



# FOOD SECURITY STRATEGIES FOR COMPLEX CRISES

## Evidence for a different approach

APRIL 2018

Conflict has a grave impact on food and nutrition security, and humanitarians' ability to advance it around the world. Of the 815 million people in the world who are chronically food insecure or malnourished, 60 percent live in countries affected by violent conflict.<sup>1</sup> In early 2017, four violence-ridden countries were put on famine alert: South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen, with famine also likely occurring in northeast Nigeria in late 2016 and parts of South Sudan tipping into famine mid-2017. While each of these contexts is different, the combination of conflict and fragility layered over other pre-existing stresses makes them each so complex. And complex crises pose unique challenges to humanitarians seeking to build sustainable food and nutrition security.

Even if we acknowledge the root causes of conflict in humanitarian response strategies, humanitarians cannot stop wars. At the same time, considerable access constraints in violent conflict contexts make it even more difficult to deliver aid effectively. The recent commercial trade blockades in Yemen or extreme levels of violence in northeast Nigeria underpin this point. As complex crises like these become protracted, traditional efforts to support emergency food and nutrition security — in-kind rations; cash-based transfers; distributions of seeds, tools and other non-food items — are unable to sustain improvements in longer-term food and nutrition security. Even though some of these inputs, such as cash-based transfers, can help maintain markets and other systems during crises, they are ultimately unsustainable on their own.

<sup>1</sup> FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017. Building Resilience for Peace and Food Security* (Rome: FAO, 2017).

Here we suggest a different approach: a multi-disciplinary, context-specific response strategy aimed at delivering immediate relief while addressing systemic barriers to long-term food and nutrition security, one forged by our front-line experience and substantiated by our resilience research from various complex crises around the world.

## Acknowledge pre-crisis constraints to food security

The presence of conflict is not the only reason countries are susceptible to food and nutrition crises and famine. In fact, conflict often exacerbates pre-existing conditions that contribute to food insecurity. Consider South Sudan, Yemen and Syria: populations with Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM)-levels above 15 percent are considered to be in a “critical” emergency, but malnutrition levels in these places exceeded this threshold *before* current conflict and famine threats, and there were other indicators of poor food and nutrition security as well (see textbox 1).

In each of these contexts, concentrated humanitarian efforts have been made to avoid further deterioration of food insecurity, including dedicated nutrition; health; and water, sanitation and hygiene programming; as well as food assistance and emergency livelihood activities. Yet, stubbornly high levels of sustained acute malnutrition — including prior to the current crises — suggest that tackling the underlying constraints to food and nutrition security may be warranted.

However, humanitarian action generally deprioritizes interventions that tackle systemic barriers to food and nutrition security, especially in conflict contexts, as they are perceived to be either less important or less feasible than emergency relief activities that emphasize more immediate needs of saving lives and livelihoods. This is driven by a number of factors, including divisions between humanitarian relief and broader development efforts by donors, U.N.-coordinating bodies, and NGO staff and program teams. Yet, a narrow focus on emergency relief may actually reinforce vicious cycles that protract food security crises and impede achieving lasting change.

Instead, humanitarian actors should invest in complementary program tracks that support immediate food security needs while also tackling underlying economic, social, political and environmental constraints to food and nutrition security. Although the fluidity of the context may make it impossible to engage in more

### Textbox 1: Pre-crisis food security emergencies

*In many of the places facing famine threats today, food and nutrition security was at crisis levels akin to the current outlooks prior to the eruption of conflict.*

**South Sudan:** *In Unity State, South Sudan, 35.4 percent of young children were estimated to be acutely malnourished before the civil war broke out (2010 figures). Across the country, 60 percent of the population was considered food insecure (consumed fewer than 2,100 kcals per day and/or survived on food items from fewer than four different food groups).<sup>2</sup>*

**Yemen:** *In 2013, prior to Yemen’s current civil war, 26.2 percent of young children in the now-besieged governorate of Al Hudaydah were acutely malnourished.<sup>3</sup> Other indicators also suggested underlying food security constraints: 25 percent of Yemeni households reported not having enough food to eat in the month prior to the survey.<sup>4</sup>*

**Somalia:** *In Somalia, regular severe droughts, coupled with continuous tensions between al-Shabab and the government, drive food insecurity. Following the 2011 drought and famine that resulted in a quarter of a million deaths,<sup>5</sup> warnings of potential famine are called regularly as cycles of drought and conflict continue to gravely impact food and nutrition security.*

<sup>2</sup> Siemon Hollema and Andrew Odero, “Report on Food Security and Nutrition in South Sudan,” VAM Food Security Analysis (World Food Program (WFP), 2012), <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp252353.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Public Health and Population (MOPHP) [Yemen] et al., *Yemen National Health and Demographic Survey 2013* (Rockville, MD: MOPHP, CSO, PAPFAM, and ICF International, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> BBC News, “Somalia Famine ‘Killed 260,000 People,’” *BBC News*, May 2, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22380352>.

robust recovery efforts to tackle systems-level constraints, such as building hard infrastructure or engaging in national-level governance reforms, other types of interventions that facilitate behavior changes and sustain pre-conflict networks are still possible.

Complementary programming that can support relief activities includes those that work with local-level institutions to facilitate equitable uptake and delivery of better agricultural, nutrition, health, WASH, and financial and market practices and services. For example, as part of malnutrition-management activities, humanitarians can encourage pre-crisis health actors, local leaders and family members to promote better infant and young child feeding practices. Alternatively, in both cash-based and in-kind food assistance activities, humanitarians can work to empower women and youth to engage in household and community-level decision-making, which is shown to improve families' overall nutrition and financial stability. Or, rather than distributing supplies to conflict-affected communities, humanitarians can facilitate market-based approaches that strengthen the local economy and are more self-sustaining.

In other cases, pre-conflict or recovery interventions that support food security may need to be adapted to a conflict context, while maintaining the integrity of the intervention as a whole. For example, group facilitation efforts may need to be modified to avoid congregating large groups of people, since a large group may be a target for violence in a conflict setting.

## Pursue a multi-disciplinary approach

While, traditionally, food security has been seen as a solitary sector drawn from livelihoods and nutrition disciplines, it is increasingly recognized as a broader indicator of well-being across disciplines. Indeed, Mercy Corps sees food security as a cross-cutting goal of much of the work we do around the world, dependent on healthy ecological systems, good governance, social empowerment, sound health, pro-poor market systems, and peace and stability.

The definition of food security — people are considered food secure when they have availability and adequate access *at all times* to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life — suggests that to be food secure, people must also be resilient. Food security only exists when, despite the shocks and stresses that occur over time, people have availability and access to the food they require. Consequently, sustaining food and nutrition security during complex crises — food access, availability and utilization — is not possible without some degree of resilience. Given that many of the places currently threatened by famine have experienced repeated conflict shocks, an emphasis on resilience is particularly relevant to food security.

Building completely resilient food security in complex crises may not be possible, but working across disciplines may be one way to start. Part of what makes a resilience approach powerful is how it breaks down silos that hamper multi-disciplinary approaches to improving human well-being.<sup>6</sup> In other words, building resilience and food security go hand in hand, and both require an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach, where layers of resilience capacities can be employed during complex crises to maintain well-being.

Mercy Corps' research on resilience,<sup>7</sup> including studies from northeast Nigeria, Syria, Somalia and Ethiopia, has identified determinants of food and nutrition security in conflict contexts and explores what factors can

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<sup>6</sup> Christophe Béné et al., "Is Resilience a Useful Concept in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition Programmes? Some Conceptual and Practical Considerations," *Food Security* 8 (2016): 123–38, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-015-0526-x>.

<sup>7</sup> Learn more about resilience at Mercy Corps here: [www.mercycorps.org/research/resilience](http://www.mercycorps.org/research/resilience)

help households maintain food and nutrition security *despite* experiencing conflict. These determinants — or resilience capacities — are listed below and provide insight on how to help communities maintain food and nutrition security in conflict contexts, as well as the types of parallel activities that may complement relief efforts.

It should be noted that not all potential determinants of food and nutrition security in emergencies have been equally investigated by Mercy Corps, and the recommendations below are not exclusive. Further research on resilient food security in conflict contexts is warranted.

## Gender and youth empowerment

### Evidence and considerations

It is well established that in non-crisis contexts, children are better nourished when women have decision-making ability and some autonomy with household resources.<sup>8</sup> Evidence from Somalia suggests that women's empowerment is also a key determinant for resilience to food security shocks during crises. According to Mercy Corps' research following the 2011 drought and famine,<sup>9</sup> women's involvement in household decision-making, where men were present, was linked to a greater ability to maintain diverse and sufficient food intake among family members during the crisis. Alternatively, in Syria, food security indicators for households with working women and youth (male and female) are better than similar households where women and youth do not earn income,<sup>10</sup> pointing to the value of households embracing additional income earners in addition to male heads of household.

However, in conflict contexts, the number of households where men are absent — due to military conscription, death and out-migration — increases.<sup>11</sup> Such female-headed households are often considered more vulnerable to food insecurity because they have a higher share of older people and children to care for, fewer assets, and less access to resources and influence. Meanwhile, the labor burden of women and children can increase when men are absent, which can impact food and nutrition security and gender empowerment either positively or negatively. In some contexts, women and girls may pursue risky livelihood strategies, including transactional sex. In others, conflict may increase opportunities for women in positive ways: in Syria, women and girls participating in economic activities outside the household have expressed

#### Textbox 2: Targeting men, women, boys and girls

*Men, women, boys and girls experience food insecurity differently, and gender and age dynamics within communities and households translate to different types of access to resources that contribute to food security, including land, money and markets.*

*Because in many contexts women's access to resources is more limited than men's, standard practice generally targets women as the primary recipient of in-kind or market-based food assistance. However, depending on the context, this may not be possible or appropriate. Considering the location and timing of food assistance, and how people of different ages and genders can access it, can improve the success of these efforts, such as ensuring the intervention location is safe for women and young people to access.*

*More broadly, even when women or young people gain resources or knowledge from an intervention that supports food security, they may not be able to maintain control of the resource or practice new skills if gender dynamics favor men and elders' control of resources and household decision-making. Therefore, understanding underlying gender and age dynamics within a community are critical to designing a successful food security program. For example, while a livelihood intervention may envision targeting women and youth as the primary beneficiary, inclusion of men and elders in the process is critical to ensuring women and youth are supported to participate and benefit as planned.*

<sup>8</sup> Duncan Thomas, "Intra-Household Resource Allocation: An Inferential Approach," *The Journal of Human Resources* 25, no. 4 (1990): 635–64.

<sup>9</sup> Jon Kurtz, "What Really Matters for Resilience: Exploratory Evidence on the Determinants of Resilience to Food Security Shocks in Southern Somalia" (Washington, DC: Mercy Corps, October 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Kimberly Howe et al., "The Wages of War: Learning from How Syrians Have Adapted Their Livelihoods through Seven Years of Conflict" (Washington, DC: Mercy Corps, February 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Gender, Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises: Women and Girls as Agents of Resilience" (Rome: FAO, 2016).

satisfaction with increased public, social and labor roles, even while their labor burden is higher.<sup>12</sup>

## Recommendations

- Consider the unique gender dynamics and needs of men, women, boys and girls as you design food and nutrition interventions, including location, timing and approaches (see textbox 2).
- Include sensitization efforts for men in support of women's equitable participation in income-generating activities, household decision-making and community institutions.
- Advance research on the ways gender empowerment can support food and nutrition security *within* complex crises, including where men may be absent and women may be more specifically vulnerable.

## Market access

### Evidence and considerations

Markets exist even in the bleakest conflict conditions, though supply and the price of goods can be substantially impacted. Regardless, accessing markets can help ensure households maintain food and nutrition security, because they provide physical places and networks to buy and sell goods.<sup>13</sup> During the 2011 drought and famine in Somalia, for example, households that reported good market access were more food secure than those that said they could not access markets.<sup>14</sup> In northeast Nigeria, households that experienced conflict and reported access to basic services — including markets, village institutions and infrastructure — were less likely to have malnourished children than households that did not have access.<sup>15</sup> In Syria, food security indicators were better for households that lived closer to markets, where prices were stable and where there was more market activity.<sup>16</sup> Combined, these points suggest the importance of markets in determining food and nutrition security in the face of conflict.

Conversely, however, during the 2011 drought in Ethiopia, where disagreements between pastoralist groups are frequent, access to markets was not significantly linked to better food security outcomes.<sup>17</sup> This is possibly because even where markets were accessible, limited availability and accessibility of goods, due to the drought, may have hampered their efficacy. In sum, although conflict can restrict access to markets, these spaces can support food and nutrition security when traders can supply them and households are able to reach them.

### Recommendations

- Research further the types of market access that are most likely to support better food and nutrition security in conflict contexts: networks, physical location of markets, safety in traveling to markets, etc.
- Build programs based on a sound understanding of market dynamics, and include real-time market information and analysis in program design; be ready to rapidly adjust activities based on changing market and conflict dynamics.

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<sup>12</sup> Howe et al., "The Wages of War: Learning from How Syrians Have Adapted Their Livelihoods through Seven Years of Conflict."

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Kurtz, "What Really Matters for Resilience: Exploratory Evidence on the Determinants of Resilience to Food Security Shocks in Southern Somalia."

<sup>15</sup> Patrick Baxter et al., "Resilience and Conflict in Nigeria: Analysis of Dynamics and Programming Leverage Points" (Portland, OR: Mercy Corps, May 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Howe et al., "The Wages of War: Learning from How Syrians Have Adapted Their Livelihoods through Seven Years of Conflict."

<sup>17</sup> Jon Kurtz and Greg Scarborough, "From Conflict to Coping: Evidence from Southern Ethiopia on the Contributions of Peacebuilding to Drought Resilience among Pastoralist Groups" (Portland, OR: Mercy Corps, 2012).

- Ensure humanitarian interventions in conflict environments support — and do not harm — markets and market activity. Avoid in-kind distributions and importation of goods when local markets can effectively and efficiently meet needs, while also training communities on locally-made solutions to market demands (e.g. local materials for shelter needs as opposed to imported materials). Work with fellow humanitarian actors to discourage distributions where market-based approaches can deliver the desired food security outcome.
- Inform traders which communities are receiving cash to incentivize their readiness to better serve nearby markets; if needed, subsidize traders or food retailers to continue to engage in market activity and bring diverse goods to the market at lower prices.
- Work with local authorities to negotiate access for trade across conflict lines and support the development of trade networks that can adapt in fluid environments.
- Consider the different ways men and women both access markets, and utilize market access to improve food and nutrition security.

## Livelihood strategies

### Evidence and considerations

Sustainable livelihood strategies can increase income and, thereby, increase food purchasing power for households. Yet, conflict can have a detrimental impact on livelihoods, including through market disruptions, and adversely impact food and nutrition security. Diversity in livelihood strategies is often considered a way households can manage shocks but, in reality, evidence from both Somalia and northeast Nigeria suggests that employing more livelihood strategies does not yield better food security outcomes for households in conflict contexts.<sup>18,19</sup> There are several potential reasons for this, including, for example, that the livelihood strategies employed are equally affected by shocks, or that shocks so severely impact the economic environment that any livelihood strategy is adversely affected.

Rather than focusing on diversity in livelihood strategies, a focus on conflict-resilient livelihood strategies may be a better approach. In Syria, for example, households able to adapt their livelihood strategies within the conflict-context experienced less hunger than non-adapters who rely more on agriculture and animal husbandry.<sup>20</sup> Such livelihood adaptations include engaging in small business, trade, skilled labor or working in the private sector. Some of these livelihood opportunities may also have been developed directly out of the conflict context: for example, generator maintenance as a result of increased demand for off-grid electricity, or medical assistance as a result of skills gained by supporting medical staff.<sup>21</sup>

Supporting conflict management capacities within livelihood programs may build food and nutrition security as well. Evidence from southern Ethiopia suggests that pastoralist households in communities where conflict management trainings were ongoing were more food secure than comparison households, potentially due to increased mobility that came from improved conflict management capacities.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Baxter et al., “Resilience and Conflict in Nigeria: Analysis of Dynamics and Programming Leverage Points.”

<sup>19</sup> Kurtz, “What Really Matters for Resilience: Exploratory Evidence on the Determinants of Resilience to Food Security Shocks in Southern Somalia.”

<sup>20</sup> Howe et al., “The Wages of War: Learning from How Syrians Have Adapted Their Livelihoods through Seven Years of Conflict.”

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Kurtz and Scarborough, “From Conflict to Coping: Evidence from Southern Ethiopia on the Contributions of Peacebuilding to Drought Resilience among Pastoralist Groups.”

## Recommendations

- Support livelihood strategies that are less directly affected by conflict or may be able to thrive in conflict contexts, including informal economies or other livelihood strategies that emerge as a result of conflict (where appropriate) and the provision of related vocational trainings.
- Ensure support for livelihood strategies is matched by demand for the output of those strategies to avoid skill development in vocations for which there is no market.
- Develop interventions that support locally-made products, especially where import markets of those products are thin (e.g. increasing purchase of fresh vegetables or fish, which are also nutritionally dense, through vouchers and nutrition education).
- Employ cash/voucher/food-for-work opportunities that can bolster existing livelihood strategies and lead to more productive livelihoods post-crisis (e.g. low-tech flood management infrastructure for agriculture, or low-input market-related infrastructure, such as market stalls).
- Improve business performance of existing livelihood strategies through trainings on micro-business development and value-chain development (e.g. food preservation strategies).
- Consider the specific needs and capacities of men, women, boys and girls in livelihood-based interventions.

## Financial inclusion

### Evidence and considerations

Access to financial services can serve immediate humanitarian and long-term development needs, providing greater financial access to food and other resources that support food and nutrition security. However, existing evidence on the impact of financial inclusion in sustaining food and nutrition security in conflict-contexts is sparse and underdeveloped. Mercy Corps' existing research on the subject looks broadly at different types of financial services, contributing to an incomplete picture of the role of financial inclusion in supporting food and nutrition security in conflict.

In contexts across the African continent — where financial services are generally less developed — access to financial services does not appear to be a predictor of food and nutrition security in crises. In northeastern Nigeria, for example, access to banking services was actually linked with worse nutritional status for children and was not correlated to food security indicators at all.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, receiving remittances or using insurance was not linked with either better or worse food security or nutrition.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, in Somalia, households that had debt *prior* to the drought and famine in 2011 were less food secure than households that did not,<sup>25</sup> highlighting the fact that access to credit — or, rather, incurring debt — prior to a crisis can actually hamper a household's ability to cope. In contexts where communities face shocks regularly, access to credit can overwhelm a household with debt and ultimately undermine food security.

However, in Syria, where financial services were more developed prior to conflict, access to and use of financial services *is* a predictor of better food security. Households are more food secure in communities where there are more savings and loan institutions, and where they are able to borrow money successfully, though the ability to borrow money is extremely limited in the current context. Likewise, households that

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<sup>23</sup> Baxter et al., "Resilience and Conflict in Nigeria: Analysis of Dynamics and Programming Leverage Points."

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Kurtz, "What Really Matters for Resilience: Exploratory Evidence on the Determinants of Resilience to Food Security Shocks in Southern Somalia."

were able to receive remittances in the six months prior to the survey were far less hungry, in terms of household hunger scales, than those that were unable to receive them.<sup>26</sup>

Further research is needed to understand the reasons for these results, as well as what types of financial products may better support food and nutrition security in conflict zones. Understanding the specific societal norms that influence the use of formal and informal financial products is likely key to uncovering what products may work in different contexts. Traditional savings groups that are often pursued in less-developed contexts, such as village savings and loan associations (VSLAs), may not be as feasible in fluid conflict environments, where households may be wary of money box holders fleeing from violence or where social cohesion is especially fragmented. However, in semi-stable conditions, such as in displacement camps, they may be more viable.

## Recommendations

- Investigate further the role of financial inclusion in supporting food and nutrition security in conflict-affected zones, including the types of financial products and services that may be appropriate within varied levels of development and how they are used in these contexts by men and women.
- Consider developing financial services that are flexible and adapted to fluid contexts, such as mobile savings or loan platforms (where the mobile network is functioning) or short-cycle VSLAs, while also supporting local markets.

## Natural resource access

### Evidence and considerations

In rural pastoralist environments, the ability to access natural resources such as water, farmland and pastureland is a key resilience capacity. During the 2011 drought and famine, when the presence of al-Shabab made it difficult for humanitarians to provide aid in certain famine-affected regions in Somalia, households that had access to watering points were more food secure than households that did not have access.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, in southern Ethiopia, where tensions between pastoralist groups simmered throughout the same drought, households with access to natural resources were more food secure than households that reported poor access during that time.<sup>28</sup> Interventions that sustainably improve access to quality natural resources may be one way to support food and nutrition security in complex crises.

### Recommendations

- Pursue a systems-based approach by identifying and supporting local-level institutions that manage natural resources, and facilitate local agreements to improve access to key livelihood resources during conflict.
- Develop projects that rehabilitate and restore the natural resources rural livelihoods rely upon, including reseeded pastureland, improved management of water resources, improved forest management and reduced consumption of fuelwood.
- Consider fuelwood needs, potential protection concerns and gender-based violence associated with collection of fuelwood, and the use of energy-efficient cook stoves in humanitarian response.

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<sup>26</sup> Howe et al., "The Wages of War: Learning from How Syrians Have Adapted Their Livelihoods through Seven Years of Conflict."

<sup>27</sup> Kurtz, "What Really Matters for Resilience: Exploratory Evidence on the Determinants of Resilience to Food Security Shocks in Southern Somalia."

<sup>28</sup> Kurtz and Scarborough, "From Conflict to Coping: Evidence from Southern Ethiopia on the Contributions of Peacebuilding to Drought Resilience among Pastoralist Groups."

# Social cohesion and capital

## Evidence and considerations

Social cohesion — “the willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other to survive and prosper”<sup>29</sup> — can help maintain food security in the face of shocks. One component of social cohesion is social capital, which refers to the positive relationships and support networks that individuals can tap into when facing crisis. When social capital exists between individuals, they may be willing, for example, to share food with each other when facing hunger. Social capital can exist between individuals within communities (“bonding” social capital) and across communities (“bridging” social capital).<sup>30</sup>

Bonding social capital can facilitate people’s access to resources that support food security, such as borrowing food from neighbors or negotiating better prices with frequented traders. Before a crisis becomes protracted, bonding social capital is critical for household survival — and it is often the case that in the early stages of crises, shared hardship results in people coming together. But this is not an infinite resource. As crises draw out and resources become depleted, households are increasingly forced to look out for themselves. For example, many Somali households that relied on community support mechanisms during the 2011 drought and famine were found to be *less* food secure than households that did not rely on such networks.<sup>31</sup> This may be because these households were more food insecure and vulnerable than other households at the onset of the crisis, and had to rely on community support mechanisms, whereas less vulnerable households had other resources to rely on. In Syria, however, people reported that family and social networks helped them find new jobs and were important sources of informal financial support, both of which are linked with better food security.<sup>32</sup>

Households’ ability to access support from outside their immediate community during protracted crises (bridging social capital) is also linked with better food security in complex crises. Somali families that had recently engaged in social and economic activities with members of other ethnic groups consumed a far more diverse diet than those that did not in the wake of the 2011 famine and drought.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, in Syria, households that had more interactions with people outside their communities experienced less hunger than those who had fewer interactions.<sup>34</sup> Notably, however, in conflict contexts these relationships are often strained due to inaccessibility or conflict between certain groups, making it more difficult to draw support. In Syria, for example, many people must rely on social media to seek jobs and financial help from more-distant friends and family.

## Recommendation

- Analyze potential networks, connectors and dividers between groups, within and across communities, to better identify ways to support social cohesion in food security interventions.
- Acknowledge social disparities and design interventions that take them into account, do not exacerbate them and, ideally, build unity.

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<sup>29</sup> Dick Stanley, “What Do We Know about Social Cohesion: The Research Perspective of the Federal Government’s Social Cohesion Research Network,” *The Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers Canadiens de Sociologie* 28, no. 1 (2003): 5–17.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel P. Aldrich and Michelle A. Meyer, “Social Capital and Community Resilience,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 59, no. 2 (2014): 1–16.

<sup>31</sup> Kurtz, “What Really Matters for Resilience: Exploratory Evidence on the Determinants of Resilience to Food Security Shocks in Southern Somalia.”

<sup>32</sup> Howe et al., “The Wages of War: Learning from How Syrians Have Adapted Their Livelihoods through Seven Years of Conflict.”

<sup>33</sup> Kurtz, “What Really Matters for Resilience: Exploratory Evidence on the Determinants of Resilience to Food Security Shocks in Southern Somalia.”

<sup>34</sup> Howe et al., “The Wages of War: Learning from How Syrians Have Adapted Their Livelihoods through Seven Years of Conflict.”

- Ensure food security interventions build upon and *do no harm*<sup>35</sup> to existing social cohesion, and design activities to promote greater social cohesion through collective action across different ethnic, class, and age groups and between displaced and host communities.
- Support intra-community communication mechanisms and tools, including access to mobile networks where possible.

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Many of the capacities that yield better food and nutrition security are particularly limited in conflict contexts, which is even more of a reason to invest in and promote them. However, although humanitarian interventions may provide some space to address short- and long-term needs in conflict settings, these efforts are under-resourced and small scale.

According to OCHA's 2017 Global Humanitarian Appeal, around \$2 billion — of the \$5.4 billion requested — in humanitarian food and agricultural relief was provided in 2016.<sup>36</sup> While, in some cases, this funding goes toward relief programs that include efforts to improve food security systems and behaviors, it largely goes toward in-kind distributions or financial resources. Despite such investment, 2017 saw famine warnings in four different countries — and the food security outlook in these contexts remains grim.

Additionally, since the beginning of 2016, Mercy Corps has received roughly \$40 million from Food for Peace, WFP and FAO for food and nutrition security programs in Nigeria, Syria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen alone. While Mercy Corps' work in these crises only represents a small proportion of the total investment in food and nutrition security across the humanitarian community, it is substantial portion of Mercy Corps' portfolio. In 2016, Food for Peace emergency program funding represented roughly 12.5 percent of all Mercy Corps' grant funds for that year.

With so much invested in food and nutrition security — and ongoing fragility threatening lasting improvements — it is increasingly important to respond better. Removing systemic barriers to food security is necessary in conflict contexts, yet efforts to facilitate these changes will not happen without the appropriate resources. Mercy Corps must work with its donors and country programs to adapt our responses to the protracted nature of these complex crises by identifying and addressing the economic, political, social and environmental pre-crisis constraints to food and nutrition security, while also providing immediate relief.

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<sup>35</sup> Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace-Or War* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999).

<sup>36</sup> Derived from: OCHA, "Global Humanitarian Overview 2017" (The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2017), <https://www.unocha.org/publication/global-humanitarian-overview/global-humanitarian-overview-2017>.

# Annex 1

## Mercy Corps' Evidence of Predictors of Food Security during Shocks & Stresses

The table below presents key findings from Mercy Corps' studies into specific resilience capacities, focusing on which determinants are linked to better food security in the face of conflict and environmental shocks and stresses. By drawing across contexts, it is possible to better understand how different capacities support food security under different types of shocks and stresses. In the table below, **green** suggests that the capacity is positively correlates with food security during the corresponding shock, **yellow** represents no correlation, and **red** suggests that the capacity actually negatively correlates with food security during a shock.

RESILIENCE CAPACITY	HIGH INTENSITY CONFLICT SHOCK	LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT STRESS	HIGH INTENSITY ENVIRONMENTAL SHOCK	LOW INTENSITY ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS
<b>ACCESS TO SERVICES (RESOURCES, MARKETS, INFRASTRUCTURE)</b>				
Access to Natural Resources	Less Coping Strategies (Somalia)	Less Hunger, More Dietary Diversity and Less Coping Strategies (Ethiopia)	Less Coping Strategies (Ethiopia and Somalia)	Less Hunger and More Dietary Diversity (Ethiopia)
Access to Public / Basic Community Services	Less Stunting, Underweight and Wasting (Nigeria); <b>More Coping Strategies (Somalia)</b>		<b>No correlation (Ethiopia); More Coping Strategies (Somalia)</b>	
Access to Telephone	Less Coping Strategies (Somalia)		Less Coping Strategies (Somalia)	
Access to Veterinary Services	Less Coping Strategies (Somalia)		Less Coping Strategies (Somalia)	
Access to Electricity	Less stunting, Wasting and Hunger (Nigeria)			
Market Access	Less Coping Strategies (Somalia); Less Hunger (Syria)		Less Coping Strategies (Somalia and Nepal); More Dietary Diversity (Nepal); <b>No correlation (Ethiopia)</b>	
Information / Tech Access	Less hunger and Coping Strategies and Higher Food Expenditures (Syria)			
<b>LIVELIHOODS</b>				
Pastoralist Livelihood	Less Coping Strategies (Somalia)		Less Coping Strategies (Somalia)	
More Livelihoods / Diverse Incomes	<b>No Correlation (Nigeria); Less Hunger (Syria)</b>		<b>More Coping Strategies (Philippines); No Correlation (Nepal)</b>	
Pre-Conflict Income	Less Hunger (Syria)			
Youth Employment	Less Coping Strategies (Syria)			
Livelihood Adaptation	More Food Secure (Syria)			

FINANCIAL SERVICES				
Formal Savings			Less Coping Strategies (Philippines); More Dietary Diversity (Nepal)	
Informal Savings			Less Coping Strategies (Philippines)	
Formal Loans			No Correlation (Philippines); Less Coping Strategies (Nepal)	
Informal Loans	Less Hunger and Less Coping Strategies (Syria)		No Correlation (Philippines); Less Coping Strategies (Nepal)	
Remittances	No Correlation (Nigeria) Less Hunger (Syria)		No Correlation (Nepal)	
Bank Account	More Stunting (Nigeria)		No Correlation (Philippines)	
Insurance	No Correlation (Nigeria)		No Correlation (Philippines)	
Prior Debt	More Coping Strategies (Somalia)		More Coping Strategies (Somalia); More Coping Strategies (Nepal)	
EMPOWERMENT				
Women's Empowerment (Financial Decision-Making)	Less Coping Strategies (Somalia)		No Correlation (Philippines); Less Coping Strategies (Somalia)	
Education	Less Hunger (Syria)			
Female Headed Households; Female income earners	More Hunger and Coping Strategies (Syria)			
Female income earners in Gender/Youth inclusive communities	More Food Security (Syria)			
CONFLICT MANAMGENT AND SOCIAL COHESION				
Freedom of Movement		Less Coping Strategies (Ethiopia)	Less Coping Strategies (Ethiopia)	
Peaceful Inter-Community Interactions		More Hunger and Less Dietary Diversity (Uganda); No Correlation (Ethiopia)		More Hunger and Less Dietary Diversity (Uganda); No Correlation (Ethiopia)
Trust	No Correlation (Nigeria)	More Dietary Diversity (Uganda)		More Dietary Diversity (Uganda)
Traditional Leaders Manage Conflict		Less Coping Strategies (Ethiopia)		Less Coping Strategies (Ethiopia)
Government & Traditional Leaders Manage Conflict Together		No Correlation (Uganda and Ethiopia)		No Correlation (Uganda and Ethiopia)
Government Manages Conflict		No Correlation (Ethiopia)		No Correlation (Ethiopia)

EMERGENCY RESPONSE / AID / SOCIAL CAPITAL				
International Aid			No Correlation (Philippines)	
Community DRR			More Coping Strategies (Nepal)	
Household DRR			More Dietary Diversity (Nepal)	
Bonding Social Capital / Rely on Community Support	More Coping Strategies (Somalia); Worse Food Security (Syria)	Less Hunger and More Dietary Diversity (Uganda)	More Coping Strategies (Philippines and Somalia); More Dietary Diversity (Nepal)	Less Hunger and More Dietary Diversity (Uganda)
Linking Social Capital / Rely on Government Support	Less Coping Strategies (Somalia)	Less Hunger and Less Coping Strategies (Ethiopia)	Less Coping Strategies (Philippines and Somalia); More Coping Strategies and Less Dietary Diversity (Nepal)	Less Hunger and Less Coping Strategies (Ethiopia)
Bridging Social Capital	Less Household Hunger and Higher Food Expenditures (Syria)	More Coping Strategies (Uganda)	Less Dietary Diversity (Nepal)	More Coping Strategies (Uganda)

## Table Bibliography

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### About Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.



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