

CHAPTER 2

RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AND FOOD SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA: CONFLICTS AND MIGRATION

CONFLICTS, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AND FOOD SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA

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A. Summary Note*

This paper considers the effects of conflict on food security in West Africa, including the nature of conflict and the trends in conflict within this subregion of Africa. The relationship between food security and conflict is analyzed in a general context, raising some key issues. The effects of conflict in Sierra Leone and Liberia are examined to illustrate policy implications and directions that policy should take.

Conflict and food security are closely related. For the period 1992–2003, conflict and economic problems accounted for more than 35 percent of food emergencies compared with 15 percent for the period 1986–1991 (FAO 2003d). By September 2003, 22 of 38 countries that faced serious food shortages requiring international assistance were in Africa. Civil strife accounts for well over half of the reported food emergencies in Africa.

Conflict within West Africa tends to be localized or regional in nature, spilling across borders in some cases and stemming from a diverse mix of environmental, social, political, and cultural factors. Only Benin, Cape Verde, and Ghana were considered to be at peace in 2001. In 2002, Guinea-Bissau suffered a coup d'état; Côte d'Ivoire (1999, 2002), Sierra Leone (1991–2002), and Liberia (1989–1997, 2003) experienced state collapse and violent conflict; and Guinea and Togo faced conflict arising from disputed governance. During the 1980s, the increased vulnerability in rural areas as a result of drought in the Sahel region resulted in increased numbers of people seeking asylum in Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Later, the nature of conflict altered, having more of a political and ethnic basis. As a result, conflict constitutes the *major explanatory factor* for famine, hunger, and malnutrition. Policy responses during and in the postconflict period, particularly in relation to the dimensions of food security, need to address who is being affected by conflict, why, and how.

The Sahel and West Africa Club (2002) has identified various types of conflict that can be characterized broadly as follows: (1) political crises involving armed revolt or state-sponsored violence; (2) border disputes between states; (3) conflict related to culture, group identity, or ethnicity; (4) conflict related to population movement, particularly economic migration, forced migration, and refugee flows; (5) conflict over natural resources; (6) structural violence such as slavery and bonded labor; and (7) socioeconomic crises such as violence emerging from unequal distribution of assets, deep-seated corruption, and so forth. Most countries in West Africa have in recent history suffered from at least five of these types of conflict. In addition, they identified trends in conflicts in this subregion of Africa that indicate that the numbers of migrants or refugees linked to pressures on natural resources are likely to rise and that border disputes between local populations are likely to have severe repercussions for the entire region (for example, Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire).

The World Food Summit stated that food security exists when “all people, *at all times*, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”(FAO 1996). The analysis of food security covers three dimensions: availability, access, and stability. In terms of food availability, the information on food output for West Africa corroborates the dichotomy in the experiences vis-à-vis food security between those countries with and without conflict. Agricultural and per capita food production tend to be on

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average 10 percent lower after conflict, which translates directly into a lower daily energy supply (DES, calories). Both Sierra Leone and Liberia, for example, show significant reductions in daily calorie supply of 14 percent and 13 percent, respectively. Countries without conflict, in contrast, show improvements (for example, Benin and Guinea with improvements of 24 percent and 6 percent, respectively, in daily calories).

A major consequence of conflict is the variability in agricultural production, which is characterized by generally very low yields. For West Africa, there are wide differences among countries. Livestock raising especially appears to be one of the most vulnerable agricultural activities during war times. FAO has estimated losses of US\$52 billion in agricultural output through conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa between 1970 and 1997, that is, 30 percent of the agricultural value-added (FAO 2000). It should be noted that average losses of US\$4.3 billion per year in agricultural value-added for all conflict-affected developing countries exceeds the amount of the food aid bill.

In terms of food access, conflict emerges with a very negative effect. Although the incidence of undernourishment for West Africa as a whole is declining, individual country inspection reveals a story of contrasts. The prevalence of hunger is high and increasing in countries suffering prolonged conflict. This is particularly the case for Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire. In stark contrast for the same period, 1990–2001, Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Mali displayed remarkable reductions in the numbers of undernourished. Ghana particularly stands out with a reduction from 5.5 million in the numbers of undernourished to 2.4 million, a reduction of 23 percentage points (FAO 2003d). If we consider using the human development indicator (HDI) as a proxy for food access and, more precisely, as a measure of losses and gains in human capital, the correlation coefficient between HDI and poverty and food insecurity tends to be high. Once again, different measures of poverty provide compelling evidence that food security is adversely affected for a prolonged period by conflict.

Stability of food security during conflict depends to some extent on the nature and scope of the conflict itself. Generally, production ceases almost immediately and the loss in output may be hampered in the long term if economic structures are specifically targeted with the intention of reducing the economic capabilities of the opponent; farmers and agricultural laborers are forced to move away from the fighting; displaced persons lose access to their food entitlements; persons trapped in conflict zones are cut off from market links and relief food; people lose their employment and income as a result of fighting; and informal taxation adds to economic decline.

The policy implications for improved food security are varied. Within the short term, humanitarian response and emergency agricultural support programs address basic needs in increasingly diverse and imaginative ways, some with significant capacity-building effects. These short-term responses need to be located within a broader and longer-term food security policy framework aimed at improving people's resilience, preparing to take advantage of lulls in conflict or the prospect of a more sustained peace, and helping prevent further disasters (FAO 2003a).

Following conflict, Sierra Leone has set about implementing a fairly prescriptive rehabilitation program. Central to this program is the recognition that long-term sustained economic growth and significant poverty reduction hinges on promoting the agricultural sector. For example, increased rice production would go some way toward reducing the hefty import bill. Increased production requires a directed agricultural policy that encourages production in those crops where Sierra Leone possesses a comparative advantage. Although development of agriculture is essential for moving toward increased food security, it is by no means a sufficient condition. Moreover, the longer-term strategy must be to diversify sources of rural income if sustainable food security is to be achieved. Given that agriculture tends to be dominated by small farms, future policies need to focus on the education and training of the rural population, especially women, in developing the rural community, access to credit, and land reform. In particular, attention needs to focus on incentives to improve female nutrition, especially for women of childbearing age. The role of women in the agricultural sector of Sierra Leone is such that there is a need

to promote their rights to the ownership of assets. In the postconflict era, there is evidence that some of these policies are beginning to take shape and that in other areas, the dialogue is beginning.

In contrast, the conflict in Liberia has been such that institutional reconstruction seems necessary as a prerequisite to support agricultural development. In 1999, the government launched a “back to farming” campaign in an attempt to make Liberia self-sufficient in food production and to enable agriculture to form the backbone of economic recovery. Difficulty in accessing markets, poor infrastructure, and the lack of income-earning opportunities, rather than a land shortage or a shortage of food, are effectively the main barriers to food security in Liberia and general agricultural development and growth. Food availability is affected by sanctions (inadequate structures for long-term food production as a result of a weakened agricultural sector) and access is seriously distorted through a politically motivated policy to weaken opposition groups. The crisis of food security and agricultural decline is set to continue in Liberia unless there is a wide-scale concerted effort to address the complex nature of the conflict.

Ghana is frequently cited as the success story of West Africa, achieving a reduction in the number of undernourished from 64 percent to an extraordinary 12 percent between 1979 and 2000. Although income distribution remained unchanged, the success is almost entirely explained by increased food availability. Expansion of maize, yam, cassava, and plantain production accounted for most of the increase in DES. An improved economic environment and increased market access for farmers resulted in an increase in the amount of land under cultivation. The increased food security was driven by economic growth, with export farmers particularly benefiting from the macroeconomic climate. Ghana’s experience with increasing food production highlights the importance of investments in developing more productive staple food technologies and taking those new techniques to producers. In the future, policymakers will increasingly have to address the issue of how to make markets work better and improve access to food in those regions and for those households yet to benefit. Targeted policies to address this inequality are necessary through the implementation of pro-poor policies. Finally, as the data on undernutrition of children under five years old suggest, although availability and access are necessary, other efforts, including targeting mothers’ education and nutrition, are also important and necessary activities to eradicate hunger (FAO 2003c; see Croppenstedt et al. 2003 for a fuller examination).

In conclusion, the interaction between food security and conflict needs to be comprehensively understood, as well as its potential role in conflict prevention and peace-building processes.

CONFLITS, DÉVELOPPEMENT RURAL ET SÉCURITÉ ALIMENTAIRE EN AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST

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B. Résumé*

Cet article examine les conséquences des conflits en Afrique de l'Ouest. Plus précisément, il analyse la nature des crises et les tendances des conflits dans cette sous-région de l'Afrique. L'étude du rapport entre sécurité alimentaire et conflits dans un contexte général permet de soulever un certain nombre de problèmes clés. Les conséquences des hostilités en Sierra Leone et au Libéria servent de trame de fond pour rendre compte de l'implication des conflits et fournir des orientations sur la politique.

Conflits et sécurité alimentaire sont étroitement liés. Entre 1992 et 2003, les conflits et les problèmes économiques ont entraîné plus de 35 % de l'aide alimentaire d'urgence contre 15 % sur la période 1986-1991 (FAO, SOFA 2003). En septembre 2003, sur les 38 pays souffrant d'une pénurie alimentaire exigeant l'aide alimentaire internationale, 22 étaient des pays africains. Les guerres civiles sont responsables pour une bonne moitié de l'aide alimentaire d'urgence vers l'Afrique.

Les conflits en Afrique de l'Ouest, le plus généralement affectent une région et dans certains cas surpassent les limites frontalières. Leurs origines sont multi-factorielles : économiques, sociales, politiques et culturelles. Seuls le Bénin, le Cap-Vert et le Ghana ont bénéficié d'une situation de paix en 2001. En 2002, la Guinée-Bissau a dû affronter un coup d'Etat, la Côte d'Ivoire (en 1999 et en 2002), la Sierra Leone (de 1991 à 2002) et le Libéria (de 1989 à 1997, puis en 2003) ont vécu un effondrement de l'Etat et connu de violents combats suite à des dissensions pour le pouvoir. Pendant les années 80, la vulnérabilité accrue des zones rurales liée aux sécheresses dans la région du Sahel s'est soldée par une augmentation du nombre de réfugiés au Ghana, en Guinée, au Mali et au Burkina Faso. Par la suite, la nature du conflit s'est déplacée sur des bases plus ethniques et politiques. Ainsi, les conflits constituent la cause principale des famines, de la faim et de la malnutrition. Les réponses de politique économique à apporter pendant et après ces périodes de troubles, notamment du point de vue de la sécurité alimentaire, doivent intégrer les questions suivantes : quelles sont les populations touchées par ces conflits, pourquoi et comment.

Le Club du Sahel a identifié en 2002 différents types de conflits que l'on peut résumer ainsi: (i) Crises politiques impliquant une révolte armée ou actes de violence à l'initiative de l'État ; (ii) désaccords entre des États sur les limites des frontières ; (iii) conflits d'ordre culturel, d'identité, ou ethnique ; (iv) conflits liés à des mouvements de population, notamment migrations économiques, migrations forcées et afflux de réfugiés ; (v) conflits pour l'appropriation de ressources naturelles ; (vi) violence structurelle telle qu'esclavage et travail servile ; (vii) crises d'ordre socio-économique, telles qu'actes de violence causés par une distribution inégale des biens, corruption généralisée, etc. La plupart des pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest ont connu au moins cinq de ces types de conflits au cours des dernières années. En outre, le Club du Sahel a mis en évidence une tendance à l'accroissement du nombre de migrants ou de réfugiés dont le départ est lié à des pressions portant sur des ressources naturelles et souligné l'importance des répercussions des crises frontalières entre les populations locales sur l'ensemble de la région (au Nigeria et en Côte d'Ivoire par exemple).

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Lors du Sommet mondial de l'alimentation, il a été stipulé que la sécurité alimentaire ne peut se faire que lorsque « tous les êtres humains ont, *à tout moment*, un accès physique et économique à une nourriture suffisante, saine et nutritive leur permettant de satisfaire leurs besoins énergétiques et leurs préférences alimentaires pour mener une vie saine et active» (FAO, Plan d'action du Sommet mondial de l'alimentation, 1996). L'analyse de la sécurité alimentaire englobe trois aspects: disponibilité, accessibilité et stabilité. Sur le plan de la disponibilité alimentaire, les chiffres de la production agricole en l'Afrique de l'Ouest confirment la dichotomie des expériences vécues par ces pays en matière de sécurité alimentaire, avec ou sans conflit. La production agricole par personne baisse en moyenne de 10 % après une période de crise, ce qui se traduit immédiatement par une disponibilité énergétique alimentaire (DEA) plus faible. Le Libéria, et la Sierra Leone, par exemple, ont subi une baisse significative de leur DEA de 13 % et 14 % respectivement. A l'inverse, on observe des améliorations dans les pays indemnes de tout conflit, comme la Guinée et le Bénin avec une augmentation de 6 % et 24 % respectivement.

L'une des conséquences principales de ces crises est la variabilité de la production agricole, qui se caractérise généralement par de très faibles récoltes. On constate de grandes différences parmi les pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest. L'élevage en particulier, semble être l'une des activités les plus vulnérables en temps de guerre. La FAO a estimé les pertes en production agricole en Afrique sub-saharienne à 52 milliards de dollars US pour les années 1970 à 1997, soit 30 % de la valeur agricole cumulée (FAO, SOFA 2000). Il est à noter que les pertes moyennes en valeur agricole cumulée, évaluées à 4,3 milliards de dollars par an pour l'ensemble des pays en voie de développement affectés par des conflits, dépassent le montant global de l'aide alimentaire.

Du point de vue de l'*accès à l'alimentation*, ces crises ont des effets extrêmement négatifs. Tandis que le taux de sous-alimentation en Afrique de l'Ouest diminue dans l'ensemble, un examen des pays au cas par cas révèle une multitude de contrastes. Les famines sont fréquentes dans les pays qui subissent des conflits prolongés. Cela est particulièrement vrai pour le Libéria, la Sierra Leone et la Côte d'Ivoire. À l'opposé, au cours de la même période de 1999 à 2001, le Ghana, le Nigeria, le Burkina, la Mauritanie et le Mali ont vu leur nombre de sous-alimentés diminuer de manière considérable. Le Ghana se place en première position avec une baisse de 5,5 millions à 2,4 millions, soit moins 23 points de pourcentage (cf. FAO, SOFI 2003). Si l'on envisage l'utilisation de l'IDH comme modèle de prévision de l'accès à l'alimentation et, plus précisément, comme système d'évaluation des pertes et profits en capital humain, le coefficient de corrélation entre IDH, pauvreté et insécurité alimentaire a tendance à être élevé. Une fois encore, si l'on a recourt à différents systèmes d'évaluation de la pauvreté, les faits nous apportent des preuves incontestables que la sécurité alimentaire est défavorablement affectée par une période de troubles prolongée.

La *stabilité* de la sécurité alimentaire en situation de crise dépend dans une certaine mesure de la nature et de la portée de cette dernière, en particulier celles associées aux conflits. D'une manière générale, la production est presque immédiatement stoppée et la baisse de rendement peut se prolonger à long terme si les structures économiques sont explicitement centrées sur l'intention de réduire les capacités économiques de l'adversaire. Les agriculteurs et les ouvriers agricoles sont contraints de s'éloigner des combats. Les populations déplacées sont ainsi privées de leurs droits alimentaires et les populations piégées en zone de conflit perdent emplois et revenus ainsi que le prélèvement d'impôts officieux précipite le déclin économique de la région.

Les *implications sur des décisions de politique économique* pour une amélioration de la sécurité alimentaire sont diverses. À court terme, la réponse humanitaire et les programmes d'aide d'urgence répondent à des besoins fondamentaux et doivent être de plus en plus ingénieux et variés, certains ayant des effets significatifs sur le renforcement des capacités des populations. Ces solutions d'urgence doivent être élaborées dans le cadre d'une politique de sécurité alimentaire plus large, à long terme et plus viable qui viserait à améliorer les facultés d'adaptation des populations en les préparant à tirer profit des

accalmies ou de la perspective d'une paix durable et ainsi permettre d'éviter d'autres désastres (FAO, Atelier Tivoli, 2003).

Suite à sa période de trouble, la Sierra Leone s'est lancée dans la mise en œuvre d'un programme de réhabilitation dont la récupération de l'agriculture joue un rôle principal. Il a été bâti sur la prise de conscience que l'on ne peut obtenir une croissance économique, durable et une réduction significative de la pauvreté qu'en favorisant la promotion du secteur agricole. Ainsi, par exemple, une augmentation de la production de riz permettrait de réduire la lourde facture à l'importation. Ce qui exige une politique agricole dirigée qui encourage les cultures dans lesquelles la Sierra Leone possède un avantage relatif. Mais si le développement de l'agriculture est une condition nécessaire pour aboutir à une sécurité alimentaire accrue, elle n'est en aucun cas suffisante. En outre, toute stratégie à long terme doit viser à diversifier les sources de revenus agricoles afin de garantir une sécurité alimentaire durable. Dans la mesure où l'agriculture tend à être dominée par de petites exploitations, les lignes d'actions à venir devront être axées sur l'éducation et la formation de la population rurale, le développement de la communauté, l'accès au crédit et la réforme agraire. L'on devra tout particulièrement s'attacher à la formation des femmes; à promouvoir une alimentation meilleure pour les femmes, notamment celles en âge d'avoir des enfants. Vu leur rôle dans le secteur agricole de la Sierra Leone, les femmes doivent avoir accès aux propriétés foncières. Aujourd'hui, il apparaît de manière avérée que certaines de ces politiques commencent à prendre forme et que dans d'autres régions, le dialogue est ouvert.

En revanche, le conflit au Libéria a été tel que le développement agricole nécessite au préalable la reconstruction institutionnelle. En 1999, le gouvernement a lancé une vaste campagne de « retour à la ferme » pour engager le Libéria vers la voie de l'autosuffisance et édifier l'agriculture comme le fer de lance du rétablissement économique. Les difficultés d'accès au marché, le manque d'infrastructures et l'absence de sources de revenus ont constitué davantage de freins pour parvenir à la sécurité alimentaire, au développement agricole et à la croissance d'un manque de terre ou un manque de production alimentaire. La disponibilité alimentaire et son accessibilité ont été sérieusement entravées par des orientations politiques destinées à affaiblir les groupes d'opposition. La crise alimentaire et la dégradation du secteur agricole peuvent se perpétuer au Libéria à moins d'un effort concerté de grande ampleur face à la complexité de l'origine du conflit.

Le Ghana, qui a pu réduire de façon exemplaire le nombre de sous-alimentés de 64 % à 12 % entre 1979 et 2000, est souvent cité comme un modèle en Afrique de l'Ouest. La distribution des revenus étant restée inchangée, ce résultat s'explique pratiquement par le seul fait d'une disponibilité alimentaire accrue. Le développement de la production de maïs, d'igname, de manioc et de plantain explique la majeure partie de l'accroissement du DEA. L'amélioration de l'environnement économique et un plus large accès au marché pour des producteurs ont favorisé l'accroissement des terres mises en culture. L'amélioration de la sécurité alimentaire a été obtenue grâce à un climat macro-économique que les producteurs ont su mettre à profit pour développer les exportations et soutenir ainsi la croissance économique. L'expérience du Ghana dans l'accroissement de la production alimentaire souligne l'importance des investissements dans le développement et la diffusion auprès des producteurs de techniques plus intensives de production. Dans le futur, les responsables de la politique économique devront faire face à la nécessité d'avoir des marchés qui fonctionnent bien (performants) et d'améliorer les conditions d'accès à l'alimentation dans les régions et auprès des ménages qui n'ont pas encore été bénéficiés. Des objectifs précis à travers des politiques explicites de réduction de la pauvreté sont nécessaires pour combler ces inégalités. Enfin, comme les données sur la sous-alimentation des enfants en dessous de cinq ans le suggèrent, d'autres efforts, y compris vis-à-vis de la nutrition et de l'éducation des mères, sont également importants et nécessaires si on veut éliminer la faim. (FAO, SOFA pour l'Afrique, 2003); (Cf. Croppenstedt *et al*, 2003).

En conclusion, l'interaction entre sécurité alimentaire et conflits doit être parfaitement comprise, ce qui est essentiel dans la prévention des conflits et la construction de la paix.

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C. Background Paper

Agriculture dominates the economies of most West African countries, being the key employer and major source of income and exports. Exploitation of high-value mineral resources has also increased as an economic activity in various countries. The majority of the poor in West Africa are concentrated in rural areas. Although the West African subregion has the lowest prevalence of undernourishment (15 percent), two of its countries, Liberia and Sierra Leone, are among those with the highest rate of undernourishment. Both countries have suffered long-lasting conflicts that have undermined the well-being of the people and the economy. Unfortunately, they are not the only countries that have gone through civil strife. Two years ago, only a few of the 16 countries in the region were considered to be living in peace.¹⁰

Conflict and food insecurity are closely related. The proportion of food emergencies that can be considered human-made has increased over time. Indeed, conflict and economic problems were cited as the main cause of more than 35 percent of food emergencies between 1992 and 2003, as compared with around 15 percent in the period from 1986 to 1991 (FAO 2003b). More than half of the countries where undernourishment is most prevalent experienced conflict during the 1990s (FAO 2003d). As of early September 2003, 38 countries faced serious food shortages requiring international assistance; 22 of these countries were in Africa. Although adverse weather conditions are behind many of the emergency situations, human-caused disasters are also a major factor. Civil strife or the existence of internally displaced people or refugees are among the reasons for more than half of the reported food emergencies in Africa. In West Africa, the emerging picture of food insecurity is more complex and arises from the interaction of both human and natural disasters.

Conflict is a complex subject that has attracted much attention in the development literature. Causes of war within West Africa range from a diverse mix of environmental, social, political, and cultural factors. In 2002, Guinea-Bissau suffered a coup d'état; Côte d'Ivoire (1999, 2002), Sierra Leone (1991–2002), and Liberia (1989–1997, 2003) experienced state collapse and violent conflict; and Guinea and Togo faced conflict arising from disputed governance. During the 1980s, the increased vulnerability in rural areas as a result of drought in the Sahel region resulted in increased numbers of people seeking asylum in Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Afterward, the nature of conflict altered, having more of a political and ethnic basis. Conflict in Senegal and Mauritania has arisen from access rights to water. In Senegal, the conflict situation in the Casamance region is the result of an ongoing rebellion. Religious as well as ethnic tensions have been the driving force behind conflict in Nigeria. All in all, conflict in

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¹⁰ West Africa includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

West Africa stems from a variety of factors. There are similarities across countries but also distinct problems unique to specific countries. As a result, conflict constitutes the major explanatory factor for famine, hunger, and malnutrition, affecting the entire region as a result of the complex nature of the humanitarian crisis that results from conflict. But conflict, although the major cause of food insecurity, is not the only cause. Poverty, natural disasters, and gender discrimination also result in food insecurity and, when combined with conflict, tend to exacerbate further the extent of the humanitarian crisis.

A major difficulty that arises from internal conflict is that hunger is often used to target both armed groups and civilians (Messer 1998). Consequently, hunger persists long after the end of war. That conflict has severe negative economic and social consequences is not under dispute, but analyzing the extent of these consequences is problematic, given the lack of reliable data at the microeconomic level (see Mohammed 1999).

The need to secure the food and nutrition requirements of the population suffering the conflict becomes a necessary condition for recovery. In the absence of adequate food security, the conflict/postconflict scenarios of mass migration, starvation, sectoral collapse, and death due to hunger and disease (as opposed to combat-induced death) become more likely. The economic cost is closely linked to the social cost. The reduction in human capital, as well as physical and social capital, has strong implications for food security. An understanding of the effects and dynamics of conflict on the engines that drive human welfare is essential in order to face appropriate mechanisms for postconflict recovery and conflict prevention. Clearly, conflict is disruptive and has strong implications for rural and agricultural development and growth. The short-term emergency responses to address the needs of people suffering the consequences of the conflict need to be located in a broader long-term perspective of a food policy framework aimed at improving the resilience of people and of the food system.

This paper proceeds as follows. The second section presents an overview of conflict and considers why understanding the type of conflict is important for food policy during and after the conflict. The third section examines the impact of conflict on some key variables for the region as a whole. An analysis of the impact of conflict principally rests on examining the effects on agricultural growth, rural development, and food and nutritional security. This list is by no means exhaustive. The effects of conflict on these variables are direct but also indirect, given the interlinkages within economies.

Securing adequate access to food requires putting into place mechanisms that, even when disrupted by conflict, can adapt more quickly to the postconflict environment. This is particularly important when there is any kind of cyclical nature to conflict. The immediate emergency response and the long-term path to development must be such that preconflict trends are at least matched after a lag and begin to move upward. Because of the diversity of the region, the section focuses on Sierra Leone and Liberia as examples of countries under conflict in the West African region. In addition, it focuses on recent development in Ghana as a useful analytical contrast. This contrast may serve to highlight some common themes on conflict. The fourth section thus examines policy implications arising from the analysis of the three countries.

Overview of Conflict

West African countries have at one stage or another experienced some form of conflict in the last 50 years. Essentially, conflict within West Africa tends to be localized or regional in nature, spilling in a few cases across borders. This is not to say that there is not an international dimension to conflict—often there is such a dimension through the provision of arms or other collateral support. Recent international wars have tended to occur primarily between military forces with the aim of minimizing civilian casualties and the establishment of corridors for humanitarian aid. There are, of course, notable exceptions such as the Iran-Iraq war in the 1990s. Indeed, history has shown that the deliberate targeting of civilians is seen as essential in strategies designed to weaken the opponent. Although protecting civilians may seem

important in current military thinking, in practice, the nature of war is such that collateral damage is difficult to avoid and, as such, the operation of corridors becomes virtually impossible. In West Africa, conflict has resulted in substantial losses of life and in displaced and refugee people. In Liberia, for example, the number of war-related deaths has been put at a conservative estimate of 150,000 people, representing 5 percent of the total population (see Gnisci 2003). Additionally, hundreds of thousands of people were injured and displaced (more than 1 million in Côte d'Ivoire and 3 million in Sierra Leone).

Conflict in West Africa is multidimensional in nature and the policy responses need to be alert to this fact. Moreover, conflict may be limited to a specific region or it may occur on a national level. Thus, when defining a policy of food security, it is essential that the policy recognize who is being affected by a conflict, why, and how. The policy needs to be designed to avoid creating a gulf between perceived winners and losers of the policy, before, during, and after a conflict. Note that a food security policy will be all encompassing in nature in recognizing the need to achieve structural stability and growth. The success of such a policy is, in effect, a function of the institutional capacity present within the country to implement the policy, a big challenge for the economic and political actors involved in conflict-prone regions, as conflict is usually associated with weak state institutions.

An initial review by Gnisci (2003) identified some major trends in conflict and instability in West Africa. The trends pinpoint the degree to which conflict may be seen as a more temporary phenomenon or as longer term in nature and if there seems to be a move from the area directly affected to a wider region. It might be expected that (1) regional/subregional concentration of conflicts will remain static, mainly in the Mano River area; (2) multiple conflicts at the local, national, and border level might result in political instability at the national level, thus having important repercussions for the entire region (Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire, for example); (3) long-term conflicts between neighboring countries over common access and usage of shared resources may vary in intensity and may spill from a border dispute between local populations to a full state confrontation; and (4) problems of migrants and refugees linked to pressure on natural resources, unclear or disputed property rights, and access may rise.

The multidimensional natures of conflicts, their diversity, and their trends have serious consequences for long-term structural stability. The capacity of the ruling authority to carry out essential functions becomes increasingly difficult and weakens their legitimate basis. Related to this weakening is the issue of governance. Conflict impedes the state machinery to effectively negotiate increased political security and economic activity. Marginalization of vulnerable groups in regions characterized by protracted crisis is aggravated by the lack of investment and the malfunction of markets. This basket of consequences has serious effects for food security. Dealing with conflict (before, during, and after) requires an understanding of the nature of the conflict and who is affected and then the devising of strategies that incorporate this information. Moreover, if food security is not tackled as a priority, the dimensions of conflict may become more entrenched, creating an inescapable low-level equilibrium poverty trap.

Food Security: The Relationship to Conflict

The World Food Summit stated that food security exists when “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO 1996). The analysis of food security covers three dimensions: availability, access, and stability. Availability is related to domestic production, import capacity, food aid, and stocks. Access is influenced by level of income, employment, wage rates, food prices, income distribution, access to assets such as land and finance, the efficiency of markets, the provision of safety nets, and infrastructure capacity. The utilization of food might be considered as a component of access, that is, how each individual is able to benefit from food intake, which is linked to health, sanitation conditions, the nutrient component of the diet, and the quality of food. Stability of food security refers to

factors affecting variability in supply and access such as price, weather variability, and political environment. All three dimensions are jointly necessary conditions for increased food security.

In general, countries subject to conflict and complex emergencies are characterized by weakness or absence of government functions, poorly performing institutions, authorities that lack legitimacy, and a tendency for any transition from violent conflict to peace to be protracted, uncertain, and prone to reversal (FAO 2003a). Profound and multiple impacts on farmer livelihoods and food security often result from complex and highly context-specific interactions involving such factors as environmental hazards, resource scarcity and degradation, political and socioeconomic marginalization, lack of basic services, crime, and the spread of HIV/AIDS, as well as from direct impacts of war such as insecurity and displacement.

International responses to complex emergencies concentrate largely on emergency relief, in particular food aid and short-term agricultural assistance. The relief may extend to the adequate provision of health and water alongside infrastructure rehabilitation. Information systems and activities in support of these interventions focus on quantifying relief needs, beneficiary targeting, and logistical aspects. Yet complex emergencies may, in their own distinctive ways, persist for many years in a state somewhere between all-out war and peace, within which conditions may vary widely over space and time.

Although the link between conflict and structural stability seems readily identifiable, an analysis needs to be made on the interface between food insecurity and conflict and on the complex relationship between the humanitarian and the long-term food security perspectives.

Food availability

The information on food output for West Africa corroborates the dichotomy in the experiences vis-à-vis food security between those countries with and without conflict. Teodosijevic (2003), using a sample of 38 countries experiencing conflict between 1961 and 2000, showed that agricultural and food production levels in per capita terms are on average about 10 percent lower during conflict and in the five years after conflict than in the five years before conflict. The study showed that the impact of conflict on food production translates significantly into a lower daily energy supply (DES [calories]). In general, food aid tends to partially offset lost production. However, the study concludes that DES falls on average by 7 percent. These results are confirmed for West Africa (Table 1). Sierra Leone and Liberia show significant reductions in daily calorie supply, but Benin, Burkina Faso, and Guinea have shown improvements.

Table 1 — Food availability: Daily energy supply

Country	Kcal per person				Difference 1970–2000 (%)	ODA (\$US) per agricultural worker per year, 1998–2000
	1969–71	1979–81	1990–92	1999–2001		
Benin	1,995	2,044	2,334	2,481	24.4	36
Burkina Faso	1,763	1,683	2,335	2,464	39.8	19
Cape Verde	1,721	2,545	3,087	3,295	91.5	n.a.
Côte d'Ivoire	2,512	2,826	2,457	2,586	2.9	21
Gambia	2,180	1,804	2,379	2,283	4.7	52
Ghana	2,286	1,707	2,097	2,622	14.7	24
Guinea	2,203	2,216	2,094	2,328	5.7	18
Guinea-Bissau	1,882	2,095	2,486	2,441	29.7	n.a.
Liberia	2,387	2,543	2,222	2,076	-13.0	3
Mali	2,004	1,753	2,296	2,371	18.3	30
Mauritania	1,938	2,124	2,607	2,734	41.1	83
Niger	2,039	2,129	2,004	2,127	4.3	10
Nigeria	2,238	2,031	2,561	2,767	23.6	2
Senegal	2,282	2,274	2,282	2,275	-0.3	37
Sierra Leone	2,236	2,108	1,996	1,928	-13.8	8
Togo	2,216	2,194	2,152	2,314	4.4	7

Sources: FAO (2003d); OECD (2002).

Note: ODA indicates Official Development Assistance; n.a. indicates data were not available.

Evolution of DES is linked with agricultural sector performance. As shown in Table 2, in the last 30 years variability has characterized the growth of agricultural production in the region, with generally very low yields¹¹ and wide differences among countries. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has estimated losses of US\$52 billion in agricultural output through conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa between 1970 and 1997, that is, 30 percent of the agricultural value-added (FAO 2000). It should be noted that average losses of US\$4.3 billion per year in agricultural value-added for all conflict-affected developing countries exceeds the amount of the food aid bill.

¹¹ Cereal yield varies from 401 kilograms per hectare in Niger and Mauritania (429) to 1,309–1,312 kilograms per hectare in Ghana, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau (FAO 2003e).

Table 2 — Net agricultural production: Average annual growth rates for West Africa

	1970–74	1975–79	1980–84	1985–89	1990–94	1995–99	2000–02
Agriculture	–0.33	–0.12	1.43	4.68	4.05	3.52	0.67
Cereals	2.98	–1.83	3.27	5.82	2.73	1.99	1.93
Crops	–0.22	–1.35	1.39	5.98	4.46	3.78	0.67
Food	–0.15	–0.20	1.62	4.65	4.36	3.34	0.53
Livestock	–0.88	4.95	1.58	–0.11	2.14	2.19	0.64

Source: FAO (2003e).

On the other hand, global resources from external assistance directed to agriculture (Official Development Assistance [ODA] at 1995 prices) increased up to 1990, when the global policy environment changed dramatically. The 1990s have witnessed a decrease in development-oriented resources. The low level of resources directed to agriculture (US dollar per agricultural worker) might have had an impact on the level of food supply in West Africa. Nonetheless, there is still a need for a deeper analysis linking the assistance received to the use of resources, the agricultural performance, and the persistence of conflict.

Food imports improve food availability. Specific country conditions define when there is a risk of dependency. The import capacity is linked to the level and diversification of exports, as well as to the commitments for servicing external debt. For countries where one commodity provides more than 20 percent of total export earning, food security is heavily dependent on international market prices. That is the case in Guinea-Bissau (cashew nuts, 97 percent of total exports); Benin (cotton, 36 percent); Burkina Faso (cotton, 35 percent); and Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana (cocoa beans, 23 percent and 21 percent). The situation worsens when conflict contributes to the destruction of plantations or access to markets or both.

Food access

In West Africa, the incidence of undernourishment is declining but individual country inspection reveals a story of contrasts. The prevalence of hunger is high and increasing in countries suffering prolonged conflict. This is particularly the case for Liberia and Sierra Leone. In stark contrast, for the same period, 1990–2001, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, and Nigeria displayed remarkable reductions in the numbers of undernourished. Ghana particularly stands out with a reduction from 5.5 million in the number of undernourished to 2.4 million, a reduction of 23 percentage points (see FAO 2003d). Table 3 and Figure 1 show some of the trends occurring within West Africa. The tables show food insecurity problems in peaceful countries as well as in conflict zones. Niger has a high incidence of food insecurity; almost double that of West Africa but above that of Sub-Saharan Africa. Interestingly, Senegal shows an increase in the number of food-insecure people even though it is not a high-intensity conflict zone.

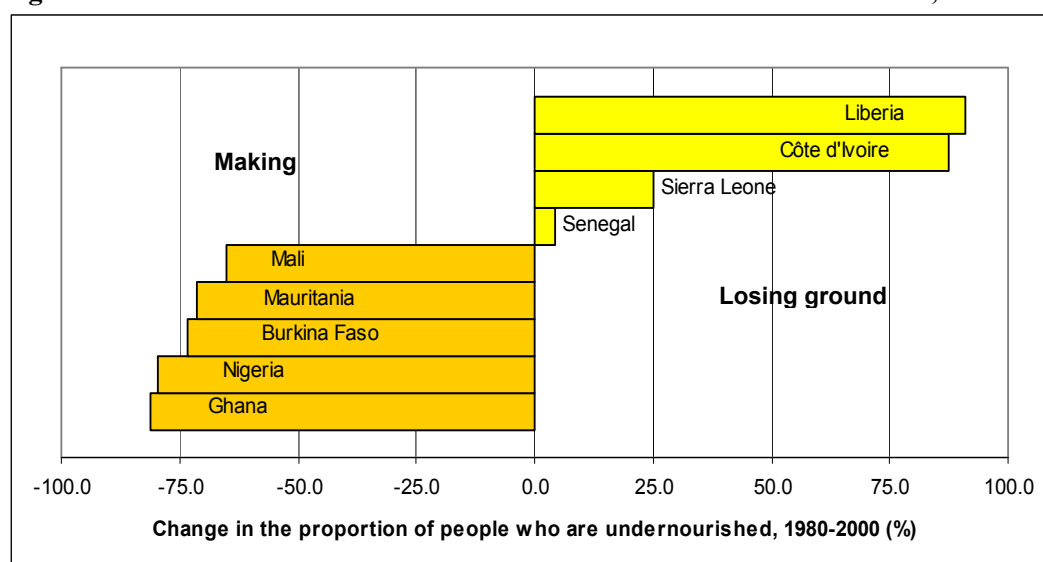
Table 3 — Prevalence of undernourishment in West Africa

Region/country	Number of people undernourished (millions)				Proportion of undernourished in total population (%)			
	1969–71	1979–81	1990–92	1999–2001	1969–71	1979–81	1990–92	1999–2001
Sub-Saharan Africa	91.9	125.4	165.5	198.4	36	36	35	33
West Africa	28.7	50.7	36.2	32.7	30	40	21	15
Benin	1.1	1.3	1.0	1.0	41	37	20	16
Burkina Faso	3.2	4.5	2.0	1.9	59	64	22	17
Cape Verde	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Côte d'Ivoire	0.9	0.7	2.4	2.4	16	8	18	15
Gambia	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.4	32	58	22	27
Ghana	2.0	7.1	5.5	2.4	24	64	35	12
Guinea	1.3	1.5	2.5	2.3	33	32	40	28
Guinea-Bissau	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Liberia	0.4	0.4	0.7	1.2	27	22	33	42
Mali	2.3	4.1	2.2	2.4	42	60	25	21
Mauritania	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.3	48	35	14	10
Niger	1.7	1.9	3.3	3.7	40	34	42	34
Nigeria	12.7	25.2	11.2	9.1	26	39	13	8
Senegal	1.0	1.3	1.7	2.3	23	23	23	24
Sierra Leone	0.9	1.3	1.9	2.2	34	40	46	50
Togo	0.5	0.7	1.2	1.1	24	26	33	25

Source: FAO (2003d).

Note: n.a. indicates data were not available.

Figure 1 — Reductions and increases in undernourishment in West Africa, 1980–2000



Source: FAO (2003d).

Alternatively, we may consider using the human development indicator (HDI) as a proxy for food access and more precisely, as a measure of losses and gains in livelihood capital (Table 4). The correlation coefficient tends to be high between HDI and poverty and food insecurity. Once again, different measures of poverty provide compelling evidence that food security is adversely affected for a prolonged period by conflict.

Table 4 — Human development indicator (HDI)

HDI rank	Country	HDI value
100	Cape Verde	0.715
129	Ghana	0.548
141	Togo	0.493
148	Nigeria	0.462
152	Mauritania	0.438
154	Senegal	0.431
156	Côte d'Ivoire	0.428
158	Benin	0.420
159	Guinea	0.414
160	Gambia	0.405
164	Mali	0.386
167	Guinea-Bissau	0.349
169	Burkina Faso	0.325
172	Niger	0.277
173	Sierra Leone	0.275
Not listed	Liberia	

Source: UNDP (2002).

A word of caution is needed here about the effect of conflict on poverty and food security in general. Although civil war and violent conflict may be highly disruptive, this is not to say that in the absence of conflict, food security and agricultural development would have seen impressive improvements. It is perhaps all too tempting to say that were it not for the war, things would be better. This, of course, depends on the state of the systems in place prior to the conflict. Conflict alone does not account for the inherent structural weaknesses that were present before the conflict and resulted in slow growth and worsening food security. Simply, the presence of conflict cannot always account for the worsening poverty exhibited in many West African countries. The challenging question is how to increase the numbers of food-secure people during the conflict and in the aftermath of civil war, as a means to prevent the reemergence of a conflict.

The results from the previous tables are perhaps not surprising, given the extent of conflict within this region and the spillover of conflicts across the region. The key points here are to consider how conflict disrupts the underlying forces that drive food security and what happens to agriculture under conflict and consequently to the pace of rural development.

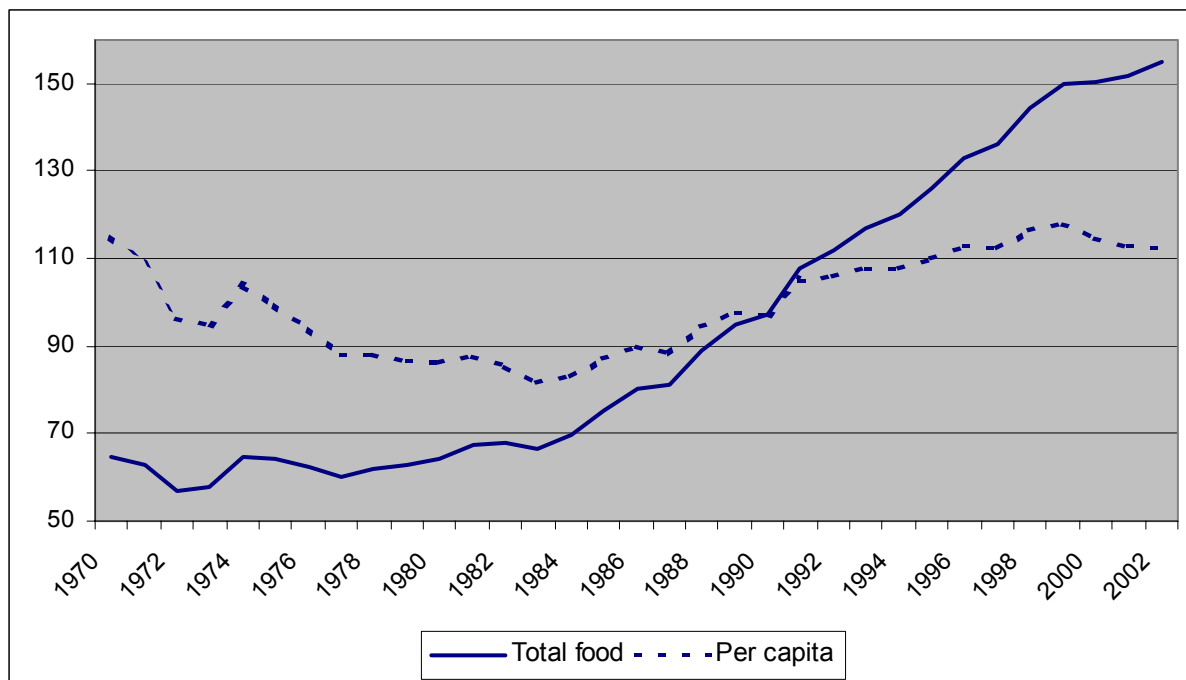
Stability of food security during conflict

The effect of conflict on agriculture depends on the nature of the conflict itself. If it is confined to a specific geographic region, then agricultural losses are to some extent minimized. This was true for developing countries where conflict was localized enough so that the decline in production (and exports) could be contained. The conflict-afflicted area, in contrast, suffers serious economic decline.

Production ceases almost immediately, but the loss in output may be hampered in the long term if economic structures are specifically targeted with the intention of reducing the economic capabilities of the opponent. Moreover, in order to secure food, farmers and agricultural laborers are forced to move away from the fighting. Displaced persons lose access to their food entitlements; persons trapped in conflict zones are cut off from market links and relief food; and people lose their employment and income as a result of fighting. Informal taxation adds to economic decline. Additionally, the use of land mines makes the land unusable. The postconflict unit of the World Bank estimates that over 100 million land mines are deployed every year worldwide, claiming 25,000 casualties. This figure does not include the numbers seriously maimed as a result and consequently unfit for physical labor. Where agriculture accounts for a significant proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) as it does in West Africa, economic growth suffers a sharp decline. Agriculture value-added in Sierra Leone accounts for between 45 and 50 percent of GDP, in Ghana the figure stands at 35 percent, and in Guinea-Bissau at a staggering 60 percent (see Appendix Table A1).

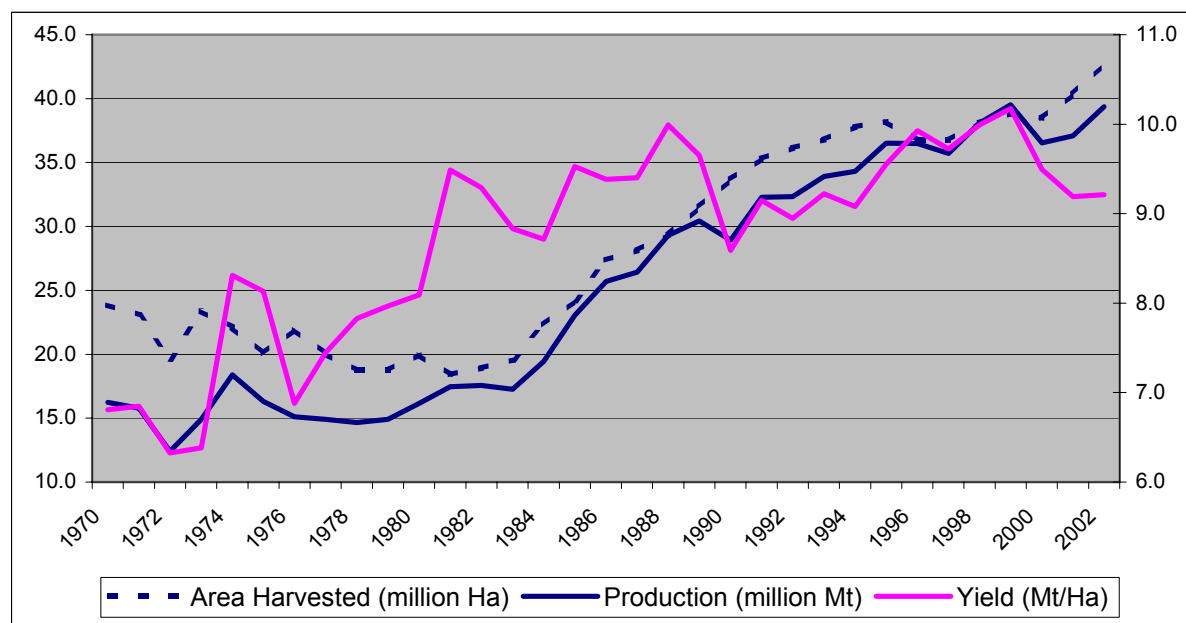
A regional perspective on food production points to at least two key issues: first, the stagnation in per capita food production, and second, the limits of growth related to cereal production, with very low yields for the whole region (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2 — West African food production (index 1998–91 = 100)



Source: FAO (2003e).

Figure 3 — Low yields and high variability of yields (cereals only)



Source: FAO (2003e).

Not surprisingly given the large share of agriculture and the indirect effects of agricultural production on the rest of the economy, growth rates for GDP are markedly poor in areas of conflict and begin to pick up significantly at conflict end. Collier (1999) found that during civil war, GDP per capita tends to decline at a rate of 2.2 percent annually. In Appendix Table A2, Sierra Leone showed negative growth rates from the mid-1980s to 1999 and GDP growth has only just started to rise. Volatility of growth appears in areas of conflict, compared with more steady rates of growth in countries with less conflict. Ghana's GDP growth has been steady since mid-1980 with the exception of 2000, when it dipped below 4 percent, whereas Nigeria's growth has been more unstable.

What the figures do not readily indicate is the geographic distribution of food access. In Nigeria—where ethnic and religious tensions have affected some areas—calorie consumption has increased by 36 percent since 1980. However, this average conceals the more important story of the marked poverty difference between the wealthy north of the country and the substantially poorer south.

Another important dimension to conflict and food security stems from the deliberate use of hunger as a weapon, the so-called scorched earth tactics and what are termed “attacks by omission,” in which food aid, for example, fails to reach the most vulnerable groups, affecting the fragile stability of food access. De Soysa et al. (1999) found that attacks to undermine the productive capacity of agriculture occur in the very countries whose economies are highly dependent on agriculture but that do not have the means to increase land productivity. Moreover, the active disruption of mechanisms that facilitate access to food such as well-functioning markets, reasonably usable roads, absence of roadblocks and sieges, and unrestricted movement all contribute to increased numbers of the hungry.

Conflict and Protracted Crisis: Policy Implications for Improved Food Security

Populations living in the midst of chronic but fluctuating conflict strive to protect their livelihoods and food security as best they can, whether in receipt of emergency humanitarian assistance or not. Within the limits of a short-term planning horizon, emergency agricultural support programs address these needs in increasingly diverse and imaginative ways, some with significant capacity-building effects. The question

arises as to whether these short-term responses can be located within a broader and longer-term food security policy framework aimed at improving people’s resilience, preparing to take advantage of lulls in conflict or the prospect of a more sustained peace and helping prevent further disasters (FAO 2003a).

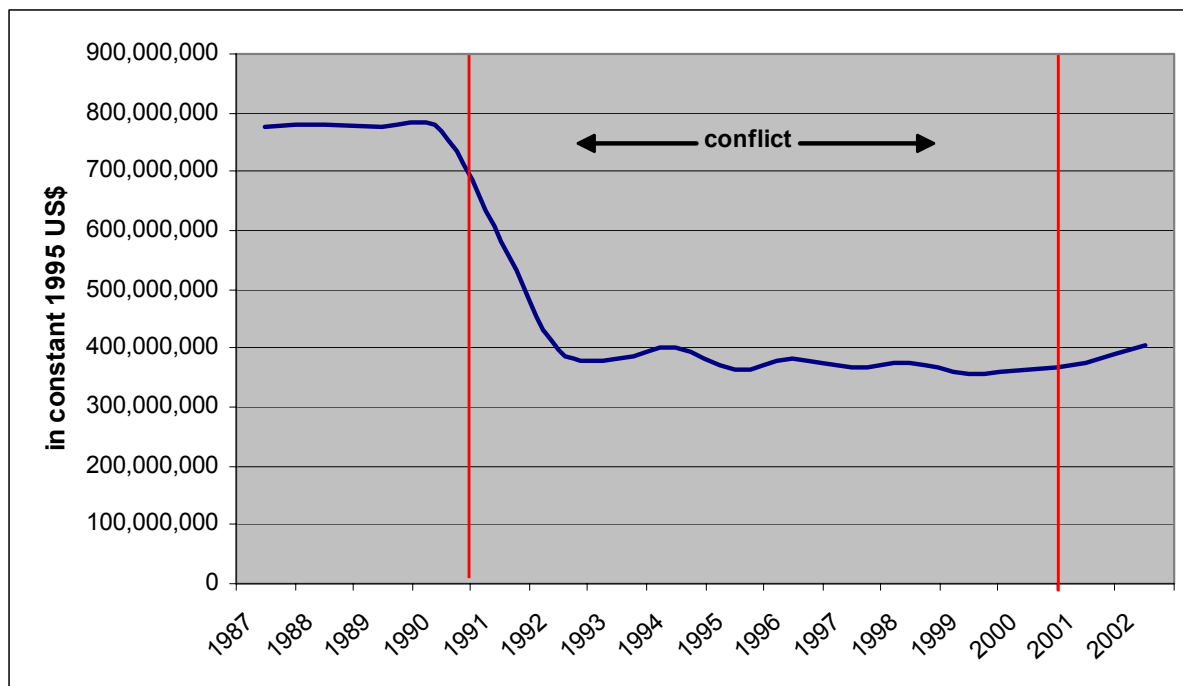
Recent experiences of Sierra Leone and Liberia, both at different stages of transition from conflict to peace building, present some interesting elements of postconflict policy initiatives. As a contrast, the experience of Ghana may highlight long-term policy aims.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone achieved independence in the 1960s. The economy grew at a rate of roughly 4 percent per year but fell sharply in the next two decades. Agriculture’s share in GDP moved from 31 percent at the onset of independence to approximately half by the start of the war. In the 1980s, GDP growth fell to just under 1 percent. By the end of the decade, the institutional and policy environment resulted in a serious slowdown of economic activity. In real terms, GDP growth rates were negative at 7 percent. Civil war gripped the country in 1991. According to the Government of Sierra Leone, during this period of conflict, the economy contracted by 4.6 percent per year with per capita income falling by 47 percent. The combination of falling agricultural income and low growth led to a severe upturn in poverty that was especially marked in rural areas.

Figure 4 indicates the drastic consequences of conflict on agriculture and, given its importance to the whole economy, the repercussions for Sierra Leone as a whole. Interestingly, the figure shows that for Sierra Leone, after the initial downward impact of conflict, agricultural value-added remained at a plateau. Whether in Sierra Leone this slow growth will persist remains to be seen and depends in part on the measure of postconflict policy.

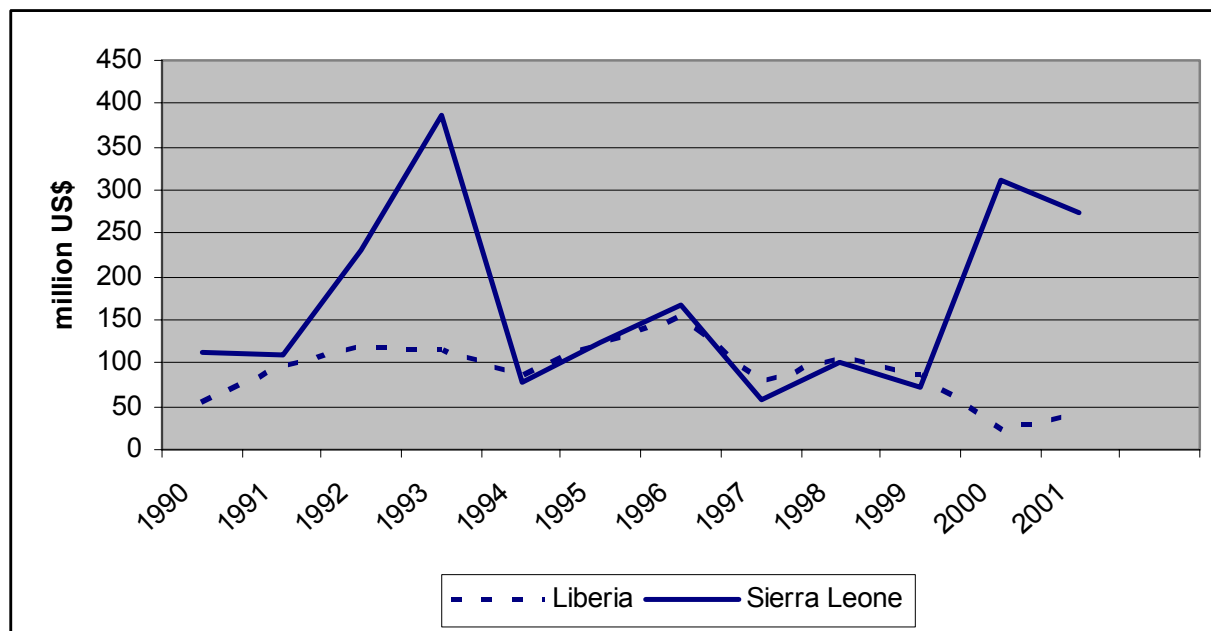
Figure 4 — Sierra Leone agriculture, value-added



Source: World Bank (2002).

Figure 5 shows a similar story for ODA assistance. Periods of conflict marked a significant downturn in this type of aid. Sierra Leone witnessed a sharp decline in ODA for the duration of the conflict, but at conflict's end the trend reverted to a substantial inflow of ODA. In other words, ODA responses to the nonconflict situation are significant and substantial. For Liberia, ODA has remained low and relatively static as a consequence of the ongoing instability. As expected, emergency assistance, too, is highly responsive to the postconflict environment and follows a similar pattern for Sierra Leone (and indeed for Liberia; see Appendix Figures A1 and A2).

Figure 5 — Official development assistance, concessional commitments, Liberia and Sierra Leone



Source: OECD (2002).

Following conflict, Sierra Leone has set about implementing a fairly prescriptive rehabilitation program. Central to this program is the recognition that long-term sustained economic growth and significant poverty reduction hinges on promoting the agricultural sector. Agriculture's share of GDP stands at about 45 percent and it is by far the largest employer; therefore, development of this sector has positive growth implications for other sectors, too. Sectoral information clearly illustrates the strategic importance of agriculture in the long-term economic recovery of Sierra Leone. Notably, the crop subsector with rice as the major crop contributed about 75 percent of agricultural GDP in 1993/94 but fell to 66 percent by the end of the war.

In terms of imports, including food, Sierra Leone faced a trade sanction during the war and the import bill fell substantially. With peace and the lifting of the embargo, imports swiftly rose with food imports accounting for 27 percent of total imports. Given the comparative advantage of Sierra Leone in rice production, increased production of this crop would go some way toward reducing the import bill. Practically, production would require increased investment in technology. Indeed, there has been some success in riverine rice production. However, the level of technology used by small-scale farmers is still

limited. In addition, other key crops such as cocoa, groundnuts, and cassava need also to be developed for the export market. Development requires a directed agricultural policy that encourages production.¹²

Although development of agriculture is essential for moving toward increased food security, it is by no means a sufficient condition. Productivity increases in food crops should represent only part of a broader range of agricultural strategies designed to reduce the numbers of the hungry. Specifically, those most vulnerable under conflict must have access to mechanisms that guarantee adequate food consumption either through income- or consumption-smoothing policies or through the provision of safety nets. Moreover, the longer-term strategy must be to diversify sources of rural income if sustainable food security is to be achieved. As yet, in Sierra Leone little progress has been made to actively put into place mechanisms that would permit diversification, but there is evidence of the need to increase access to credit markets. Given that agriculture tends to be dominated by small farms, future policies need to focus on the education and training of the rural population, especially women, in developing the rural community, access to credit, and land reform. In particular, attention needs to focus on incentives to improve female nutrition, especially for women of childbearing age. The role of women in the agricultural sector of Sierra Leone is such that there is a need to promote their rights to the ownership of assets.

In the postconflict era, there is evidence that some of these policies are beginning to take shape and that in other areas, the dialogue is beginning. It is too early in transition to say what the effects of these reforms on food security and agricultural development will be following a 10-year war, but the evidence is that there is a real commitment on the part of the government through “Operation Feed the Nation.”

Liberia

Liberia was a relatively calm country until 1980, when its then president was overthrown after food price riots. Although the coup marked the end of dominance by the minority Americo-Liberians, it also marked the start of a chronic period of instability.

By the late 1980s, arbitrary rule and economic collapse culminated in civil war. Characteristic of the conflict was the number of rebel groups, each with a distinct ethnic allegiance. The war became more complex as a result. Extreme brutality, violence against civilians, and the use of children as soldiers and workers in military camps culminated in the death of over 150,000 people. Up to 2 million people were forced to flee. Health, education, and social welfare services were devastated; the economy collapsed; and many features of traditional life and the social structure were destroyed. As a consequence, Liberia during the 1980s was one of the largest aid recipients in Africa. A peace accord was signed in August 1996, which eventually led to elections in July 1997. Despite the peace accord, conflict continued.

To compound the problems of conflict further, Liberia is also heavily affected by the current crisis in Côte d’Ivoire. Intensified fighting has cut off humanitarian access to huge numbers of displaced people in western Liberia. The influx of Ivorian refugees, third-country nationals (mainly Burkinabes, Malians, and Nigerians), and Liberian returnees has also worsened the living conditions of local communities along the border, themselves recovering from the effects of Liberia’s civil conflict. Prices of staple food commodities like rice and cassava have more than doubled. The cost of fuel has risen dramatically, making transport difficult, if not impossible. The increasing numbers of displaced have put extra pressure on already limited resources and are jeopardizing people’s resilience.

¹² See the forthcoming document “Consultation on the Sierra Leone Agricultural Sector,” prepared by the Policy Assistance Division/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (TCA/FAO). For further information please contact TCA Division.

The number of Liberians relying on humanitarian assistance has continued to rise since the beginning of 2002. According to the consolidated interagency appeal for Liberia for 2003, 80 percent of the population lives below the poverty line of US\$1/day with severe poverty estimated at 52 percent. Large numbers of displaced people are living in miserable conditions with few, if any, amenities. Many children and their families are once again at risk of malnutrition, disease, and separation. Issues of access and availability are pressing problems in the transition phase. Political stability is far from secure with increased pressure on resources from displaced persons. Difficulty in accessing markets, poor infrastructure, and the lack of income-earning opportunities are the main barriers to food security in Liberia currently. Insecurity makes it hard for people to farm or trade. Continued fighting has resulted in large-scale displacement. As people turn to short-term solutions for their food security and livelihoods, there is large-scale overexploitation of natural resources.

In the years preceding the civil war, Liberia had a buoyant economy with coffee, rubber, and cocoa as major income-earning export crops. Liberia also has large deposits of iron ore, diamonds, and gold. It is estimated that between 1990 and 1994, diamond, rubber, and timber export income averaged \$380 million annually. Most of the value of exports was spent on weapons. The wealth base has been heavily plundered during conflict, resulting in an almost total economic collapse. Poverty, inflation, and unemployment are high with few prospects for the poor. Aid, especially food aid, could go some way toward the relief of the most needy, but relations with donors have been poor since 1997. In May 2002, the UN Security Council voted to renew sanctions on Liberia for another 12 months as a result of its support for rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone. The situation changed in 2003 when Liberia's President Taylor was granted asylum in a neighboring country.

The result of such protracted political instability has been profound. Agriculture has been particularly badly affected as displacement has forced many people to abandon their farms. The deterioration of the economy in Liberia is striking, as Appendix Figure A2 indicates. Moreover, "conflicts affect the capacity and credibility of states to allocate, legislate and regulate towards growth, education and improved living standards. The state becomes impoverished, skilled civil servants may flee, and in some cases the state nearly disappears completely. Intact institutional structures are crucial for a rapid recovery after the conflict is over" (WIDER 2002). For Liberia, institutional reconstruction seems necessary as a prerequisite to support agricultural development. In 1999, the government launched a "back to farming" campaign in an attempt to make Liberia self-sufficient in food production and to enable agriculture to form the backbone of economic recovery.

Difficulty in accessing markets, poor infrastructure, and the lack of income-earning opportunities, rather than a land shortage or a shortage of food, are effectively the main barriers to food security in Liberia and general agricultural development and growth. The urgency of the problem is evident. Displaced people staying in camps face serious food shortages. Not only is availability of food affected by sanctions (inadequate structures for long-term food production as a result of a weakened agricultural sector), but also access is seriously distorted through a politically motivated policy to weaken opposition groups. The crisis of food security and agricultural decline is set to continue in Liberia unless there is a wide-scale concerted effort to address the complex nature of the conflict. Macroeconomic stability is key, but a necessary condition prior to this stability is the rebuilding of communities and trust so that the poor invest in their own future.

Ghana

In contrast, Ghana is a case frequently cited as the success story of West Africa, achieving a reduction in the number of undernourished from 64 percent to an extraordinary 12 percent between 1979 and 2000. Although income distribution remained unchanged, the success is almost entirely explained by increased food availability. Expansion of maize, yam, cassava, and plantain production accounted for most of the increase in DES. An improved economic environment and increased market access for farmers resulted in

the increase in the amount of land under cultivation. Alongside improved varieties for maize and yam, increased cassava yields and production was the main driving force behind the reduction, a significant development because cassava has the highest calorie-to-price ratio in the country and because consumption of cassava and yam products reaches a peak in the “hunger season” just before harvest time. The increased food security was driven by economic growth, with export farmers particularly benefiting from the macroeconomic climate.

Ghana’s experience with increasing food production highlights the importance of investments in developing more productive staple food technologies and taking those new techniques to producers. FAO’s measure of welfare suggests strongly that food availability is no longer the key constraint to hunger reduction in Ghana: access to food is key.

Economic growth has improved the food security prospects of many Ghanaians. In the future, policymakers will increasingly have to address the issue of how to make markets work better and how to improve access to food in those regions and for those households yet to benefit. Targeted policies to address this inequality are necessary through the implementation of pro-poor policies. Finally, as the data on undernutrition of children under five years old suggest, although food availability and access are necessary, other efforts, including targeting mother’s education and nutrition, are also important and necessary activities to eradicate hunger (FAO 2003c; see Croppenstedt et al. 2003 for a fuller examination).

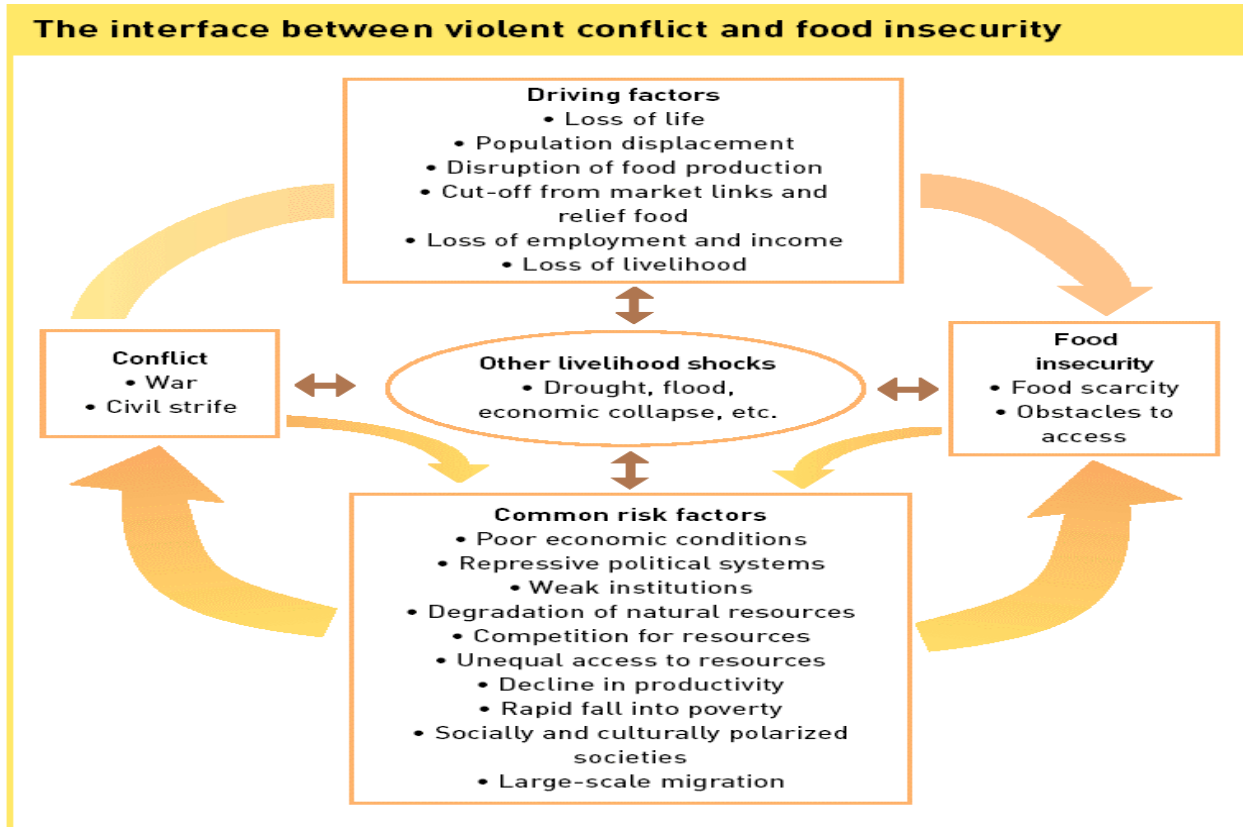
Concluding Remarks

Policy formulation to address causes and consequences of complex emergencies derived from conflict is a challenge for national and international development institutions. As food security emergencies linked to conflict have risen in the last decade, food aid interventions have increased while aid for development has declined. Although humanitarian relief and food aid address immediate human suffering and survival under conflict and immediate postconflict situations, these factors are limited in addressing the root causes of the crises themselves. Sustainable food security requires longer-term policies and interventions, establishing an adequate link between short- and long-term perspectives. There is a need for a deeper understanding of the social, political, and economic factors that generate a crisis and its impact on food security. And, more important, there is a need to identify conditions determining the resilience of food systems in order to design policy frameworks in which short-term responses are one component of a diverse spectrum of action aimed at supporting that resilience.

Recovery from conflict and its effects is not only about raising agricultural production and productivity (availability of food), but also about increased access to food. Recovery requires rebuilding government institutions and social capital. Food security is complex in nature, requiring recognition of entitlements of people who are more affected by the access to assets during conflict (displaced, refugees, returnees). Priority is to be given to investment in education, as has already been proposed in Sierra Leone, technology (highly positive results in Ghana), protecting vulnerable groups alongside essential infrastructure, and a policy of redistributing incomes.

Figure 6 (FAO 2002) provides a broader vision of the interaction between conflict and food security and its potential role in the peace-building process and conflict prevention. Further discussion is needed, not only on the interface factors, but also on applied analysis to local, national, and regional conditions in West Africa.

Figure 6 — The interface between violent conflict and food security



Source: FAO (2002).

Appendix

Table A1 — Agriculture, value-added (% of GDP)

Country	1970–79	1980–89	1990–99	2000–02
Benin	33.5	33.8	36.1	35.8
Burkina Faso	35.4	33.2	36.3	38.5
Cape Verde	n.a.	16.6	12.9	11.4
Cote d'Ivoire	27.8	27.1	28.5	23.8
The Gambia	34.4	34.0	28.8	37.8
Ghana	51.3	51.9	39.5	35.3
Guinea	n.a.	24.0	23.0	24.0
Guinea-Bissau	47.2	48.2	56.5	57.7
Liberia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Mali	60.7	44.4	46.7	39.5
Mauritania	30.6	30.4	26.6	21.2
Niger	56.7	38.6	39.4	39.4
Nigeria	33.6	33.4	31.1	31.7
Senegal	24.6	20.1	19.1	18.1
Sierra Leone	34.0	40.8	41.4	49.8
Togo	29.7	31.8	38.2	39.1

Source: World Bank (2002).

Note: n.a. indicates data were not available.

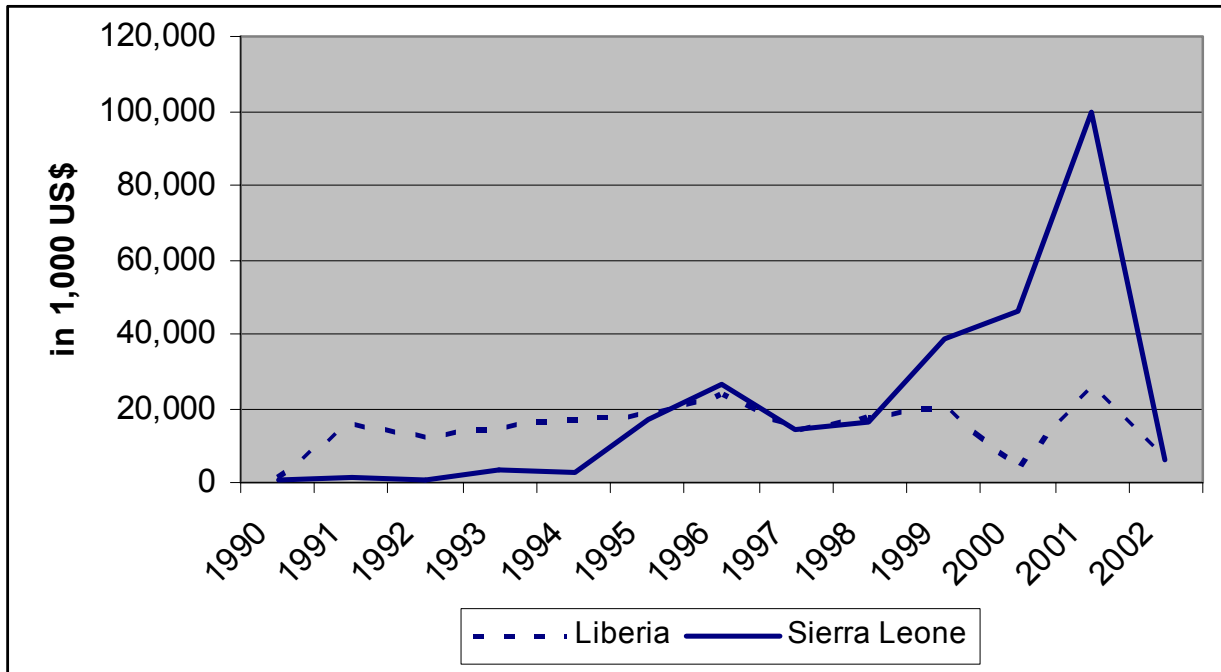
Table A2 — Real GDP (annual percentage change)

Country	1985–94	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Africa	1.9	3.0	5.6	3.0	3.3	2.6	2.8	3.6	3.4
Benin	2.5	4.6	5.9	5.8	4.6	4.7	5.8	5.0	5.8
Burkina Faso	4.3	4.5	7.5	4.8	6.4	6.3	-1.6	5.6	5.2
Cape Verde	4.7	7.5	6.7	7.2	8.0	8.9	6.6	4.0	4.6
Côte d'Ivoire	1.2	7.1	7.7	5.7	4.8	1.6	-2.3	0.1	0.5
The Gambia	3.7	-3.4	6.1	4.9	3.5	6.4	5.5	5.9	4.7
Ghana	4.9	4.0	4.6	4.2	4.7	4.4	3.7	4.2	4.5
Guinea	4.1	4.7	5.1	5.0	4.8	4.6	2.1	3.6	4.2
Guinea-Bissau	3.0	4.4	4.6	5.5	-28.1	8.0	9.5	0.2	-4.2
Liberia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Mali	2.5	7.0	4.3	6.7	4.9	6.7	3.7	1.5	9.6
Mauritania	2.9	4.6	5.5	3.2	3.7	4.1	6.3	4.6	4.2
Niger	2.1	2.6	3.4	2.8	10.4	-0.6	-1.4	7.1	3.0
Nigeria	3.9	2.4	6.5	3.1	1.6	1.0	3.9	2.8	0.5
Senegal	2.1	5.2	5.1	5.0	5.7	5.0	5.6	5.6	2.4
Sierra Leone	-1.1	-10.0	-24.8	-17.6	-0.8	-8.1	3.8	5.4	6.6
Togo	1.1	6.9	9.7	4.3	-2.1	2.9	-1.9	2.7	2.6

Source: IMF (2003).

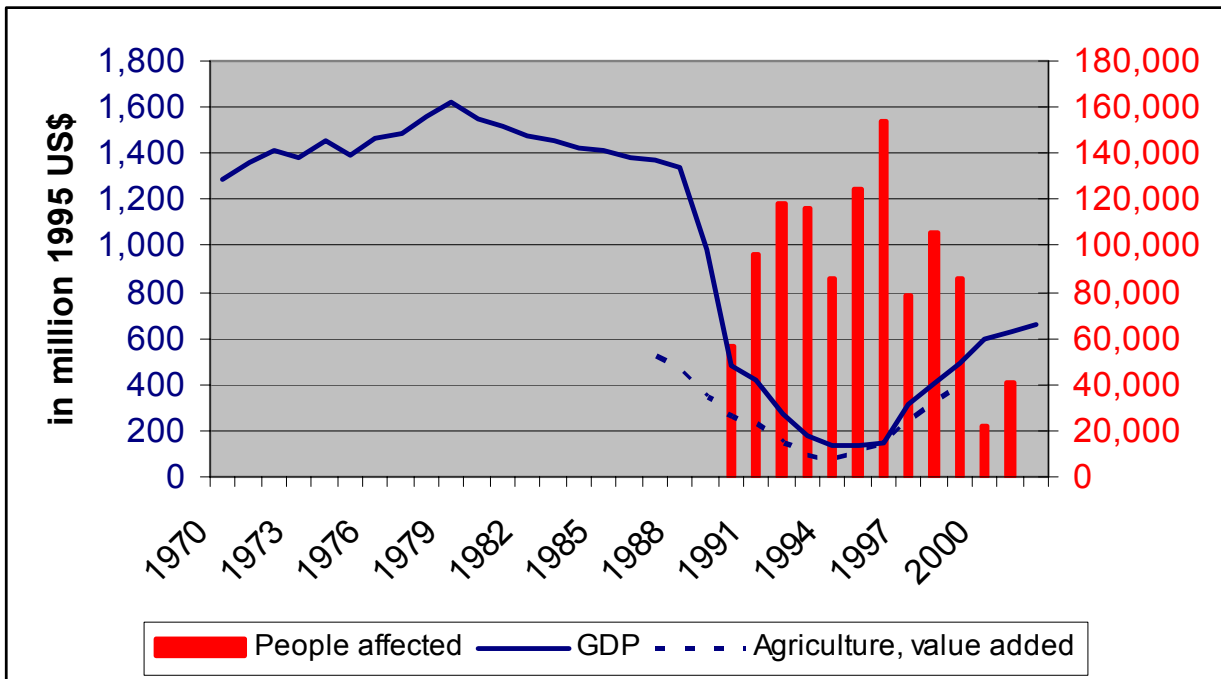
Note: n.a. indicates data were not available.

Figure A1 — Emergency assistance



Source: OECD (2002).

Figure A2 — Liberia: Development shift after crisis



Sources: World Bank (2002); CRED (2002).

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CONFLICTS, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AND FOOD SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA

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D. Commentary

Kankonde Mukadi, Université Protestante Au Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo

Most countries of West Africa have suffered from conflicts. Only three of them—Benin, Cape Verde, and Ghana—can be considered at peace. Margarita Flores has presented the typology of conflict defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which includes armed, social, and economic conflicts.

In West Africa, most conflicts are localized or regional, staying within national borders. Nevertheless, an international dimension does exist through the provision of arms or other collateral support, such as humanitarian aid for relieving famished people.

Conflicts and food insecurity are intimately related. In fact, conflict situations affect the economy as a whole by decreasing local production and making importation difficult or impossible. Any type of conflict has negative consequences for the national economy, especially in the agricultural sector. Rural areas depend on agriculture for employment as well as for food supplies.

In several West African countries, conflicts have resulted in substantial losses in human life, displaced people, and refugees. Farmers have been forced to leave their activities, and as a consequence, food supplies have decreased; poverty has increased; and hunger, malnourishment, and diseases such as HIV/AIDS have multiplied. In other words, as conflicts mount, food insecurity rises: food is less available because supplies are irregular, and access to food is difficult, given that both rural and urban people are poorer.

Liberia and Sierra Leone are examples of countries under conflict in the region. The economic and social situations in these countries are highly tragic. In contrast, Ghana is at peace and has improved food availability by investing in more-productive technologies for staple food production and taking the new techniques to producers. Nevertheless, food access remains a key constraint in Ghana, weakening government institutions, breaking social peace, and compromising rural development.

After a conflict has been resolved, the government is responsible for implementing relevant policy to fight poverty, prevent further conflict, establish food security, and develop rural areas. Government policy should give priority to investing in education and technology, protecting vulnerable groups, building essential infrastructure, and improving the social and economic environment to promote local production and trade. By setting such policy, government can prevent exploitation of natural resources.

West African countries would benefit by harmonizing their policies concerning biodiversity and working together to fight malnutrition and food insecurity. Moreover, countries in this part of Africa need to recognize the relationship between conflict and migration, both forced and economic, and analyze the impact of migration on food and nutrition security and rural development.

