, the current world context does not favor the progression of the reduction of food poverty and on the contrary increases it. The current war in Ukraine is causing millions of African families to starve and food insecurity for millions of people in developed countries due to inflation. Globalization has made countries interdependent for food and a conflict in a specific region of the world can quickly steer millions into food poverty. Global warming is making agricultural production more and more difficult and this is likely to get worse in the years to come.

The global context of successive crises makes food aid indispensable to meet the food needs of millions of hungry people. How can we explain that food poverty on such a scale still exists in the 21st century? Why is the global balance in terms of food poverty still so fragile today? These multiple questions lead me to legitimately

ask myself what are the effects of food aid on the end of food poverty?

Many food aid programs exist, they can come from religious organizations, local charities or international organizations. Since my subject is the question of the end of food poverty in the world, I have chosen to talk mainly about international food aid agencies such as UNICEF and the World Food Programme, which have been working on a large scale to feed millions of people every year for decades to reduce food poverty. I will analyze the kind of methods they use to help countries facing food poverty, the benefits and limits of their help.

In order to analyze the impact of food aid on the reduction of food poverty in a concrete manner, I decided to study the more specifically effect of food aid in Burundi and in the United Kingdom. These two developing and developed countries have in common to be confronted with the problem of food poverty. In order to draw conclusions on the role of food aid in ending food poverty in general, I had to study two countries with very different profiles, even opposite. In one case food poverty is structural and corresponds to a long-term problem, whereas in the other case food poverty has developed due to circumstances over the last ten years. I have made the choice of studying the extent of the food

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poverty crisis and of the food aid provided in each country, the way the help of food aid is perceived before evaluating the impact of food aid on the reduction of food poverty in the concerned country and drawing more global conclusion on our research subject.

### **Concept and types of Food Aid**

Initially, the term "food assistance" refers to the shipment of in-kind food supplies from the United States to areas with the greatest need. A more general phrase for in-kind food commodities, such as food aid and market-based initiatives to fight hunger and malnutrition, is "food assistance." Food aid benefits a nation or region experiencing a food shortage by providing necessary food commodities. It comprises two primary parts, and the most fundamental of which deals with giving access to food in times of need, such as during a conflict like a war or right after a natural disaster. Another option is longer-term food assistance. The causes and effects of poverty include inequality, marginalisation, conflicts, hunger, malnutrition, and stunting; inadequate healthcare, particularly for mothers and children; lack of access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene; climate change; a lack of education; subpar public works; and inappropriate infrastructure. The poverty categories most actively battled by food aid are rural, situational, and generational poverty. With financial assistance, significant corporations will move a portion of their operations abroad. The businesses' construction of factories, laying of roads, and installation of internet connections aid in the development of the supported nations. Providing financial assistance to other nations is known as aid. Aid for agricultural development is an effective means of assisting people in meeting their food needs, particularly in countries where most people depend on agriculture for a living because it constitutes a long term action. The phenomenon enables individuals in developing nations to boost the agricultural sectors' productivity.

Program, project, and emergency food aid are the three main categories. Food produced in a wealthy nation is sent to the government of the recipient nation as programme food aid. Almost all programme of food aid is commercialised or sold on the marketplaces of recipient nations to make money. Emergency food assistance programmes help those afflicted by armed conflict and natural disasters, especially refugees, by saving lives, alleviating suffering, and promoting quick recovery.

### **Food aid reason for being**

The lack of new technologies encountered in most African countries remarkably affects agricultural production. Climate change has come to worsen a situation that was already critical. Low production and increase of population in the world are the situations that generate the food shortage and implicate the former colonisers to bring the food aid. Increased infant and child mortality among those who are already

malnourished or living in poverty and spending a sizeable portion of their daily income on food are just a few examples of the profound effects that rising food costs have had on people's lives livelihoods. Financial restrictions imposed by deprivation encourage people to choose cheap, high-energy staple foods, particularly carbohydrates and fats, rather than nutrient-dense foods.

Food aid is currently considered a synonym for the resilience of African poverty. It does not mean that Africa is the only continent to experience food shortage, but it is the most affected while talking of food aid. Reasons are diversified, and each country has its proper explanation. Even though common reasons for the African continent to be confused to food shortage and food aid exist. The main reason is the colonisation that mostly targeted this old continent, rich in terms of natural resources. The old masters from the west part of the globe convinced the rest of the world that Africa lacks civilisation and for so, they divided it into their properties as they wished. They could not follow the standard protocol. They called it the spread of culture, yet it was pure colonisation. After dividing the land and other resources of the conquered countries, they decided to take out all the found natural resources to their respective countries. They became rich, and they did not require any amount of financial or human capital.

Local people were used freely and without their minimum consideration as human beings. They forced them to do their work without claiming any payment; they only survived those whose health was at their top. These so-called masters could not give their forced workers medicines, food and drinking water. They did it for an extended period reaching more than a half-century which affected the economies of the African countries. This phenomenon happened when the rest of the world was developing. Nowadays, their development level proves that even African countries were subject to development if there was no colonisation. The human resources that were made to build their countries found themselves on track to western countries to make them slaves and work in factories exploiting the natural resources taken from their respective African countries. The slavery phenomenon affected the economies of African countries. Later, in the '60s, different dignitaries' sons of Africa decided to fight back for their freedom in the independence movement. It cost them a high price paid in finances and human lives. The so-called masters realised they could not survive the revolution instigated by the elder sons of Africa; they made falsified contacts that will continue to connect them to their old slave countries until today. They ensured they had parted on every production of the tortured populations in post-colonisation times or neo-colonialism. This is the natural origin of the food shortage in most African countries. What makes it a waste is when the western countries that caused all these troubles are the ones to pretend to help their former slaves with food aid. Food aid is not the solution to rescue the African populations because they

need the techniques and technologies through quality education to manage themselves to produce according to their respective people and think of exporting the extra production to other countries. Food aid incarnates in itself the spirit of creating laziness in the population because they think once the food is required, aid will supply it to the necessity. In the following part, the discussion will rely on the impact of food aid in Burundi.

### **Impact of food aid in Burundi**

Ranked at the top of the poor countries, Burundi has an area equal to 28,834 square km with an estimated population of 12 million according to UN estimates. The poverty that plagues the country is due in particular to the cyclical wars that the country has gone through. The majority of the country's poor are in rural areas, where 90 percent of people rely heavily on subsistence agriculture and informal employment.

Indeed, since the year of independence, 1962, Burundi has never been stable for a period of 20 successive years. And of course, instead of focusing on development, leaders have always focused on security. The population has never had an education on development. Moreover, Burundians still practice ancient agriculture, no any modernization step. This also contributes to the poverty observed in the country. Farmers often live on a small income, which also means they have little capital to invest in improved farming techniques or equipment, such as fertilizer.

Despite recent efforts by development actors in Burundi, there is still a long way to go. The problems that haunt the development sector in Burundi are numerous and are due to different causes. In general, they are due to the lack of good leadership of the leaders because when it comes a period of political stability, there's no tangible progress.

According to World Food Programme (WFP), in Burundi, food insecurity levels are alarming with 52 percent of children under 5 stunted and even higher levels of malnutrition among rural communities.

WFP specifies also that some of the drivers of food insecurity in Burundi include poverty, rapid population growth, vulnerability to climate-related shocks, poor access to clean water, and worsening access to basic services such as health and education. A high prevalence of infectious diseases, lack of diversity in diets and poor hygiene make the situation worse.

### **Does recurrent food aid have a positive impact in Burundi?**

This is an important question that everyone may ask. It has been several years that international organizations working in food aid sector have been present in Burundi. In the sector of fighting against hunger and poverty, UNICEF and the World Food Programme are very well known in Burundi. Many

projects for fighting against hunger have been implemented by the two organizations. Since the 90s, they have been in the country carrying out such projects. We note the importance of their contributions but, in reality, there is no remarkable progress in the eradication of hunger.

It is difficult or even impossible for a country to get developed only via aid that comes from outside. It is better to highlight the cooperation that can help a country by teaching the population the practical methods of fighting against hunger and poverty instead of always bringing them food.

For instance, as it is said by WFP, in order to serve healthy meals in primary schools to ensure children's physical and intellectual growth. The program intends to feed primary school students and is old more than 20 years. It helps children from vulnerable families, but the question we ask ourselves is whether it will stay that way for all the time. The implementation of a policy by the government of Burundi to strengthen the economic autonomy of families so that they can thrive without having to ask for food aid every day is necessary.

In short, while there are many reasons for the poverty in Burundi, there have also been a number of proposed remedies. The government has established Vision 2025 in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and the African Future Institute and is seeking to reduce poverty to 33 percent by that year. The plan focuses on everything from sustainable land use to better governance and social cohesion. The government has also expanded various child protection measures and, in 2005, made primary education free. In addition, UNICEF has passed out nets laced with insecticide in an effort to fight malaria in Burundi and has helped the country expand its school infrastructure, including building 387 classrooms.

There is no doubt that many of the reasons for poverty in Burundi are serious and that food aid is not the cause. However, they would benefit from more support to the government of Burundi through long-term solutions to help it become self-sufficient in feeding its people. The new government of Burundi is aware that it has its work cut out for it and seems to be taking appropriate measures to rectify the situation on all fronts.

Unfortunately food poverty is also present in developing countries, admittedly in a smaller extent than in African countries such as Burundi, but it is important to highlight that food poverty is not only a problem concerning developing countries. For this reason, it is also relevant to evaluate the effect food aids have on ending food poverty in a developed country like the United Kingdom.

In December 2020 UNICEF had to intervene to feed children in the United Kingdom. It was the first time

in 70-year history since its foundation that the United Nation agency helped to finance food parcels for 1,800 families hard hit by coronavirus crisis in Southwark, south London.

But this situation of extreme poverty is not a new fact in the country. Covid-19 outbreak has only exacerbated the food poverty crisis in the United Kingdom by making a bigger part of the British population more vulnerable to food insecurity. As a matter of fact, a report from UNICEF published in June 2015 indicated that Great Britain has the highest number of children living in food poverty in Europe.

### **Does emergency food aid have had a positive impact in the United Kingdom?**

If we have a look on the food insecurity evolution in the United Kingdom since the UNICEF intervention in late 2020, food poverty in the UK has continued to increase: 5 million people in the UK lived in food poverty between 2019 – 2020, according to the Governments latest Family Resources Survey that is to say 8% of the population. Data from The Food Foundation suggested that food insecurity level rose to 9% of the population in January 2021. One year later, in February 2022, The Guardian published an article stated that 10% of the households were facing food insecurity: “Altogether, nearly one in 10 UK households reported experiencing some degree of food insecurity over the past month – defined as skipping meals, going hungry or not eating for a whole day – because they were unable to afford food.”

### **The benefits and limitations of short-term food aid**

Initiatives for community and economic development may receive indirect support or incentives from food aid. Food aid enhances food security by offering a means of defence and techniques to improve the dietary status, nutrition, and consumption of the underprivileged. When it comes to empowering kids with the information and life skills they need to realise their full potential, in this perspective, quality education links to the benefits of food aid.

As example of World Food Programme (WFP) successful action for ending food poverty, WFP has made it possible for 300 million fewer hungry people now than in the 90's. To combat child hunger, WFP has provided free midday meals to nearly 20 million children each year in schools around the world since the late 1960s. In addition to providing children with the assurance of a meal each day, school meals encourage poor families to send their children to school. Furthermore, in a growing number of countries, WFP is transferring responsibility for school feeding programs to partner governments and communities: over the past 45 years, 38 countries have taken over WFP school feeding programs.

In addition, the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to WFP "for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to improving conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for its leadership in preventing the use of hunger as a weapon of war" also shows how essential is the action of WFP.

Statistics for UNICEF's twenty-five-year history reveal admittedly only a facet of the constructive work accomplished, but they provide some indication of its scope: Vaccination help for millions of children, creation of health centers and maternity wards established in eighty-five countries; help given to provide equipment for primary and secondary schools, pre-vocational training schools, schools for training pre-vocational instructors, equipment supplied for school gardens and canteens; ; supplementary meals dispensed in the billions and articles of clothing in the high millions; emergency aid furnished to hundreds of thousands victimized by floods, earthquakes, and other natural disasters.

However, several evidences show the limitations of food aid direct action on ending food poverty. In short, it has been proven that aid is an aid, and it can never replace the self-production. The gains of short-term food aid on countries it assists in addressing food poverty issues are mixed.

Food aid organizations have a double role: They have a physical and material role to bring food to people in the emergency but they also have a political role to encourage the States to implement measures to solve the problem of hunger in its country.

First of all, a very accurate proverb from Confucius says: "When a man is hungry, it is better to teach him to fish than to give him a fish". In this sense, feeding people directly as food aid organizations do only addresses the surface problem, but it is not really the key for reducing food poverty in the world in a sustainable way and achieve the zero-hunger goal. Food aid agencies should change strategies by teaching more the targeted population how to develop their agricultural techniques.

Often the countries that have recourse to food aid have the necessary resources to feed their populations (South Africa, United Kingdom) and we see in parallel that there is a problem of politics and government that does not put in place or few ineffective measures to solve the problem of hunger in the long term. Couldn't we wonder wether food aid wouldn't indirectly prevent the assisted country from trying to solve the problem internally. This then leads us to ask whether food aid organizations are making the countries they help dependent on their action.

Shouldn't UNICEF and WFP teach a country how to feed its population rather than directly feeding it? Feeding the population directly encourages inaction by

the government which says to itself "what interest do I have in acting and spending money and energy if food aid agencies are there to feed my population?" This constitutes a real and problematic vicious circle.

Some countries are highly dependent from the international financial, humanitarian and food aid for many years. In Afghanistan for example, nearly 75% of the country's budget and public spending came from foreign aid grants. Before August 2021, Afghanistan was already experiencing some of the worst food insecurity in the world due to the years of war devastating the country and the numerous droughts that destroyed the agricultural production on which the country depends at 60% to feed its population. Around 14 millions of Afghans were suffering from hunger that is to say one in three person and around 2 millions of children in 2020. Since the Taliban's came to power, Afghanistan no longer receives food aid and as a direct consequence 23 million of Afghans, including 3.2 million children under the age of 5, are currently suffering from hunger (According to the FAO and WFP).

In this extent, it is highlighted that sustainable short term aid finally, unconsciously, participate in maintaining political inaction and mismanagement of these governments.

Another limit caused by direct food aid is that direct food aid delivers by food aid agencies do not always benefit the people for whom it is intended because of the often very high rate of corruption in the country being assisted. As a result of corruption, local politicians may use help for personal benefit or political advantage.

The report titled "STOLEN FUTURES: The impact of corruption on children in Africa" focuses on the direct consequences of corrupt behaviors of service providers in the health and education sectors on children and their families. The report also highlights the impact of illicit financial flows (IFFs) on children. Illicit Financial Flows can be defined as "money that is illegally earned, transferred or utilized originating from activities including bribery and theft by corrupt government officials." and can result from tax evasion or trade miss-invoicing or money laundering. In 2018, the OECD estimated that US\$80 billion are lost annually in Africa due to IFFs.

Corruption constitutes a really huge problem because if they are properly managed, government budgets offer the largest scope for investment since they constitute the principal source of finance available to any country. Grand corruption typically results in loss of large amounts of money, resources that could otherwise be invested in better infrastructure, systems and services for children.

As highlighted by Dr Violet Odala, Children and the Law Programme Manager from African Child Policy Forum, "it is necessary to combat corruption, wastage of resources and overall inefficiency in public services through concrete and effective measures taken by the governments such as enhancing transparency and accountability".

Although all African Union member ratified the Article 4 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, agreeing to "undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention...to the maximum extent of their available resources". In General Comment 19 specifies the states parties' obligation to end corruption and mismanagement of public resources, and to increase budget transparency so that sufficient resources are made available to spend on the rights of the child.

Acting against corruption is imperative to achieving the adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to end poverty, and ensure prosperity for all. Every country must adopt the principles of transparency, accountability and good governance. Break the culture of corruption and impunity is a fundamental goal to achieve for ending food poverty.

Food aid may have several negative impacts at the household, community or national level, but the three most common issues are:

- Food aid can lead to reliance;
- Food aid can destabilise the expansion of local markets and agriculture;
- Food aid can mess up and disrupt trade patterns;

Other potential problems caused by direct and short-term food aid include inadequate shelter, clothing, and food; unsafe water supply; and increased diarrheal disease among children. Such assistance may lower prices and reduce the income of rural farmers in the recipient countries by boosting the local food supply. Additionally, it deters domestic production. Since the impoverished are frequently concentrated in rural regions, food assistance may unfairly harm the poor.

Kenyan economist James Shikwati said in an interview with *Der Spiegel* in 2005 that "aid to Africa does more harm than good" and that "Africans are being pushed to be beggars, not to be independent". According to him, food aid increases corruption because local politicians have the opportunity to steal part of the aid to bribe voters, to export the aid to developed countries for a profit. He stated that the WFP responds too easily to calls from corrupt governments, and provides too much food aid leading to a reduction in production by local farmers because "no one can compete with the UN World Food Programme".

Aware of this food aid misappropriation problem, from the 2000s, the WFP rethought its action and, in parallel with emergency food aid, developed the notion of food assistance, which aims, through multi-year plans, to provide more sustainable solutions by integrating structural actions. Some of the in-kind donations were replaced by cash donations, in order to "empower individuals to provide for their own food needs". Its aid catalog is enriched with actions other than strict food aid, by identifying and targeting the weak points of a region's food systems. An example from Niger shows how the purchase of food from small local producers is accompanied by the provision of inputs, equipment and access to technical training.

Even though food aid agencies are trying to develop food assistance measures, we have observed that food aid agencies help countries facing food poverty mainly through short term methods although this kind of help has several and important limits. Indeed, if we look at the results of an increase in food poverty in the countries it assists, it appears that food aid agencies action are emergency and short-term actions that does not always encourage the governments of the countries it assists to take concrete action afterwards to solve the problem of food poverty in depth.

Now we have analyzed the benefits and limits of short term food aid provided by food aid agencies in order to end food poverty we can wonder why food aid agencies mostly use short term help rather than using long term help?

### **The primary function of the different food aid agencies when they were established**

To have a better understanding of the effects food aids have on ending food poverty and to understand why UNICEF and WFP are mostly using shorter-term solutions to face food poverty it is first necessary to understand the primary function of the different food aid agencies when they were established. What type of action were two major food aid programs such as World Food Programme and UNICEF intended to provide when they were created?

Let's talk first about the World Food Programme (WFP). The World Food Programme is the food aid agency of the United Nations and the FAO. WFP is the largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger in the world by distributing food assistance among people in fragile settings who, either permanently or during crisis periods, are unable to produce enough food or do not otherwise have the resources to provide enough food for themselves or families. Each year, WFP provides assistance to 80 million people in nearly 80 countries.

Created by the United Nation and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) resolutions in 1961, WFP was originally a three-year humanitarian program.

The original idea of this program was to feed hungry developing countries with surplus food from developed countries. In 1965, the WFP was no longer a temporary program, and became a permanent program of the UN and the FAO.

Now let's talk about the UNICEF. UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) was established in 1946 to provide supplies and assistance to children after World War II, regardless of the role their country had played in the war. UNICEF began as a temporary UN relief fund before becoming a permanent UN agency in 1953. The words "International" and "Emergency" were dropped from the official name but the acronym "UNICEF" was retained. "Emergency" disappeared because it was known that UNICEF was not only destined to act over time due to the magnitude of the need, but that its role would evolve to address not only emergency needs but also to participate in sustainable poverty reduction.

UNICEF has always worked to protect the rights and well-being of all children, wherever they are and wherever they live. UNICEF is a United Nations agency that has also evolved in its goals and missions to meet changing needs:

For the post-war period, from 1946 to 1950, the "emergency needs approach" meant rapid action to meet the food, clothing and health needs of children, particularly in Europe. After 1950, the fund shifted its focus to general programs to improve the welfare of children, particularly in less developed countries and in a variety of emergency situations.

During the period 1951-1960, UNICEF continued to meet emergency needs, but at the same time moved into the long-range benefit approach. To protect the health of children, UNICEF conducted campaigns against tuberculosis, yaws, leprosy, and malaria; made provisions for environmental sanitation; encouraged maternal and child health care education. To raise nutritional standards for children, UNICEF helped countries produce and distribute low-cost, high-protein foods and fostered programs to educate people in their use.

UNICEF expanded its policy during the 1961-1970 period by adopting a concept of allying aid for children to the development of the nation. UNICEF grew into a vocal advocate of children's rights. In recognition of the interconnection between aspects of national policy and programs of aid to children, this approach, called the "country approach," permitted UNICEF to implement in appropriate ways the priorities established by each nation in meeting the needs of its children. UNICEF provided assistance for teacher education and curriculum reform, allocated funds for pre-vocational training in usable skills, promoted information on the uses of technology. UNICEF projects, in short, reflected a comprehensive

view of the child, seeing him as “a future agent for economic and social change.”

In the decade of the seventies, UNICEF will attempt to elevate the quality of life of children in the developing nations, coordinating its efforts with those of the governments concerned with complementary support from international, multinational, and nongovernmental agencies.

There is no doubt that both WFP and UNICEF, originally temporary food aids organizations, were originally established to provide emergency aids. It explains one of the reasons explaining why these food aid organizations mostly used short term methods to help countries facing food poverty.

### **The new role and new explicit mission of UNICEF and WFP: acting to achieve the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Over the years UNICEF and WFP roles have changed to meet longer-term goals and consequently adopted more long-term policies and specifically since 2015 that is to say since all United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They emphasize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

All UN agencies are acting to meet the 17 Sustainable Development Goals such as the eradication of poverty in all its forms, everywhere in the world; the elimination of hunger, ensure food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; enable all people to live in good health, and promote well-being for all at all ages; ensure equitable, inclusive, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. UNICEF and WFP are two of the UN agencies helping to face poverty in a sustainable way together.

Now, the annual High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development serves as the central UN platform for the follow-up and review of the SDGs. Today, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) provides substantive support and capacity-building for the SDGs. In order to make the 2030 Agenda a reality, broad ownership of the SDGs must translate into a strong commitment by all stakeholders to implement the global goals. DSDG aims to help facilitate this engagement and thus plays a key role.

The World Food Programme’s (WFP) implements the SDG’s. Indeed, the WFP Strategic Plan which sets the organization’s course for the next four years, is grounded within renewed global commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The vision for 2030 underlying WFP’s strategic plan is that the world has eradicated food insecurity and malnutrition (SDG 2 – Zero Hunger) and that national and global actors have achieved the SDGs (SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals).

The Strategic Plan of WFP emphasizes the inter-connectedness of the SDGs, highlighting that WFP’s activities also contribute towards and depend on other Goals.

The creation of the SDG’s for the United Nation agencies and their partners is recent and the UN food aid agencies such as UNICEF and WFP use longer term policies in a more systematic and effective way since they have the explicit mission to do it. It is therefore another reason explaining why the different food aid programs mostly provided short term aids to countries they were helping in the past and the mixed record on the effectiveness of food aid in reducing food poverty.

Now I have explained the link connecting the two main food aid agencies to the United Nations and the recent sustainable development goals they must now reach through long-term methods, I can question the role of food aid and its degree of power in ending food poverty since the adopted SDGs in 2015?

### **Food aid’s power to put the food poverty issue back on the political agenda**

By providing direct help to feed the population of a country facing food poverty it can make the government aware of the critical food poverty situation its population is facing and thus drive the government of the assisted country to act. Using the example of food aid provided by UNICEF in the United Kingdom, this intervention caused critical reactions among members of the British government. First of all, we can talk about Jacob Rees-Mogg, the Commons leader, who said that this help of UNICEF is a “real scandal”, he characterized UNICEF’s support as “playing politics” and has even said that the UN agency should be “ashamed of itself” for this political stunt before listing all actions the government has done to reduce child poverty in Great-Britain since 2010.

Now let’s have a second point of view of UNICEF’s intervention and in this way we will talk about the reaction of Labour’s deputy leader, Angela Rayner. She said: “The fact that Unicef is having to step in to feed our country’s hungry children is a disgrace and Boris Johnson should be ashamed.”[...] “We are one of the richest countries in the world. Our children should not have to rely on humanitarian charities that are used

to operating in war zones and in response to natural disasters.” When Richard Burgon, also member of Labour Party in the United Kingdom said: “Charities and businesses across the country have done a brilliant job stepping in where the government has failed, but it should have never come to this.”, it calls into question if it’s normal that such a country and a city as rich as London comes to this extreme point ?

In reaction of UNICEF intervention the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, commissioned Henry Dimbleby to conduct an independent review to help the UK government create its first National Food Strategy for 75 years. This report is a masterly study of UK’s food problem. The first part of the report contains urgent recommendations to support the UK through the problem caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. It focuses on making sure a generation of our most disadvantaged children do not get left behind, and grasping the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to decide what kind of trading nation the UK want to be. The second part of this report, published in July 2021, focuses its researches on strategies to transform the way England produces, sources and consumes to cut down on food poverty and improve health across the country. Experts are aiming to make healthy food accessible and affordable to everyone, protect the food system from future shocks such as pandemics or the climate crisis and ensure the way to get food without damaging the environment.

In this case we can see that UNICEF's intervention has had the beneficial effect of putting the problem of food poverty of the British population back on the political agenda and reviving discussions on this problem that the British government had ignored for years.

However, the actions of Boris Johnson's government have not followed Henry Dimbleby's recommendations and have instead taken measures that have not reduced food poverty since two years after the intervention of food aid in the United Kingdom, the food insecurity in the UK has increased and the Food Foundation is still calling on the Government to make tackling food insecurity central to the levelling up agenda: "The Levelling Up white paper commits to boosting productivity, pay and job security but does not commit to reducing food insecurity rates. Food insecurity is a vital measure if we are to monitor severe material deprivation. It contributes not only to health inequalities and life expectancy, but also social wellbeing.” (Anna Taylor, Executive Director of The Food Foundation).

The action of food aid organizations cannot replace the action of the government. For this reason a longer-term solution taken by the british government is needed and is the only way to tackle the root causes of food poverty so that no more child go hungry in this

developed country that has the financial means and food resources to end food poverty in its country.

### **The dependence of food aid organizations on the will of the States limits their capacity to end food poverty**

Another illustration that shows that food aid organizations have limited power on ending food poverty is that these organizations remain extremely dependent on the will of states:

WFP and UNICEF are part of the United Nations action for reducing food poverty but the United Nations are not as important as we could believe because this international organization can only do what countries ask the United Nations to do. The action of the food aid agencies mandated by the United Nations depends on the will of its member states which often used the United Nations for their own selfish goals and interests. Because the United Nations are instrumentalized by certain member states, it contributes to prevent the United Nations from achieving the sustainable development goals the United Nations have set for and want to achieve and to limit the food aid agencies actions.

The food aid organizations actions are not only limited because of different political will and interests but are also limited by financial contributions. As a matter of fact, to achieve sustainable development goal of zero hunger in the world, it is required to make big financial means available to food aid organizations. WFP as well as UNICEF operates with voluntary contributions primarily from member states. Even though food aid agencies have a power to act through long term solutions and are mandated to achieve the goal of zero hunger, they do not necessarily have the means to achieve this ambitious goal and to implement long-term solutions they would like to. The actions of other existing sources of food aid such as church organization, privates or religious charities, donations are also dependent from the amount of money the people give. Food aid organizations are thus limited in their power to act as well as in their means of action.

Besides, each country has the sovereign authority to set its own national poverty reduction goal. Thus, the primary responsibility of ending food poverty in a country remains with the country itself, and food aid cannot substitute for the country's government's efforts to reduce hunger in a sustainable manner. Food aid agencies and organizations cannot forcibly interfere to provide food aid and long term solutions in order to end food poverty in a country.

## **CONCLUSION**

The extent of food poverty in the world requires the action of food aid organizations and their work remain essential. The objectives the food aid agencies display are remarkable and they provide praiseworthy efforts. However, the benefits of the colossal action of food aid agencies in the countries in need are not necessarily felt because they mostly acted through short



term actions and in an infinite way that does not encourage governments to take charge and put an end to food poverty, whereas the United Nations objectives require long term actions.

Food aid helps to end food poverty, but food aid cannot by itself end the problem. Therefore, food aid organizations cannot be blamed for the limited benefits of their efforts on ending food poverty.

First, food aid cannot end food poverty because food aid agencies do not always have the political and financial capacity to do as much as they could and would like to. Second, food aid can substitute for government action to reduce food insecurity in the country but only in the short term. We have seen a perverse effect caused by food aid on the governments it assists for decades. Thirdly, this direct food aid must remain emergency aid, but it must be rapidly transformed into long-term aid in order to give the necessary keys to the leaders of the countries to succeed in feeding the population of their country in a sustainable and autonomous way. This brings us back again to the Chinese proverb that says: "When a man is hungry, it is better to teach him to fish than to give him a fish". In this sense, feeding people directly as food aid organizations do only addresses the surface problem, but it is not really the key for ending food poverty in the world in a sustainable way and achieve the zero-hunger goal.

If food aid agencies should change strategies by teaching more the targeted population how to develop their agricultural techniques, how to invest in public infrastructures, schools, etc., only the government of the country can solve the problem of poverty in its roots by taking concrete policy measures. The role of food aid agencies should be more an accompaniment role in the management, acquisition and production of resources to prevent emergency food aid from dragging on.

However, food aid is not the cause of poverty in a country, the main responsible for the perpetuation of poverty in a country is the government of the country being helped itself, because, to quote Richard Burgon, "poverty is a political choice".

The end of food poverty in the world will be made possible when the governments of countries facing food poverty will demonstrate a real political will to end this problem, by putting an end to corruption for example. Food aid will play a really effective role in ending food poverty by accompanying these governments in their transition and giving them the keys to achieve food sovereignty.

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