

**REPORT
ON
THE
NORTH SOUTH
FOOD ROUNDTABLE
ON
THE CRISIS IN AFRICA**

PREFACE

The African crisis that confronts the international community today is real and urgent. A combination of climatic problems, colonial heritage, regional and national food and agricultural policies and politics, and deteriorating external economic environment has brought about a situation which threatens to destroy the economies of a number of African countries and cause a colossal degradation and deprivation of a huge mass of population. How does the international community respond to this situation? What sort of policy responses are needed to address the immediate problem of saving millions of human lives and to provide a basis for recovery and long-term sustained development in Africa?

To seek answer to these and other related questions, the North South Roundtable held a meeting of its Food Roundtable in collaboration with UNICEF and World Food Council in New York on March 5 and 4, 1985. The main theme of the meeting was 'The Crisis in Africa: Mobilizing a Food, Nutritional and Health Response'. The meeting, attended by thirty high-level policy makers, experts and development professionals from the U.N. System, academia and NGOs (see Annex A). Several papers were prepared for this meeting, a list of which is annexed (Annex B).

The issues on the agenda were:

- mobilization for a new type of structural emergency - Africa's long-term food crisis;
- entitlement and food-aid issues based on a review of operational experience, particularly in Ethiopia;
- new approaches for combining health and food interventions to ensure adequate household nutrition; and
- implications for national and international policies and actions..

All these issues were debated and evaluated in terms of current operational experience in order to arrive at specific conclusions for action.

The North South Roundtable wishes to thank the UNICEF and the World Food Council for their support of this meeting. The UNICEF provided excellent conference facilities at its Headquarters in New York, and Kate Newell of the World Food Council provided superb organizational support. Besides sharing the financial costs of the meeting, these two institutions also provided two fine rapporteurs - Roger Hay of UNICEF and Peter Temu of World Food Council.

This Report of the Food Roundtable on the "Crisis in Africa" - prepared under the chairmanship of Maurice Williams - is both timely and important. Its conclusions as to mobilizing a constructive food, health and nutritional response deserve the attention of all those concerned with the critical situation in Africa - individuals, private voluntary organizations, governments acting bilaterally and collectively, and international agencies.

Islamabad
April, 1985

Khadija Haq

CONTENTS

Preface

Foreword

Summary Conclusions

Focus and Perspectives

The Nature of *the* Crisis

The Appropriate Response

Household Food and Health Security

Household Food Entitlements

Some Determinants of Household Food Security

Specific Policies for Household-level Action

The critical situation of disaster victims in relief camps

People in a potentially critical situation

People vulnerable to further food and *health* security decline

Utilization of Relief Resources for Development

Technical Issues

Issues Associated with National Policy

Strategic Issues

Annexes

FOREWORD

The crisis in Africa which could be foreseen quite clearly since 1980 is a crisis of steadily growing food deficits. These deficits are now so widespread and perennial that they can no longer be explained as the result of particular occurrences, climatic or political. If current trends continue, the deficits and need for food imports will triple by 1990, to some 17 million tons annually, simply to maintain the 1975 level of consumption. These structural food deficits, and the related under-development of their food and agricultural sectors, have left African countries extremely vulnerable to recurrent drought and other difficulties.

As one African official recently observed:

"The real truth is that Malthus was correct for Africa. Today our children eat less well than their parents did as children and much less well than their grandparents did before them. If we do not get on top of the food and population problem, we will be dependent on food aid forever."

African governments and the international community are engaged in formulating a programmatic food and health response for what might be defined as a new type of structural or systemic emergency. This is precisely because the food emergency in Africa will be with us for a number of years. The general downward trend in per capita food production, rapidly increasing population against a background of stalled development and concomitant prospects of recurring famine, place sub-Saharan Africa in a historically unique situation.

The international community has now geared up operationally to meet the most immediate and urgent aspect of Africa's food Crisis - emergency relief. The disaster mobilization and delivery process by multi-lateral, bilateral, and private voluntary agencies has involved a tremendous outpouring of aid, most notably food aid, transport and basic medicines, to some 20 sub-Saharan countries in addition to Ethiopia. While there remain logistical bottlenecks and concerns about meeting food aid requirements several months hence, the overall response has been seen by many observers to have been comparatively quick and efficient - once public opinion forced the issue into the realm of "high politics" among donors.

Throughout the various funding appeals, relief and development organizations have repeatedly called attention to the need for meeting simultaneously both the disaster-relief and the medium- and long-term development requirements. Famine relief even on the scale of some US\$ 3 billion now underway will be only a palliative if these relief efforts simply restore the status quo ante, and do nothing to overcome the untenable disaster prone conditions which brought about the potential for famine in the first place. However, accepting the logic of this argument, it is not entirely clear how simultaneous relief and development tasks can be carried out programmatically. The answer would appear to be more complicated than merely undertaking emergency relief alongside more-of-the-same development assistance.

The international community has only limited experience integrating humanitarian relief with development assistance, and certainly not on the scale required by the African countries. One element in this equation is that, managerially, it is easier to respond to a disaster - where target populations, relief requirements, and logistical arrangements can be more precisely defined - than it is to tackle the more complex and diffused policy and organizational goals of revitalizing the food sector and improving basic nutrition. This dilemma, then, raises fundamental questions for the international donor community and the African governments, as to the practical steps that can be taken to promote a better synthesis of emergency relief and longer-term investment.

It is this complex of issues - relating to a truly constructive food, health and nutritional response to the African crisis - which the Food Roundtable has sought to address. In particular, the large-scale of emergency food aid pre-eminently requires a better synthesis between relief and longer-term development. It also brings to the fore issues of food policy and longer-term development in the African countries as well as of aid effectiveness.

Support for resolving Africa's food crisis will require better understanding of the long-term nature of the crisis and sustained support by public opinion in the donor countries. As we are well aware, public opinion can be a variable factor. On the one hand, western public opinion in the last few months has pushed donor governments to step up significantly their relief assistance to Africa and made the matter of famine response into a highly charged

political issue in many donor capitals. On the other hand, public opinion is principally geared to seeing Africa's problem in terms of short-term humanitarian assistance to disaster victims, not as the tragic outcome of food systems that have gone awry.

By any measure, broad-based public support will be necessary to ensure the kind of long-range donor assistance which African countries require, namely increased development assistance and improved trade arrangements. As things now stand, and as historical precedent would suggest, the public attention span to disasters is measured in months, not years. In this respect, helping to solve Africa's food problem is not just a managerial or technical undertaking; it involves a political process of accommodation not only in recipient countries but in donor countries as well, in order to maintain public commitment for solving Africa's more systemic food problems.

Maurice J. Williams
Chairman
North South Food Roundtable
March, 1985

THE CRISIS IN AFRICA

1. SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Africa is in the midst of a severe and continuing food crisis which has brought death to many thousands of people and threatens the lives of millions more. Africa's food exigency arises from more deep-seated social and economic crises which have been exacerbated by the drought rather than directly caused by it. Thus, the causes and consequences encompass more than a focus on food and agriculture, and the actions required to confront the problem extend well beyond the present emergency relief.

This report of the North South Food Roundtable meeting summarizes a broader analysis of the problem. It also suggests some required strategic responses and makes specific recommendations for remedial action. These recommendations are based on the conviction that the very considerable flows of relief aid being made available to African countries today represent a major opportunity. If used constructively they can be an important catalyst directed not only to meet urgent human needs more effectively, but at the same time to address the primary, developmental causes of the problem.

Following are summaries of the meeting's main communions:

1. /The present dichotomy in the operations of most assistance agencies between the allocation of assistance to development activities on one hand and to emergency relief measures on the other is counterproductive a much greater extent than at present emergency assistance could and should address both urgent human needs and the underlying causes of hunger at one and the same time. This change in perspective and practice could have major beneficial effects.
2. Opportunities exist in almost every recipient African country for imaginative new approaches to assistance which meet both famine relief and development goals. By adapting more flexible procedures, virtually every development agency can promote these approaches within its areas of competence and increase the effectiveness of the aid it provides.
3. The focus of combined relief-development strategies Should be on household and, within household, on women. Women are the key to improving family food and health security because they are the main food producers and processors. They are responsible for food allocations within the household as well as caring for ,children who are most vulnerable to nutritional decline. Improved extension systems for rural women as well as opportunities to raise their educational levels are urgent priorities
4. Deteriorating nutrition is usually the result of health as well as food deficiencies, not merely food shortages. The interaction between disease and diet is most virulent in relief camp conditions, but the same interaction is the underlying cause of much malnutrition elsewhere. Measles, respiratory and other communicable diseases, and diarrhea greatly aggravate the problems of food deficiency. Preventive and curative action thus requires support for basic health interventions.
- 5 Improved household food security comes from increased household investment. For households in strained circumsces, the main investment resource is family labor !..kuery-opportunity should be taken to place emerge cy relief in a development setting by using inputs in cash or kind to mobilize. labour in order to remote Local investment. These investments should made schemes in education and training for improving skills, community support for basic health practices and

facilities, land and drainage improvement, as well as food storage facilities and road maintenance. At present, only a trivial proportion of emergency food aid in Africa is being used as food-for-work and enormous opportunities are being missed for stretching the rural base for economic recovery and increased food production.

6. A greater diversity of economic activity is urgently required in the African countryside. When people are unable to farm because of drought, opportunities exist which are rarely exploited to identify and improve local skills and apply them to non-agricultural activities.

7. It is prudent and necessary to give assistance to developing and dispensing locally relevant technology. Technological innovations to improve the efficiency of farming systems seldom can be effectively developed in remote laboratories. Extensive support networks exist and should be mobilized to create a dialogue even experts and people in the African countryside.

8. The movement of people from their homes into relief camps facing failure. It should be prevented if at all possible. This can be done by providing more effective support to households and communities at the series of points along the downward slope, which leads from low food production and declining incomes to increased risk for households, to the loss and sale of assets, to the migration from homes and farms - to destitution, disaster, and often death in a camp, miles from the family home and community. In fact, the costs of prevention are likely to be less than the costs of maintaining a population away from its social and economic base.

9. If relief camps are unavoidable, there should be a much more vigorous effort at planning for the population's future. Definite strategies are required which assist affected peoples to return to former employment (most often small-scale farming) when it is a viable economic possibility, or which assist them to seek another occupation which provides a more secure future. Assisting with resettlement to a new locality may also be required. Stronger commitments are needed to provide opportunities or training and education while people are in relief camps.

10. Priority attention should be given to people who live in a "penumbra area", i.e., a zone of increasing risk of social and economic dislocation. The people in a "penumbra area" are in a potentially critical condition and are soon likely to have to move in search of food. They are not only in urgent need of assistance but offer the greatest opportunities for combining life-saving measures to prevent migration with accelerated community-based development strategies. Inexpensive, high efficiency health support is as important as food supplies

11. It is grossly inefficient to move food from the countryside to feed the cities while, at the same time, moving relief food into the countryside from port and natural locations. Yet this is a common occurrence. It should be made of existing donor arrangements to use food aid to feed the cities while securing locally produced food for close-by relief distribution. This can be achieved by selling imported food in the towns and using the funds generated for wages, local food purchases or other combined relief and development activities, up country. The same result can also be untriedly achieved by "swap" arrangements, whereby imported food aid is provided to cities in exchange for the release up-country of food purchased locally for direct relief or food-for-work schemes. Either way the savings on internal transportation would be very considerable.

12. The gains made over the last ten years in improving methods for "early warning" should be pursued. However, more attention is required to indicators of declining food security at the household, as opposed to national level indicators. Furthermore, more flexible response capacities are required in order to respond swiftly and coherently to alarming signals, not only within drought-prone countries, but more especially the international donor community.

13. While this Roundtable discussion focused on ways of making emergency aid more relevant to the underlying problems which turn drought into famine, there was agreement that recipient governments, on their part, also should consider how the approaches suggested above can be made a coherent part of their national programmes for enhancing food security. In particular, what are required are national food strategies which give the highest priority to medium and long-term objectives for increasing the nation's food self-sufficiency, reducing dependency on food aid and food imports, and improving nutrition for vulnerable groups. Elements of a strategy include providing a greater use of national resources, for the smallholder agricultural sector, policy reforms which increase, - incentives for production, strengthened marketing - and infrastructure systems, programmes to check environmental degradation, field-based research on drought-

resistant varieties of indigenous foods, and provision of employment opportunities for rural people.

14. A national' population policy which balances -population growth with the country's food-producing potential, and. political stability are preconditions for orating Africa's food crisis.

15. More effective action is required at the international level to restore long term development momentum by African countries in the world economy, <Much more financial support, on more flexible terms, need's to be provided urgently,/International financial institute should look more carefully at the human consequences of structural economic adjustment programmes. Improved possibilities for trade and enhanced terms of trade need to be found. The heavy burden of debt servicing - of which the increases during 1984-85 f alone are likely to exceed the increases in emergency assistance - requires a fundamental review. Without an improvement in the international economic environment, there will be no solution to the deeper African crisis, even when the rains return.

16. It is important to work toward narrowing the gap in confidence which the food crisis has brought out between development assistance agencies and African recipients. Aid to Africa has not been particularly effective in the past This has many causes, some arising from donor policies but many arising from factors within African countries. In short, the problem is not only that total aid commitments are inadequate, but that they are not always well coordinated and directed toward productive channels, within a framework of coherent policies which effectively place a priority on food production and rural development in Africa.

17. The SID North South Food Roundtable places great emphasis on utilizing the current massive relief effort to begin to shift the priorities in favor of rural development processes by both African governments and the development agencies which seek to help them. The massive infusion of several billions of dollars of relief assistance should give impetus to the maximum extent possible to begin to put African economies on a more durable self-reliant path of development.

18. Public support to maintain initiatives taken during the present crisis must be sustained. Additional to mobilizing funds through television programmes featuring emaciated children, relief agencies and the media should promote better understanding of the basic causes of hunger in Africa and on the importance of moving from famine relief to genuine, long-term development.

II. FOCUS AND PERSPECTIVES

A. The Nature of the Crisis

It can barely have escaped anyone's attention that serious food shortages exist in many countries in Africa south of the Sahara. These shortages are most frequently attributed to the widespread drought which caused crop failures between 1982 and 1984 in the Sahelian zone, Ethiopia and Kenya and over a wide belt across southern Africa.

However, the food crisis in Africa arises from underlying structural causes *which* have been aggravated by the drought not caused by it. Poor economic performance and *high* population. growth rates have left the bulk of the rural population in a marginal position with respect to mainstream economic activities. Environmental degradation has been largely unchecked, thereby reducing the quality of the rural resource base. Policy formulation has frequently failed to address the needs of the majority of the normal population. Peasant farmers have neither received a fair share of national resources, nor have they been offered a policy environment conducive to a rapid growth in their output. Indeed there has been a retreat by both the state and the peasantry from wider production and marketing arrangements. The administrative and technical support structure in the countryside is weak, markets are fragmented, and parastatal institutions responsible for the provision of agricultural inputs, marketing and infrastructural development are frequently grossly inefficient.

The result has been growing structural food deficits and increasing food imports. It has to be said that, although the available data are unreliable, in many African countries food production per capita appears to have declined over the last ten years. This statistic is also undoubtedly affected by high population growth rates; in absolute terms agriculture may have performed better than per capita rates would indicate. Nevertheless, the expansion of expenditure on food imports is clear. If this is at the expense of incentives for domestic production, this trend obviously cannot continue indefinitely.

Even if the statistics are contested, most would agree that African agriculture operates at a low level of technology, is starved of investment and that the favored activities within the sector are those which feed a growing urban population rather than create a broad base for a buoyant mal economy. In particular, little attention has been given to developing agricultural systems adapted to the climatic instabilities in which they must perform. It is generally true that unbalanced development has increased the vulnerability of the agricultural system to collapse during bad years. Likewise the development process has decreased rather than enhanced household level food security.

A further major cause of vulnerability lies in the demographic structure of the population in most African countries. Almost half of the population is less than 15 years of age. This means that dependency rates are high. Furthermore, the development of skills has been inappropriate to the needs of agriculture and the management of rural development.

Much of the blame for this state of affairs can be laid at the door of national policy which has generally failed to provide incentives for agriculture, has diverted investment away from peasant farmers toward large scale farming, agro-industry and industry, and primarily concerned itself with national food security in terms of the stability of supplies of cheap food for urban populations. However, it would be unfair to hold national policy accountable for the whole problem.

International forces have played a prominent role in reducing the amount of investment funds available for development and for reducing the amount of national resources available for importing food when domestic production fails. The adverse movement in the external terms of trade of most countries in Africa is a well-documented caused of falling foreign earnings.

Much of the aid being given to Africa is under. mined by the reverse flows of funds arising from in. creasing debt servicing obligations. Interest payments in 1984 amounted to nearly US\$ 6 billion and are projected to rise in 1985 to more than US\$ 7 billion .

Furthermore, despite general agreement over the last five years that Africa's problems were reaching crisis proportions, foreign aid has not yet responded in away which corresponds with either the nature or the magnitude of these problems. Although the per capita flows of aid to African countries now amount to US \$19 for all sub Sahamn countries and US\$ 42 per capita for the low-income semi-arid countries (compared with about US\$ 5 per capita to South Asia), this aid has generally not addressed the policy framework in which aid is delivered, thus diminishing considerably its efficiency.

African countries need the kind of aid which will enhance their own productive capacity, thus reducing, and eventually eliminating, the need for aid in the future. Unfortunately, this has not been the type of aid they have received in the past. Indeed, it may be that the gaps and inconsistencies of donor aid policies have contributed to the present emergency.

Notwithstanding this aid policy framework, drought has had a profound effect on agriculture in Africa even if it is not the only cause of Africa's food problems nor even the most important one. In the most recent past the number of countries affected by drought appears to have grown - from 12 countries in 1974 to 27 countries in 1979; and to 35 countries in 1984. Furthermore, because of a rapidly growing population with increased pressure on the land and ecological degradation, more people are being supported by food aid than ever before. It may be that in some parts of Africa, notably in Ethiopia, Botswana and Lesotho, the agricultural systems have been permanently damaged. If this is so, the potential of agriculture to provide food, employment and a contribution to the national product will have been irreversibly impaired. In countries such as Botswana and Lesotho the role of agriculture in the national economy may thus have to be reassessed.

Although Africa's droughts have received most attention in recent years, this is not a new phenomenon. Africa's climate is prone to more year-to-year fluctuations than any other region of the world except the Middle East. This long-term climatic uncertainty provides the backdrop in which farmers must plan and the context for national food and agricultural policies.

There is little doubt, however, that the most recent series of rain-failures have been more severe and have had a greater effect on human welfare than the droughts of the 1970s. This occurred despite the fact that most African governments had better information and were able to act more promptly than ever before. In fact, a significant difference between the management (or lack of management) of drought in the 1970s and events in the 1980s is that, with notable exceptions, African governments in 1982 and 1983 began to act on early signals of drought well before mobilization of resources occurred within the international community.

One of the most important recent changes is that the effects of drought are increasingly recognized as being the tip of an iceberg - the larger part being the long-run economic and social crisis which is at the heart of the problem. This awareness is affecting the formulation of national policy within African countries. The immediate effects of drought are increasingly being managed within a long-term analytical framework. Indeed, the underlying theme of this report is the various ways in which short-run measures to meet the most urgent human needs can be designed in ways which contribute to the solution of the long-term problems.

B. The Appropriate Response

There is a general agreement that the emergency food problem in Africa is linked, in causes and consequences, to long-run development problems. Life saving relief measures, while necessary, are not sufficient to improve the underlying low level of development which is at the root of Africa's vulnerability to the effects of drought or other disasters.

There should be no dichotomy in the allocation of emergency aid to relief and to developmental activities. The distinctions become arbitrary once it is accepted that emaciated children are primarily the result of deep-rooted underdevelopment. It is strikingly evident that very little emergency assistance to Africa is having a development impact. Changes are urgently required if resources are to be used more rationally and if people still vulnerable to starvation are to be given a secure future.

The dichotomy poses an enormous challenge both to the countries concerned and to the international community. There is clearly a need for a programmatic framework which incorporates the use of emergency assistance both for "relief" and simultaneously for "development". What institutional measures are required to promote a synthesis of relief and development actions? How might food aid be used more effectively to stimulate economic processes? Food aid is clearly a critical input. Yet, in contrast to South Asia, the vast bulk of emergency food aid is distributed in Africa as grants without development context or objectives.

An examination of these issues begins at the level of the household. The starting point adopted is that health and food security at the household level is the major policy objective to be achieved. In subsequent sections of the report the means available for achieving this objective are examined: the utilization of emergency inputs to enhance food and health security, the technical issues associated with the recovery and development of the rural economy, and the role of national and international institutions and their policies.

III HOUSEHOLD FOOD AND HEALTH SECURITY

A. Household Food Entitlements

It is being increasingly recognized that the reason people go hungry has less to do with a general decline in food availability than with the ability of households to command a share of what is available. "Starvation is a matter of some people not having enough to eat, and not a matter of there not being enough to eat." A household's food "entitlements" may come from their own food production, trade opportunities, earned income or claims on their extended family or welfare from the state. The guarantees from these entitlements evidently determine the degree of food security households enjoy.

Famine, according to this approach, results from a collapse in household or individual entitlements. In a specific famine context, such as Ethiopia, the affected population is at various stages of desperation. For those who have had to leave their homes in search of food, the situation is critical; the only entitlement remaining is a claim on relief resources in feeding centers.

Then there are those who may soon have to migrate in search of food because their entitlements are nearly exhausted and they are in a potentially critical danger of starvation. This group, which will be forced to move from their homes if not assisted, is an important target group for assistance in terms of preventing the disruptive social and economic effects of famine.

The remainder of the population in famine-stricken areas are vulnerable to decline into the "potentially critical" and "critical" categories.

Policies are needed for each of these three population groups. In the short-term, the goal of policy should be to prevent the condition of those who are vulnerable from becoming

potentially critical and then truly critical. Simultaneous actions are also required which improve household level food security in the long-run for each of these groups of people. Artificial distinctions between "relief" aid and development assistance in a famine situation militate against the use of opportunities to improve the long-term future of people affected by famine.

(I/ The "entitlements" approach to the analysis of famine is taken from the work of Amartya Sen. See, for example, *Ingredients of Famine Analysis: Availability and Entitlements in Resources, Values and Development*, Harvard University Press, 1984.)

B. Same Determinants of Household Food Security

All of the factors reviewed in the introduction to this report impinge on the capacity of families to achieve and sustain food security. Many households in Africa are suffering from an "acquired immunity deficiency disease" in the sense that the dynamics of the current socio-economic system has resulted in a reduced capacity to withstand the effects of variable food production.

In the first place women have been undervalued in their role as major contributors to the rural labour force, as individuals with obligations to care for children as well as persons almost entirely responsible for food processing and for the allocation of food resources within the household. It is clear that women are crucial in any efforts to improve household food security. The food crisis in Africa has lent added emphasis to their importance and made their role even more crucial in attempts to link relief actions with support for improved long-term food security.

Secondly, and more specifically, increased monetization of rural economies has generally resulted in a shift in the control of food-producing resources from women to men. This, in turn, has meant that money income is allocated among many competing demands, including food, whereas previously food security was the first priority in the allocation of household "income". Thirdly, additional labour demands imposed by efforts to raise the productivity of household labour in agricultural production have coincided in many places with seasonal labour peaks and periods of minimum food resources.

Household "health security" parallels in many ways the concept of food security. Health security is just as important as food security for proper nutrition. Starvation and disease act synergistically to cause malnutrition, debility and death in a population where entitlements are jeopardized. It therefore follows in a famine situation that, first, sufficient resources must be allocated to the provision of support for families to improve their capacity to protect themselves from the effects of disease and, second, that the policy objective is to stimulate the effective demand of households for health services rather than to be preoccupied with health supplies alone,

C. Specific Policies for Household Level Action

1. The critical situation of disaster victims in relief camps

Once an affected population has moved to feeding centers, the households are no longer intact. The people are on the verge of starvation, destitute and homeless. Action must be of an emergency kind to supply food, medicine and shelter. It is of great importance that resources be allocated to non-food supplies such as vaccines, oral rehydration solution and essential drugs as well as to food supplies.

At the same time, however, plans for the resettlement and rehabilitation of the surviving victims should already be underway. This is a difficult challenge; resettlement may be possible in the areas from which the relief victims came, assuming the environment has not been permanently damaged. Otherwise, as in Ethiopia, they may have to be resettled elsewhere.

It should be recognized early that some people may not be able to return to their former occupations. Important opportunities are often lost to assess the actual and potential skills of people in relief camps and to institute educational programmes for literacy and occupational skills.

2. People in a potentially critical situation

The population in this "penumbra area", i.e., a zone of increasing risk of social and economic dislocation, is a particularly suitable target group for accelerated development assistance, because its vulnerability and fragility make it receptive to change. It is vitally important to be able to help famine victims while they are still in their own homes and local community environments before they migrate. Movement to feeding camps must be viewed as a last

desperate bid to survive and it has many disruptive effects besides dislocating families. Among its worst disadvantages are that it causes serious psychological disorientation and makes rehabilitation infinitely more difficult. Such movement must be avoided if at all possible. However, these people may be in need of everything- food, medicine, perhaps water, and various amenities and services, including education. The needs of this target group should be studied carefully and its views and perceptions taken into account, especially those of women on whom the fate of the children largely depends.

The use of food-for-work or "cash-for-food" may be crucial ways in which immediate needs can be met and, at the same time, development processes stimulated.

The first priority will almost certainly be to direct efforts at improving and increasing the stability of the local agricultural system. Nonetheless it is also important to assess the recovery potential of areas where people in this condition live. The only long-term survival strategy may depend on seeking, in consultation with the people, alternative sources of employment and using the opportunity offered by the crisis to stimulate a more diverse rural economy which is less dependent on climatic instability. The overriding principle guiding these actions should be community consultation and participation in the design as well as the execution of actions. This approach is part of what UNICEF calls "planning by process" rather than planning by project. It is most important that the health needs of this population group are met. The added vulnerability to disease arising from impaired nutritional status is itself a major factor leading to further nutritional decline. Low-cost high efficiency health actions are particularly relevant to this situation.

3. People vulnerable to further food and health security decline

This group of people constitute candidates for a slide into a potentially critical or critical condition. The prevention of this decline by well-designed health and food support measures associated with development activity depends largely on early recognition of vulnerability. In the face of scarce resources it is often difficult to allocate emergency support to prevent further deterioration because donors set boundaries on the use of emergency aid. However, it should be remembered that prevention is more efficient than relief and that the economic as well as human costs of allowing nutritional deterioration of vulnerable people are enormous.

IV. UTILIZATION OF RELIEF RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT

By the end of 1985 about US\$ 3 billion in aid resources will probably have been allocated to drought affected countries in Africa. The major challenge facing governments and donors alike is to see that these resources are used, not only to meet immediate human needs, but also to lay the foundation for future self reliance.

Resources flowing into African countries, particularly the famine-stricken areas, are either in the form of food or cash, or various forms of technical assistance. The use of both food and cash will be considered briefly and recent experience reviewed to illustrate ways in which both relief needs and development goals can be met.

The theory on which this discussion is based can be summarized as follows. When households are unable to obtain essential commodities two factors may be operating singly or in combination. The first, considered by the proponents of the "entitlements" approach to be the more common, is an inability of households to command access to supplies which are available on the local market. This may be termed "pull" or demand failure. This may be due to the loss of food crops for personal consumption and/or of incomes for the purchase of food. The second type of failure arises from the inability of the market to deliver in the presence of otherwise satisfactory household level income. This may arise from a fragmented market structure, logistical difficulties, ignorance of traders or aggregate failure of market supply. This may be termed market "response" failure.

This analytical approach, combined with attention to opportunities available to utilize relief supplies in the context of development activities, leads to a framework for deciding on the optimum use of relief resources to accelerate development processes.

The key at the local level is to use either food or cash as payment for work which constitutes an investment. This may take the form of land improvement, small-scale irrigation or other activities which will improve either the performance or the stability of the food system, or both. It may also take the form of an initial investment in alternative economic activities which will broaden and diversify the rural economic base. Equally important, it may be directed towards improving the social and health infrastructure or for paying the local salary costs required for immunization and other health campaigns.

Whether the external input should be food or cash depends to a large extent on whether the basic problem is an income pull or market response failure. If the underlying problem is a market response failure, cash disbursements are unlikely to be efficient in providing households with better access to food and other essential goods and services.

On the other hand, in certain circumstances particularly where pull failure dominates and where local food surpluses are available, the use of cash disbursements, rather than food disbursements, for emergency famine relief has certain advantages. Typically, cash can be used more flexibly than food.

Some experimental projects begun in Ethiopia with UNICEF assistance were reviewed to examine the potential of providing cash payments to families in serious need where appropriate conditions exist, that is income failure in the presence of local surpluses. In return for cash relief these families provide one or two-days' labour a week for community projects. The advantages cited were: timeliness and flexibility of response to the needs of an increasingly vulnerable population, incentives for local food production, the mobilization of existing local food resources, ready linkages between a relief response and development activities, in addition to wider consumer choice for the beneficiaries. Supplies from outlying districts or urban areas might also be attracted to augment the local supply.

More information is required regarding the costs and benefits of projects such as these in Ethiopia. The possibility that these schemes would be inflationary if implemented on a large scale is clearly a potential danger. On the other hand, some evidence from the experience in Ethiopia suggests that households receiving cash wages actually made savings and invested these in oxen, agricultural implements and other capital goods. Yet, even this apparent advantage may be at a cost, for the parallel nutritional measurements suggest that food intake from purchases may not be sufficient to support an improvement in nutritional welfare. It was generally agreed that cash disbursement schemes should be supported by a good monitoring system, that indications of inflation should be sought, and that proven administrative integrity and accountability are important preconditions for cash relief schemes.

It is apparent that cash relief versus food relief is not a simple either-or question. One can visualize situations in which cash relief, or food relief, or both, in suitable combinations, would be the appropriate course of action. Current experience indicates that the optimum strategy can only be determined empirically in terms of local circumstances.

It must nonetheless be re-emphasized that currently only a very small proportion of emergency food aid is used in a way which promotes development. This is to be contrasted with the way food aid has been utilized in South Asia where very little food is distributed free.

In short, there is an urgent need to devise ways of making a more effective use of relief assistance, whether food or cash, in a way which stimulates and supports local development efforts of long-term value.

V. TECHNICAL ISSUES

High population growth rates on the one hand, and low agricultural productivity on the other, underscore the critical importance of population control policy and increasing farm productivity. Both are essential ingredients to the solution of the long-term food crisis.

The need to improve the efficiency of farming systems in conditions of climatic uncertainty provides the main objective of agricultural research. In the past, too much attention has been paid to improving land productivity and too little to improving yield stability and, in a broader sense, the stability and efficiency of the food system as a whole. More research is required on drought-resistant crops, better and more appropriate storage and processing techniques and improved management methods.

In the long-run improved land productivity and yield stability will come from an increasing shift toward irrigated cropping. However, this requires considerable capital investment and, perhaps more importantly, local

social and economic systems which result in a fair distribution of benefits. The increased flow of emergency resources provides an opportunity to make a start on small-scale water conservation and irrigation schemes. By the same token, climate has become a factor of overriding importance in Africa. There is a great need for a breakthrough in the techniques of weather forecasting, if not weather control, as a way of improving the stability of agricultural systems.

The origins and objectives of technology may be even more important than the rate of technical innovation. Research which produces results remote from the African countryside has been shown repeatedly to be at best irrelevant and at worst counter-productive. Research of the

participatory or farming systems type is likely to yield improved, more appropriate, results. It is better to create conditions for experts to relate to local people and genuinely exchange experience so that existing technologies are upgraded in situ than it is either to carry out research in remote laboratories or to carry forward innovations without systematic back-up from the considerable support network which now exists.

Agricultural research is not alone in being flawed by inappropriate origin or objectives. Food processing technology is of particular importance for the improvement of nutritional status. practically all institutes of food technology are located in urban areas. This reflects both a commercial and urban consumption bias. If established in rural areas, such institutes would cater better to the food and nutritional needs of rural populations. Women in particular would learn improved food preparation, processing and preservation techniques applicable to traditional foods to which they are accustomed.

The need for technical innovation is not confined to economic activities which are directly agricultural in nature. The African countryside is characterized by relatively few linkages with local services and industry. Most inputs for agriculture come from urban industrial enterprises or are imported; consumer goods are rarely made locally. Although appropriate technology has received considerable attention it has made little real impact on the diversity of African rural economies. This means not only that agriculture is not supported by local industries and services but also that employment opportunities are limited in an agricultural sector which is unable to absorb the rapid increase in the rural population. Therefore, there is a great need to explore ways in which local skills can be applied to new industrial processes which arise from declared rural needs and which can be sustained by local resources.

A major constraint to improved levels of rural living is the amount of the time spent by women in performing daily chores, such as the drudgery of fetching water and firewood or pounding grain. The introduction of simple-labour saving, or toil-reducing devices, would liberate time and allow women to devote more attention to other pursuits, including food production, their own education and care of their children. Technical innovations in the service of women at the household level are therefore crucial.

Along with improvements in rural productive technology, improved health technology is required for better nutrition. Further research is required to develop the vaccines necessary to prevent various types of tropical diseases. Furthermore, even when the prevention of communicable disease is possible, the cost involved together with a lack of appreciation of the benefits of disease protection inhibits the vast majority of the people from participating. This limitation under scores the significance of devoting more resources both to health research and to methods of mass communication which are in the local idiom and powerful enough to capture the attention of the rural population at large.

VI. ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH NATIONAL Policy

The policy environment in African countries is often inimical rather than favorable to agricultural development. Ways must be found of creating a more congenial economic environment for the solution of food and agricultural problems.

In particular, what are required are national food strategies which give the highest priority to medium and long-term objectives for increasing the nations' food self-sufficiency, reducing dependency on food aid and food imports, and on improving nutrition for vulnerable groups.. The share of investment in agriculture and of this the share of resources available to the smallholder sector, with some notable exceptions, remains pitifully inadequate. The pricing structure in many countries does not offer sufficient incentives to farmers and results in a net income transfer from an increasingly impoverished countryside to the cities. A national food strategy seeks to correct these policy imbalances.

The current policy pattern is a legacy from pre independence times when cheap food was required to keep industrial wage rates down and agriculture was geared towards exports and the needs of the capital city. While these considerations are still important, agriculture has to meet broader objectives - the provision of employment and food for a rapidly-growing population. Incentives are required to stimulate the growth of agriculture, and a share of national resources commensurate with the importance of the sector should be allocated to it. These issues are widely discussed and broadly accepted to be essential ingredients in revitalizing African agriculture. It would be naive to suggest, however, that given the resource constraints facing most African countries now affected by drought, their implementation will be easy.

There is also need to improve the statistical database for practically all African countries. At present, it is hard to know what the true food situation is, much less prescribe effective remedies.

The African food problem is partly the result of cultural disruptions, particularly the substitution of exotic foods for traditional staple foods. Not only have people lost taste for, and forgotten the nutritional value of traditional foods, some have even forgotten how to grow them, or have destroyed the physical environment for their culture.

The development of human resources remains a matter of crucial importance. Education should be directed to the needs of the majority and to national priorities. The education of women must be taken more seriously. This is required not only because women constitute a major part of the national skill pool but also because women's educational level has been shown to have a profound effect on the nutritional welfare of children. The key to the solution of the food and nutritional problem in Africa is the role of the woman in the household. An educated mother who has some access to income is the surest instrument for improving the nutritional level of the family;

Human resources development and utilization, especially in the rural milieu, and the use of local materials and technology should be a central focus of development efforts, and one of the principal objectives of external assistance. Some African governments and donor agencies continue to direct funds to big projects with a high component of externally-provided equipment, rather than to projects designed to improve the production of food for local consumption. A balanced effort of development - and of external assistance - would place more emphasis on stimulating and sustaining local initiative at the village level, and letting the villagers design their own projects.

Unfortunately, foreign or local credit and other resources are not often geared to support such grassroots projects conceived by villagers because they may not meet traditional assistance criteria of commercial viability. There is need to depart from these narrow criteria and to adopt concepts of what is socially and culturally desirable to the beneficiaries themselves, particularly where they are small dislocated farmers.

To some extent, this is the approach and mandate of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), but its resources are grossly inadequate. Perhaps ways could be found to underwrite local credit systems which lend money for grassroots projects.

Alternatively, foreign assistance could be channeled directly in support of such projects. African countries and assistance agencies should be more selective in designing aid projects, ensuring that they are more directly based on local knowledge and needs.

Just as the concept of primary health care was promoted in the 1970s, the time seems ripe to promote extension services for women in Africa. What is needed is full and prior acceptance of the woman as a critically necessary agent of change in African (indeed in any) society. To prepare the ground for reception of extension services, one must train, sensitize and organize women as well as obtain the support of the political leadership for this effort.

In some African countries, the creation of internal and external political stability is an absolute precondition for ameliorating their food crisis, or indeed for bringing about any form of sustained development.

VII. STRATEGIC ISSUES

All indicators suggest that high levels of external assistance will continue to be needed long after the overt emergency situation has ended. The crisis is long term and ingrained and will not end with the coming of the rains. Therefore, if the underlying problems are to be tackled effectively, public attention must be drawn to and fully understand the need to sustain support for revitalizing development in Africa.

Although there has been a welcome increase in the flow of resources to Africa, this increase is not as great as might be evident at first glance. For example, some of the increase in short-term assistance merely represents a switch from long-term assistance. This is of doubtful benefit to Africa in the long-run. Secondly, there is a continued heavy burden of reverse flows of funds to service the debt burden of African countries.

At the same time, achieving what the international finance agencies view as proper policy and structural adjustments creates increasing difficulties for African countries under pressure from the effects of the food crisis. For example, countries are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the IMF terms, and other multilateral donors, notably the World Bank, also are

withholding their lending to those countries which do not undertake structural adjustment programmes.

The IMF's view of society and of change is basically macro-economic and policy-oriented, which understandably is its mandate. However, this approach tends to play down the human dimension which is critical for Africa at the present time. Social expenditure is often squeezed when public funds are scarce to the detriment of long-term development capacity. These factors should be considered more explicitly by multilateral donors during negotiations for programmes of structural adjustment and policy reforms.

At the level of the life-saving, emergency relief effort, everyone is anxious to help with the problem of food and hunger in Africa, and this report on the African food crisis has raised a number of issues of immediate importance.

At another level, however, the food crisis has revealed a gap in confidence between donors and recipient countries in Africa. Agreement exists in principle that the origins of the current crisis are both internal and external. However, donors see the persistent causes - beyond recurrent drought - as primarily rooted in poor domestic policies while recipient governments put more emphasis on external factors. It is therefore important to work towards narrowing the gap in confidence between donors and recipients. The present famine emergency offers an opportunity for donors and recipients to review past experience candidly and work out methods of making aid both more effective and adequate to the longer-term resolution of the food and hunger problem.

African governments have a public relations problem in gaining the sustained higher levels of assistance they need for longer-term development; how to convince donors that they themselves are serious about food and agriculture in their own countries after years of relative neglect. At the same time, recipient governments currently feel they are being held hostage by donors, who want Africans to make costly domestic reforms, but appear reluctant to support these reforms with more and better-quality aid.

It has become a truism that donor policies and practices have not always enhanced the development of capacity within African countries essential for sustained economic growth. There is need to more effectively co-ordinate the aid activities of various donors. Too many uncoordinated activities by donor agencies currently operating in Africa increases the chance of misdirection, besides overtaxing the absorptive capacity of African countries. Overall aid-effectiveness is therefore reduced. The failure to co-ordinate aid is partly due to the fact that aid, including food aid, is too often used as an instrument for furthering the policies of donor countries. In short, the problem is not only that total aid commitments are inadequate, but that they are not always well coordinated and directed toward productive channels, within a framework of coherent policies which effectively place a higher priority on food production and rural development in Africa.

If, as has been argued here, Africa's food crisis is rooted in underlying, basic development problems, then poor domestic policies while recipient governments put more emphasis on external factors. It is therefore important to work towards narrowing the gap in confidence between donors and recipients. The present famine emergency offers an opportunity for donors and recipients to review past experience candidly and work out methods of making aid both more effective and adequate to the longer-term resolution of the food and hunger problem.

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underlying, basic development problems, then the remedy is not short-term emergency assistance alone. The North South Food Roundtable places great emphasis on utilizing the current massive relief effort to begin to shift priorities in favor of rural development processes by both African governments and the development agencies which seek to help them. The massive infusion of several billions of dollars of relief assistance should give impetus to the maximum extent possible to begin to put African economies on a more durable self-reliant path of development. In addition, sustained support will be required after the drought is over to maintain initiatives taken during the crisis. This has two implications. The first is that distinctions between relief, rehabilitation and development assistance are artificial in a technical and programmatic sense, with important ramifications for donor policy and practice. The second is that public opinion needs to be mobilized and educated to support sustained assistance to African countries. The media in Europe, North America and the Pacific Basin have an important role to play. The mobilization of funds should not depend on television programmes about emaciated children but on a better understanding of the basic causes of hunger in Africa.

The world's response to Africa's food crisis could either be a "seed" or a "bubble" which will burst and disappear as soon as public attention is captured by a new world event. The challenge is to ensure that Africa's policies become the "seed" which yields sustained support for a new, more effective, development.

ANNEX A

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ANNEX B**PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE FOOD ROUNDTABLE SESSION**

1. Culter, Peter, Famine Forecasting: Prices and Peasant. Behavior in Northern Ethiopia, Disasters No. 1, Vol. 8, 1984.
2. Kumar, B. Gopala Krishna, The Ethiopian Famine and Relief Measures: An Analysis and Evaluation, UNICEF, Jan., 1985.
3. Morris, David Morris, Drought, Flood, Scarcity and Famine: How to Survive uncertainty.
4. Padmini, R, Cash for Food Project in Ethiopia, UNICEF, Much, 1985.
5. Sen, Arnartya K., Ingredients of Famine Analysis: Availability and Entitlements in Resources, Values and Development, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984.
6. UNICEF Addis Ababa Annual Report, UNICEF Innovative Project - 1984.
7. Williams, Maurice J., Mobilization for a New Type of Continuing Emergency: Africa's Long-term Food Crisis, North South Food Roundtable, March, 1985.
8. World Food Council, Effectiveness of Aid in Support of Food Strategies, WFC/1985/3.

ANNEX C**ABOUT THE NORTH SOUTH ROUNDTABLE**

The North South Roundtable, established in 1978 under the auspices of the Society for International Development, is an independent intellectual forum in which academics, researchers and policy makers from around the world come together to discuss global development issues. The Roundtable brings together experts from every continent in many fields, all sharing a commitment to orderly progress in human affairs, for the advancement of a constructive dialogue between North and South, developed and developing, rich and poor nations, in search of a more just and stable world order.

The Roundtable serves as a sounding board for the expression of new ideas, as a monitor for the North South negotiations under way in official bodies, as a private channel for the unencumbered exploration of possibilities for consensus, as a public educator on global

development issues, and as an informal meeting ground on which key policy makers in public and private life appear in a personal capacity. In annual sessions involving the whole membership of over 150 and in smaller sessions convened for the discussion of specific development issues, the North South Roundtable seeks to identify and analyze the most significant issues and to develop policy proposals in the mutual interest of North and South. The ideas evolved in the Roundtable process are disseminated to the general public, national decision makers and other international organizations, through Roundtable publications and through direct briefings.

Ongoing Programs

The North South Energy Roundtable. The North South Energy Roundtable is a forum for dialogue on energy issues. The Energy Roundtable works to put energy in its proper international and developmental perspective and to ensure policy makers' access to accurate analysis and data. The Energy Dialogue Missions of the North South Energy Roundtable visit developing countries, developed nations and international fora, to gather and relay information on national, regional and international energy policies and needs and to establish a dialogue with high-level policymakers within and among nations.

The North South Food Roundtable. The focus of the North South Food Roundtable is worldwide food security for nations and people. In meetings of experts in the food area, in briefings and in publications, the North South Food Roundtable works to assess the global food situation, to develop concrete proposals for the acceleration of food production in developing countries, and for the establishment of national, regional and international food reserves.

The Global Round The Global Round is a program of study and discussion on the North-South negotiation process. The purposes of the Global Round are to identify areas of mutual interest between North and South, to consider proposals for the restructuring of the Bretton Woods institutions, and to work with other international organizations toward the worldwide elimination of absolute poverty_ by the end of the century.

Roundtable on Money and Finance. This is an informal process of dialogue among policymakers in the public and private sectors, to initiate appropriate policies for the resolution of the current crisis in international finance. The Roundtable on Money and Finance has organized a task force of financial and development experts to assess the crisis - especially the flaws of the present system in adjustment and liquidity creation and in the relationship between private and international financial institutions - and to consider and formulate proposals for the revitalization of the world financial and trading system.