

Report: Crisis resilience 'critical' to stem rising hunger

April 19 2023



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A shift towards permanent "crisis resilience" from short-term aid is crucial to mitigate increasingly frequent shocks to the global food system and tackle rising global hunger, say food policy researchers.

Disruption to [food systems](#) from multiple crises such as [economic downturn](#), conflict, climate change-related weather events and the COVID-19 pandemic, has caused a surge in acute food insecurity in recent years.

The [Global Report on Food Crisis: Mid-Year Update 2022](#) estimates that as many as 205 million people in 45 countries experienced crisis-level acute food insecurity or worse, nearly double the number in 2016. It says requests for humanitarian assistance reached a record high of US\$41 billion.

"Crises, shocks, and volatility are no longer exceptions and may become the new normal," says Johan Swinnen, director general of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and managing director of the CGIAR Systems Transformation.

"We should better predict and prepare, implement effective and accountable governance and institutions, and invest to build resilience against future crises."

The 2023 Global Food Policy Report released last week (13 April) by IFPRI looks at evidence-based policy and governance solutions to improve [early warning](#) and rapid response systems and make food systems more resilient to shocks.

"Traditional crisis response has focused on humanitarian and emergency food aid, but a more systematic and sustainable approach is needed to address protracted crises, which are likely rising," says the report, which identifies more than 30 research tools available to support such a response.

"Shifting toward longer-term and more permanent 'crisis resilience' is critical," it adds.

The report says that early warning systems, combined with preventive measures, can facilitate both immediate humanitarian assistance and the delivery of aid to support longer-term development.

Rob Vos, IFPRI's director of markets, trade and institutions, says a closer connection is needed between early warning systems that monitor global food market volatility and those that monitor food insecurity at the local level.

"Both systems further need to pay more attention to monitoring the risk factors that underly food supply or price shocks as that cause food crises," Vos tells SciDev.Net.

"This will help save lives, livelihoods and money by enabling anticipatory action before a shock turns into a crisis."

The IFPRI report notes that South Asia is far off-track to achieving Zero Hunger (SDG2) by 2030 and progress in tackling the problem has stalled.

"There is underinvestment in agriculture in the Asia-Pacific region, but countries can increase investment in climate smart agriculture," says Anjani Kumar, IFPRI's senior research fellow and co-author of the report's chapter on South Asia.

"For instance, the existing subsidies for fertilizer and electricity can be repurposed to promote climate resilient agriculture."

The report also highlights the need for crisis response to be inclusive of women, forced migrants and other [vulnerable groups](#). It makes a case for improving collection of gender-disaggregated data and ensuring that women and marginal groups in developing countries are included in crisis response.

Grassroots groups, such as India's Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), can help in the collection of data through local programs, says Hazel Malapit, a senior research coordinator in IFPRI's poverty, gender and inclusion unit.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, SEWA helped women to sign up for government relief and organized their members to sell their vegetables," Malapit tells SciDev.Net.

"These groups have their ears to the ground, they know their communities best and can reach those who are most in need. That's the kind of nuanced, granular information we need to be able to design appropriate responses."

Daniel Walker, chief scientist at the Australian Center for International Agricultural Research says the report shows the importance of international agricultural research.

"Our global food systems are increasingly interconnected and vulnerable to disruptions," he says.

"The impact, whether it is climate change or conflict, has often been felt hardest by smallholder farmers in developing countries who produce food for half the world's population and make up to majority of those without enough to eat."

Affordable goal

Another report, [Ending hunger: the role of agri-food financing](#), also launched on 13 April, calls for reforming global development aid and finance to make ending hunger an "affordable goal."

Analyses carried out by Economist Impact with CGIAR, the world's

largest global agricultural innovation network, found that almost half of overseas development assistance for food and agriculture was spent on food aid in 2021. Less than 7.5 percent of overseas aid was spent on research and innovation to tackle the root causes of hunger and malnutrition.

"While humanitarian food aid is a natural response to a crisis, funding research and innovation allows us to break free of the crisis response cycle and build long-term resilience," says Claudia Sadoff, executive managing director of CGIAR.

Globally, almost 670 million people are projected to face hunger by 2030. The report recommends scaling up overseas development assistance, tapping new sources of private sector funding, and maximizing existing investments to increase the volume and impact of funding for resilient food systems.

Provided by SciDev.Net

Citation: Report: Crisis resilience 'critical' to stem rising hunger (2023, April 19) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-04-crisis-resilience-critical-stem-hunger.html>

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