

## **Appendix 4: HIV/ AIDS, Conflict and food insecurity**

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## **HIV/AIDS**

In many countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, HIV/AIDS has devastated the capacity of rural households to maintain a viable livelihood. A study in Tanzania, for instance, showed that while almost one third (32%) of households were directly affected by HIV/AIDS, a similar proportion (29%) had been affected through ripple effects such as fostering of orphans, providing labour or cash to help care for sick individuals and assisting other members of affected households.<sup>1</sup>

HIV/AIDS is a deadly threat in its own right but at the same time heightens rural household's vulnerability to weather hazard. HIV/AIDS impacts on productive members of rural households by undermining their ability to work. Household incomes and assets are drained to fund medical care and living expenses, shrinking livelihood opportunities, increasing poverty and reducing the capacity to absorb disaster losses. The death of household members also interrupts the inter-generational transfer of skills and knowledge which increases future vulnerability. As more and more households are affected by HIV and AIDS related illnesses, the networks and support mechanisms that initially provide support, at all levels from the household to the national level are stretched. Usually the poorest households in the most remote areas are more vulnerable, with least access to treatment and medical or financial support.

At the same time, rural households impoverished by disaster losses are more vulnerable to HIV infection. Evidence confirms a strong link between malnutrition and susceptibility to infection by HIV. Women are more susceptible to HIV infection than men, due to both biological and cultural reasons. Inadequate nutrition of mothers can raise the risks of mother-to-child transmission via pregnancy, birth or breast feeding.

## **Food security and market shocks**

According to FAO, by September 2008 rising prices had plunged an additional 75 million people below the hunger threshold, bringing the estimated number of undernourished people worldwide to 923 million.<sup>2</sup> **Error! Reference source not found.** describes in more detail some of the causes of the 2008 speculative rise in food prices.

### **Global food insecurity**

Whereas in the recent past food insecurity generally concerned the least developed countries, particularly those in conflict and facing uncertain weather patterns, concerns about sustainable food supplies are now global. In 2007 and 2008, the price of many basic grains such as corn, wheat and rice reached record levels. According to the World Economic Forum,<sup>3</sup> food insecurity is now at the centre of a global nexus of risks, including disaster risk, energy prices, declining water quality and quantity, interstate and civil wars and global financial instability and is shaped by drivers that include population increases and lifestyle changes, biofuel production and climate change. In this web of global risks, shocks and crisis become inter-linked. The more vulnerable the whole, the more a crisis in any one risk sector will have ripple effects in other sectors. Food insecurity is critical for the poor who spend a greater percentage of their income on food and therefore suffer more when prices increase.

The run on rice prices in 2008 exemplifies the complexity of the food insecurity issue.<sup>4</sup> World rice production in 2007 was at an all-time high, with 2008 forecast to set another record, while world rice stocks have remained fairly steady at 17-18% of world consumption in recent years. Between November 2007 and April 2008, however, the price of rice almost tripled to US\$ 907 per ton with a dramatic impact on the rural poor. A recent paper by World Bank economists indicated that contrary to popular opinion, the cause of the price increase was not rising food demand in China or India, but a combination of other factors: rising energy and fertilizer prices in the context of a falling dollar, government policies encouraging the production of biofuels and restrictions in exports by major producing countries, driven by a concern to secure adequate domestic supplies and forestall price increases. The price increase particularly affects the rural poor. In Indonesia, for example, 72% of the rural poor are net rice buyers and it is estimated that a 10% rise in rice prices reduces the real value of expenditure of the poorest decile of the population by 2%.

Food price rises have a significant impact on poor rural households that no longer produce enough food to cover their subsistence needs and must buy a proportion from local markets. Having to spend more on food increases poverty and also increases the probability of disaster impacts translating into poverty outcomes. The risk of sudden increases in food prices would appear to be linked to irregularities in global supply, including due to major disasters and the use of agricultural land for the production of biofuels or a range of speculative and protective measures, which cause food to be withdrawn from the market. For example, in Bangladesh in

<sup>1</sup> Rugalema G., 1999, cited in Harvey, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2008b

<sup>3</sup> Global Risk Network of the World Economic Forum, 2008

<sup>4</sup> Brahmhatt and Christiaensen, 2008

1974-1975 major flooding led to exaggerated predictions of a poor rice harvest, in turn causing excessive quantities of rice to be withdrawn from the market and stored, for either precautionary or speculative purposes. A minor shortfall became a massive shortfall in market supplies. Prices rose rapidly to levels that were unaffordable by the poor leading to the deaths of up to 1.5 million people. Landless labourers, especially agricultural workers, were worst affected because they were entirely dependent on the market for their staple food.

**Error! Reference source not found.** describes another example where a food crisis was not caused by a bad harvest.

#### **Niger food crises<sup>5</sup>**

The 2005 Niger food crisis is an extreme manifestation of how structural problems and negative socio-economic conditions in populated countries such as Niger can create a risk nexus in the region.

Food production records for 2005 show a cereal shortfall of 9% or 250,000 tonnes in Niger mainly due to drought and locust infestations in 2004-2005. According to Oxfam, the Niger 2004 harvest was in fact not the lowest the country experienced in past years. It was only 11% below the 5-year average and food was available in the region during the crisis.

However, cereal shortage increased to about 16% due to a fall in purchasing capacity, especially among agro-pastoral populations who were isolated from trading networks and highly dependent on cereal traders especially near the Nigerian border. Weak socio-economic and political structures underpinned the very high vulnerability of these particular groups who were worst affected.<sup>6</sup> High market prices and increasing poverty (which increased from 40% of the population below poverty line in 1990 to 66% in 2004) provoked the food crisis in Niger even though food was available for purchase.

Eventually, some 12 million people needed food aid in Niger and the surrounding region, with about 800,000 children affected.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Conflict**

The 2005 MDG Report identifies conflict as a major challenge to achieving the MDGs and establishes a clear link between conflict, poverty and disasters: *Efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger are frequently set back by conflict and natural disasters. Hunger and poverty, in turn, can provide fertile ground for conflict, especially when combined with factors such as inequality, and make being prepared to cope with disasters more difficult.*<sup>8</sup>

Conflict devastates livelihoods and increases vulnerability to other hazards, by reducing available labour, through the injury and death of household members and the depletion of financial and social capital. Conflict destroys market, agricultural and health systems, as well as the economic and governance systems that provide employment, credit bases, insurance schemes and markets for produce and household items. It destroys essential and non-essential services, including early warning capacities, health care and disaster response. It also displaces people from their homes and communities, while the deliberate destruction of society fragments communities and social safety nets<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, disaster risk and livelihood vulnerability increase conflict risk. Both disasters and stressed livelihood practices can also create and fuel conflict. Countries with limited per capita availability of cropland and/or renewable fresh water were found to be one and a half times more likely to experience civil conflict between 1970 and 2000.<sup>10</sup> While disputes over access to resources are rarely the product of scarcity alone, they frequently aggravate other economic, ecological and political tensions and may become emblematic of such tensions. Land-related threats to traditional rural livelihoods, such as disputes over farmland distribution or the settlement of outsiders in traditional ethnic homelands also feature prominently in the evolution of recent civil conflicts. The conflicts in Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia, for example, have all had a resource component.<sup>11</sup> As such conflict is often endogenous to contexts of rural poverty, disaster risk and livelihood vulnerability. Drought, environmental degradation and desertification, have all prominently, fuelled conflicts in Central and East Africa.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Contribution from Mohammed Abchir, UNDP-BCPR, Geneva

<sup>6</sup> Humanitarian Practice Network at: <http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=2793> )

<sup>7</sup> BBC at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4699643.stm>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, 2005

<sup>9</sup> Lautze, 1997a, Lautze, 1997b

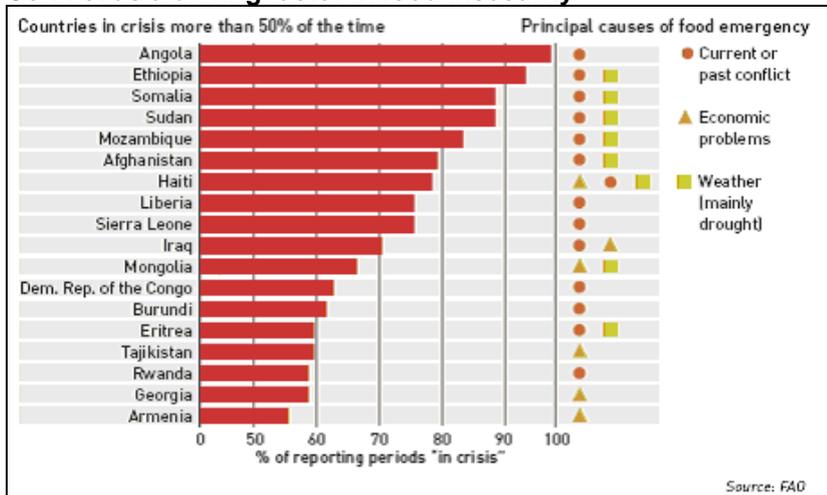
<sup>10</sup> Cincotta, et al., 2003

<sup>11</sup> Lind and Sturman, 2002

<sup>12</sup> Economic Commission for Africa and African Union, 2008

Conflict is a key driver of risk in many parts of the developing world, and especially in East and Central Africa. The FAO analysis in **Error! Reference source not found.** shows that conflict is strongly associated with food insecurity and crisis. Similar analysis on the causes of famines in Africa during the 1990s, for instance, shows that only one of eight famines experienced during the 1990s were mainly caused by drought, with the rest triggered by civil wars.<sup>13</sup> More than one out of three of the estimated number of people killed by conflict between 1994 and 2003 lived in Africa, and millions of lives have been lost. More people have been forced to flee their homes in Africa than anywhere else in the world. Two out of five (43%) refugees and IDPs globally are in Africa, many of whom live in crowded and insecure refugee camps or already overcrowded cities and towns.

### Conflict as a driving factor in food insecurity



Source: Valid International, 2004

However, poor households are not always the most affected by conflict.<sup>14</sup> Research in three communities in Southern Sudan shows that while poor households are worst affected by hazards like drought, it is non-poor households who are often most targeted by conflict. In many cases, the theft of livestock pushed non-poor households into poverty, highlighting a curse of assets and the fact that the compound relationship between different kinds of risk is complex and nuanced.

<sup>13</sup> von Braun, et al., 1998, cited in Deng, L. B. (2008) *Are Non-Poor Households Always Less Vulnerable? The Case of Households Exposed to Protracted Civil War in Southern Sudan*. Oxford. Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Published by Blackwell Publishing.

<sup>14</sup> Deng, 2008 *ibid.*