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UPDATE PAPER

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Sandra Acuna, and I will be your Assistant Director for Session One! I am so excited to welcome you to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). This year is my year on NHSMUN staff, and I attended as a delegate in 2023. Currently, I am a freshman at Menlo College, pursuing a major in finance with a minor in business analytics. After high school, I took a gap year working at a startup, which made me want to enroll in business school. In order to combine this with my interests in international studies and relations, I continued to pursue Model UN.

I'm originally from Mexico City and moved to the Bay Area for college. I'm only a few minutes away from San Francisco and love it! I love exploring and always finding new activities in my area. Outside of school and extracurriculars, I love spending time with friends and family, even through FaceTime. I'm a food lover and can never go wrong with a good taco al pastor or some soup dumplings. I also love cooking and baking. I love watching movies and listening to music— "The Princess Diaries" is my all-time favorite. Playing tennis helps me destress and stay active in a fun way!

I know Model UN conferences might be nerve-racking, especially as a first-time delegate. I advise preparing for the topics through the Background Guide, research, and crafting well-thought-out solutions. Additionally, if you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out and ask! I would also encourage everyone to enjoy the experience while it lasts! You will meet some incredible people from all over the world and enjoy working together!

Kind Regards,

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Food and Agricultural Committee
Assistant Director, Session I



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Renata Venzor

Dear Delegates,

I'm excited to welcome you to The Food and Agricultural Committee (FAO)! My name is Carolina Castilla, and I will be your Session II Assistant Director. This is my first time being a staff member at NHSMUN, following two years of attending the conference as a delegate. I loved my experiences so much that I decided to apply to NHSMUN staff.

First, I would like to introduce myself. I was born in England and moved to Chile when I was young. After finishing my time at Colegio Cumbres, I will begin studying odontology at college in March. Some of my favorite activities are traveling (my dream destinations are Greece and Italy), playing soccer, spending time with family and friends, and trying new foods!

As someone who has participated in several NHSMUN conferences, I believe it has been an unforgettable experience, and I encourage you all to enjoy them! I gained much from each conference, including friendships, teamwork, and confidence. I encourage nervous delegates to step out of their comfort zone, try something new, and truly shine. For anyone whose first language is Spanish and is doubting if you're going to be capable, "no te preocupes": I grew up with Spanish as my first language, too, and I know it can feel intimidating when most people around you speak English fluently. But trust me, what matters most is the ideas you have to share. Your perspective is valuable, and your voice deserves to be heard.

My co-AD and I hope this Update Paper helps prepare you for this incredible conference and guide your research. With this, I hope to guide you to be your best versions of yourselves during committee try to inspire, share ideas, listen, communicate, meet new people, and create new experiences that will help guide you into the future. I look forward to meeting you all and seeing what you have prepared.

Best,

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Food and Agricultural Committee
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NHSMUN 2025

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TOPIC A:

ELIMINATING LABOR EXPLOITATION IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Photo Credit: Jonathan McIntosh

Introduction

Labor exploitation in agriculture is a critical issue. It continues to undermine human rights and perpetuate systemic inequality on a global scale. Across the globe, millions of agricultural workers are subjected to unsafe working conditions, low wages, and a plethora of violations of labor rights.¹ These injustices are often deeply rooted in the food supply chain and are directly tied to food security worldwide. Agricultural workers, many of whom come from marginalized and vulnerable communities, face exploitation that perpetuates cycles of poverty and denies them legal protection against exploitation. The reliance on cheap, undervalued labor poses a structural problem that weakens the sustainability of food production systems. The interaction between labor rights, poverty, and sustainable agricultural practices highlights the urgency of addressing these systematic challenges. Without meaningful change, these dynamics risk compromising sustainable development.

Labor exploitation tends to be more common in specific economic sectors, such as clothing manufacturing, agriculture, and construction.² The agricultural industry has a unique standpoint when it comes to labor exploitation due to its reliance on seasonal and migrant workers, many of whom lack formal contracts or legal protections.³ The pressure to maintain low production costs to meet global food demand further stresses those challenges, often at the expense of workers' rights. Addressing labor exploitation in agriculture is a moral issue and a practical necessity. Improving workers' lives by ensuring fair wages, safe working conditions, and respect for labor rights is integral. Combating labor exploitation strengthens the agricultural sector's long-term viability, promotes economic justice, and helps build a more inclusive and just global food system. Over the past decade, the gap between good and poor working conditions has only worsened.⁴ In an attempt to make goods more accessible and affordable across the world, labor exploitation has increased exponentially. Therefore, it is essential to create a balance between these two factors.

Labor exploitation typically occurs in lower-income communities or regions. Based on the risks individuals

may face, the government often provides certain social protections. This may include unemployment benefits, social assistance, and other social programs.⁵ With this, it is also essential to promote the formalization of employment to ensure that employers are bound to the legal frameworks enforced in that country.⁶ The path to a sustainable and equitable agricultural sector begins with recognizing and addressing the systemic challenges perpetuating exploitation. By centering workers' voices and prioritizing human rights, we can reimagine agricultural practices that uphold dignity, equity, and sustainability.

Addressing Labor Exploitation in Agriculture Through Policy and Reform

The exploitation of labor in the agricultural sector is an urgent issue. It impacts millions of workers worldwide. Recently, more policies have been implemented to combat this issue. Governments and organizations focused on labor bans, reforming visa systems, and introducing worker protection laws. Attention has increased to exploitative practices within the agricultural sector. Dalvir Singh was a Bengali migrant working on a flower farm in Italy. On August 16, 2024, he

1 "Transform the Land: Agenda to Strengthen the Agricultural Sector with Labor Human Rights at the Center." Periplo, accessed December 19, 2024, <https://proyectorperiplo.org/en/transform-the-land-agenda-to-strengthen-the-agricultural-sector-with-labor-human-rights-at-the-center/>.

2 "What is Labor Exploitation," Vinciworks, accessed January 23, 2025, <https://vinciworks.com/blog/what-is-labour-exploitation/>.

3 Patrick Thomas, "Farms, Meat Plants Brace for Trump Immigration Crackdown," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 21, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/business/an-immigration-crackdown-risks-sapping-farms-vital-source-of-labor-88a91df0?>

4 C Zimmerman, S Hargreaves, K Lau, et al, "Addressing labour exploitation in the global workforce," *The Lancet*, no. 403 (May 2024), [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(24\)00459-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(24)00459-8/fulltext)

5 "Social Protection," International Labour Organization, accessed January 23, 2025, <https://www.ilo.org/topics-and-sectors/social-protection>.

6 "Social Protection," International Labour Organization.



Workers in agricultural fields

Credit: PAC55

was found dead in a field. Officials believe his death was due to intense heat and extreme working conditions. In these fields, much of the labor force includes migrants from areas including Sub-Saharan Africa and India.⁷ Despite Italy's lucrative food industry, harvesting jobs are associated with low pay, long hours, and limited work rights. Many of these workers live in ghettos and abandoned buildings. These are often controlled by gang masters who recruit workers and hold part of their wages. According to Italian activists, these employers exploit their workers and force them to work 10-14 hours a day in extreme heat.⁸ This issue especially affects migrant workers due to how reliant agriculture is on their labor. Migrant workers often face unsafe conditions and inadequate pay more frequently than the average non-migrant worker. This is more relevant in regions like Italy, Greece, and Spain as these are some of the largest agricultural hubs in the European Union.⁹

As a result, the European Union (EU) implemented new

regulations that banned goods made with forced labor from being produced and distributed.¹⁰ These measures aim to disrupt supply chains that rely on exploitative practices.¹¹ The Council's regulation allows customs authorities to seize goods suspected of being linked to forced labor. It also mandates that companies demonstrate that their supply chains are free from exploitative practices. These regulations include mechanisms to identify and address these violations and give authorities resources to investigate. Furthermore, they hold employers accountable for their operations. National neighboring authorities collaborate with customs agencies to seize goods suspicious of being produced through forced labor. Reports, testimonies, and audits are used to investigate these supply chains.¹² The investigation also relies on satellite data, disclosures, and NGO independent reports. Companies must provide evidence of due diligence and fair working conditions to ensure compliance with these new regulations. In cases where violations are identified, the EU mandates the

7 "Working here is hell: latest death of farm worker in 40C heat shocks Italy," *The Guardian*, August 27, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/aug/27/indian-migrant-worker-death-heat-stress-italy>

8 "Working here is hell: latest death of farm worker in 40C heat shocks Italy," *The Guardian*.

9 Joanna Gill, "How rife is exploitation of migrant workers on EU farms?," *Context News*, September 2, 2024, <https://www.context.news/money-power-people/how-rife-is-exploitation-of-migrant-workers-on-eu-farms>.

10 Hélène de Rengervé, "EU Adopts New Regulation to Curtail Forced Labor," *Human Rights Watch*, November 19, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/11/19/eu-adopts-new-regulation-curtail-forced-labor>.

11 Hélène de Rengervé, "EU Adopts New Regulation to Curtail Forced Labor," *Human Rights Watch*, November 19, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/11/19/eu-adopts-new-regulation-curtail-forced-labor>.

12 Council of the European Union, "Products made with forced labour: Council adopts ban," news release, November 19, 2024, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/11/19/products-made-with-forced-labour-council-adopts-ban/>.

withdrawal of specific products from the market, and non-compliant businesses become subject to large penalties.¹³ Enforcing these regulations accurately is challenging. To easily identify the offenders, authorities utilize multiple tools and strategies. Authorities posing as commoners serve as whistleblowers and report suspected violators. They also monitor them with the help of NGOs and the use of additional digital tools such as blockchain. Despite all efforts, enforcement is still not completely efficient or effective. Regardless, this initiative sets a strong precedent for addressing forced labor.¹⁴

The United States has a visa program that employers have continuously violated. The H-2A program enables U.S. employers or agents who satisfy specific regulations to hire foreign nationals for temporary agricultural positions in the United States.¹⁵ The exploitation of H-2A visa workers in the US exemplifies violations of labor rights. This program is designed to provide temporary agricultural workers to meet labor shortages. However, it has been overpowered by reports of abuse, miserable working conditions, and forced labor. The vulnerabilities these laborers suffer lead to a huge dependency on employers since both their legal status and livelihoods are solely reliant on them. The power imbalance between employers and workers only deepens the cycle of mistreatment. This creates large opportunities for exploitation. A recent case regarding this topic recently arose. A lawsuit filed in Denver, Colorado, revealed that H-2A workers in the San Luis Valley were subjected to a plethora of mistreatments. These include inadequate and dangerous working conditions with no protections in place.¹⁶ These working and living conditions contributed to the psychological toll on workers,

who were often isolated and unable to seek external help due to language barriers and employer involvement.¹⁷

In Idaho, similar violations have been reported, such as workers being forced to work in similar conditions without proper security measures. Deportation threats exacerbated these. Certain environments enable exploitation and perpetuate a cycle of abuse. For instance, one worker recounted being forced to work through heat waves without adequate hydration, leading to severe health complications. Employers keep leveraging their power over visa renewals to silence complaints.¹⁸ A recent lawsuit filed to block a new rule under the H-2A program underscores the growing concerns about exploitation. The rule aimed to increase wage protections for H-2A workers, faced pushback from agricultural groups, citing cost concerns. However, advocacy organizations argue that stronger wage protections are essential to prevent the economic coercion that underpins labor exploitation.¹⁹ Efforts to address these problems include proposed Farm Workforce Modernization Act reforms. This aims to provide legal protections and pathways to citizenship for agricultural workers. The Act proposes introducing independent oversight mechanisms to review employer practices and ensure fair treatment of workers. Furthermore, there is a Certified Agricultural Worker Status. This grants temporary legal status to undocumented farmworkers who meet specific work requirements. It also provides pathways to permanent residency based on years of agricultural labor. This feature enriches the H-2A visa program by streamlining the application process and extending visa validity to three years. It also introduces wage caps and allocates visas for year-round work, with funding for farmworker housing improvements.

13 European Parliament, “Products made with forced labour to be banned from EU single market,” news release, April 23, 2024, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240419IPR20551/products-made-with-forced-labour-to-be-banned-from-eu-single-market> .

14 Ana Santos, “How will the EU’s forced labor regulation impact the agricultural sector?” *Infomigrants*, November 25, 2024, <https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/61319/how-will-the-eus-forced-labor-regulation-impact-the-agricultural-sector> .

15 “H-2A Temporary Agricultural Workers,” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed December 19, 2024, <https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/temporary-workers/h-2a-temporary-agricultural-workers> .

16 Colorado Legal Services, *Colorado Legal Services files lawsuit on behalf of H-2A workers with claims of forced labor and wage theft in potato packing warehouses in the San Luis Valley* (Colorado: Colorado Legal Services, 2024), <https://www.coloradolegalservices.org/node/416/colorado-legal-services-files-lawsuit-behalf-h-2a-workers-claims-forced-labor-and-wage> .

17 Olivia Prentzel, “Potato Packing workers trafficked from Mexico to San Luis Valley in forced-labor scheme, lawsuit alleges,” *The Denver Post*, November 1, 2024, <https://www.denverpost.com/2024/11/01/h2a-visas-workers-trafficked-colorado-san-luis-valley/>

18 Nada Hassein, “Trump migrant deportations could threaten states’ agricultural economies,” *Idaho Capital Sun*, December 10, 2024, <https://idahocapitalsun.com/2024/12/10/trump-migrant-deportations-could-threaten-states-agricultural-economies/>

19 Stuart Anderson, “Immigration Lawsuit Aims To Block H-2A Agricultural Work Visa Rule,” *Forbes*, October 9, 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2024/10/09/immigration-lawsuit-aims-to-block-h-2a-agricultural-work-visa-rule/>

These protections ensure a stable, authorized workforce while protecting workers' rights.²⁰

Due to these violations, California decided to take action to protect vulnerable workers who suffered from labor exploitation. The state implemented a policy to support agricultural workers who have experienced exploitation or abuse. Senate Bill 1105, enacted in 2024, expands paid sick leave for agricultural employees. This is to allow them to recover from instances of abuse, including forced labor, human trafficking, and other workplace violations.²¹ In addition to addressing immediate needs, the law highlights the broader issue of labor exploitation in the agricultural sector. By acknowledging the unique vulnerabilities faced by agricultural workers, many of whom are migrants or undocumented, California's policy reflects a growing awareness of systemic labor issues. This law extends sick leave to cover medical treatments, legal consultations, and mental health services for victims. This broad scope ensures that workers have the necessary support to navigate the aftermath of exploitation. For instance, workers who have been subjected to unsafe working conditions or wage theft can use their sick leave to seek legal counsel or report abuse to authorities.²²

The policy has been praised for its potential to mitigate exploitation. However, the implementation of this policy is being doubted. Employers, particularly those in smaller agricultural operations, have raised concerns about the financial burden of providing paid sick leave. California has introduced subsidies and tax incentives to address these concerns and help businesses comply with the law without facing economic strain. This approach seeks to balance the need for worker protection with the realities of running small-scale agricultural enterprises.²³ Agricultural workers

have been excluded from many standard labor protections, making them especially vulnerable to abuse. By offering comprehensive paid sick leave, California addresses individual cases of exploitation and systemic inequities in the industry. A report from the Society for Human Resource Management highlights how such policies could inspire other jurisdictions to adopt similar protections, which, in the short and long run, could help agricultural victims worldwide finally get the justice they deserve.²⁴

Enacting laws and practices prohibiting labor exploitation in the agricultural sector is essential. Employees in this sector frequently face unsafe workplaces, minimal wages, and a lack of basic rights. Many farm workers face long hours, unfavorable working conditions, and the possibility of abuse in the absence of strong protections. Their access to legal, educational, and medical resources is frequently restricted. These exploitative behaviors contribute to wider social and economic inequality. Global attention should be paid to exploitative labor practices that affect millions of workers worldwide. Constant labor exploitation damages workers' dignity, maintains cycles of poverty, and impedes international attempts to build ethical and sustainable economies. Furthermore, vulnerable groups like women, migrants, and children are more frequently affected by exploitation, which worsens systemic inequality. The international community can act to end these behaviors by passing solutions that maintain workers' rights.

Ending Child Labor in the Cocoa Industry

Child labor in the cocoa industry is a significant issue, particularly in West Africa. Many of the world's largest chocolate companies receive their supplies from African

²⁰ Zacharia Rutledge, et. al., "The Farm Workforce Modernization Act and the H-2A Visa Program," Michigan State University, last modified March 18, 2024, <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/farm-workforce-modernization-act-and-h-2a-visa>

²¹ Monica Bullock, "Senate Bill 1105: California Passes Expanded Use of Paid Sick Leave for Agricultural Employees," California Workplace Law Blog, September 25, 2024, <https://www.californiaworkplacelawblog.com/2024/09/articles/disability-and-leave/paid-sick-leave/senate-bill-1105-california-passes-expanded-use-of-paid-sick-leave-for-agricultural-employees/>.

²² Michelle Barrett Falconer and Sebastian Chilco, "California Expands Paid Sick Leave Uses for Crime Victims and Agricultural Employees, and Changes Unpaid Leave Standards for Victims," Littler, last modified September 30, 2024, <https://www.littler.com/publication-press/publication/california-expands-paid-sick-leave-uses-crime-victims-and-agricultural>.

²³ "California Expands Paid Sick Leave Protections for Agricultural Workers and Crime Victims," Hub International, accessed December 19, 2024, <https://www.hubinternational.com/products/people-and-technology-consulting/workforce-absence-management-bulletins/2024/12/california-expands-paid-sick-leave-for-agricultural-workers-and-crime-victims/>

²⁴ Monica H. Bullock and Briana M. Antuna, "California Passes Law Expanding Use of Paid Sick Leave for Agricultural Employees," *SHRM*, October 1, 2024, <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/employment-law-compliance/california-passes-law-expanding-use-of-paid-sick-leave-for-agric>

farms. This includes Hershey’s, Nestlé, and Mars.²⁵ Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire produce almost 60 percent of the world’s cocoa. Despite child labor being illegal in both of these countries, approximately 1.56 million children in these two countries engage in hazardous labor on cocoa farms. This exploitation largely stems from poverty and systemic economic challenges.²⁶ The lack of access to quality education and weak labor regulations worsen the situation. Many farming families earn below-living wages and involve their children in dangerous agricultural practices to meet production needs.²⁷ Around 30 percent of each country’s population lives below the poverty line, and conditions have worsened due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁸ The financial challenges cocoa farmers face are critical contributors to the persistence of child labor. Many farmers operate at a subsistence level and cannot afford hired labor. As the demand by large corporations for cocoa at low prices has increased, cocoa farmers’ wages have decreased over time. In the 1950s-70s, cocoa farmers would

receive approximately 50 percent of the cost of each chocolate bar sold. However, in 2022, farmers only received six percent of the cost of each chocolate bar sold. Despite the costs of chocolate bars rising for consumers, farmers’ margins have continued to shrink.²⁹ Most African cocoa farmland owners make less than USD 1 per day, which only continues the industry’s poverty cycle.

As a consequence, child labor is a common and illegal alternative.³⁰ There are also many cases of child trafficking and forced labor on these cocoa farms. In small villages in Burkina Faso and Mali, traffickers have kidnapped a child from almost every family to sell to cocoa farmers in more significant regions in Western Africa.³¹ The average age of most child laborers on cocoa farms is between 12 and 16. However, children as young as six have also been found. Child laborers on cocoa farms average around ten hours of work each day and are often exposed to dangerous agricultural chemicals and

25 “Child Labor and Slavery in the Chocolate Industry”, Food Empowerment Project, January 2022, <https://foodispower.org/human-labor-slavery/slavery-chocolate/>.

26 World Cocoa Foundation, “New Framework to accelerate actions to tackle child labor in cocoa in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana,” press release, November 27, 2024, <https://worldcocoafoundation.org/news-and-resources/press-release/new-framework-to-accelerate-actions-to-tackle-child-labor-in-cocoa-in-cote-d-ivoire-and-ghana>

27 “Child Labor in the Production of Cocoa,” Bureau of International Labor Affairs, accessed December 19, 2024, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/our-work/child-forced-labor-trafficking/child-labor-cocoa>

28 “Ghana”, Oxfam International, May 25, 2022, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/what-we-do/countries/ghana>.

29 Braga, Arianna, “The dark side of chocolate: child labour in the cocoa industry”, August 20, 2024, <https://www.humanium.org/en/the-dark-side-of-chocolate-child-labour-in-the-cocoa-industry/>.

30 “Child Labor and Slavery in the Chocolate Industry”, Food Empowerment Project, January 2022, <https://foodispower.org/human-labor-slavery/slavery-chocolate/>.

31 “Child Labor and Slavery in the Chocolate Industry”, Food Empowerment Project.

Children working in Mozambique

Credit: Ton Rulkens



sharp and large knives that are used in the fields. Their living and working conditions are usually described as “slave-like.” They are typically given one wooden plank to sleep on, small rations of food, no sanitary products, no safety equipment, and are physically punished every week.³² On these abusive cocoa farms, there is also a disproportionate amount of young girls who are kidnapped and trafficked for labor. In 2022, 40 percent of the trafficked cocoa laborers in Western Africa were young women between the ages of 12 and 16.³³

Efforts to combat child labor attempt to target the root causes of this problem. Initiatives, such as the U.S. Department of Labor’s Child Labor Cocoa Coordinating Group (CLCCG), focus on fostering collaboration to promote sustainable cocoa production without exploiting children.³⁴ Additionally, the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) GALAB project has been working with communities in Nigeria to develop a Community of Practice Program. This program raises awareness, strengthens local capacity, and connects stakeholders to address child labor systematically.³⁵ Additionally, Tony’s Open Chain initiatives emphasize providing farmers fair wages and better working conditions. For example, Ferrero International’s commitment to this program has not only improved farmer livelihoods but also garnered consumer support for ethically sourced chocolate.³⁶ Similarly, some initiatives emphasize systemic solutions such as traceability systems, community investments, and education as crucial tools for eradicating child labor. These measures aim to promote long-term development and reduce

economic vulnerability, creating an environment where child labor is unnecessary and unacceptable.³⁷ The World Cocoa Foundation’s framework exemplifies collaborative innovation by aligning industry stakeholders to combat child labor through shared responsibility and targeted interventions, promoting collective accountability across the supply chain.³⁸ Similarly, the ILO’s GALAB project empowers communities through education and awareness, highlighting the importance of initiatives in fostering sustainable development and improving the quality of life for vulnerable populations.³⁹ The fight against child labor in the cocoa industry is gaining momentum through innovative approaches, technological advancements, and collaborative frameworks.

Technology is also emerging as a vital tool in addressing child labor. The FAO’s DigiChild initiative uses georeferenced data to monitor and combat exploitative practices in agrifood systems. This technological innovation enables precise tracking and intervention. This helps organizations ensure compliance with labor regulations.⁴⁰ Technology also explores how child labor is intertwined with global food security challenges. Research and geographical studies found the importance of sustainable agricultural techniques and robust economic policies in breaking the poverty cycle perpetuating child labor in cocoa farming. The usage of technology is also important to manage resources efficiently and map agricultural fields. In many areas, GPS and GIS mapping are used to monitor crops, map fields accurately, and track the distribution of resources.⁴¹ However, most cocoa farmers

32 “Child Labor and Slavery in the Chocolate Industry”, Food Empowerment Project.

33 “Child Labor and Slavery in the Chocolate Industry”, Food Empowerment Project.

34 Bureau of International Labor Affairs, “Child Labor in the Production of Cocoa.”

35 International Labour Organization, “ILO’s GALAB project launches community of practice to address child labour in Nigeria’s cocoa sector,” news release, December 6, 2024, <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilos-galab-project-launches-community-practice-address-child-labour>

36 Sydeny Krisanda and Hannah Rojas, “Child Labor in Cocoa Supply Chains: Unveiling the Layers of Human Rights Challenges” Sustainalytics, last modified March 26, 2024, <https://www.sustainalytics.com/esg-research/resource/investors-esg-blog/child-labor-in-cocoa-supply-chains--unveiling-the-layers-of-human-rights-challenges>

37 “How to remove child labour from the cocoa supply chain,” End Child Labor, accessed December 19, 2024, <https://endchildlabour2021.org/how-to-remove-child-labour-from-the-cocoa-supply-chain/>

38 World Cocoa Foundation, “New Framework to accelerate actions to tackle child labor in cocoa in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana,” press release, November 27, 2024, <https://worldcocoafoundation.org/news-and-resources/press-release/new-framework-to-accelerate-actions-to-tackle-child-labor-in-cocoa-in-cote-d-ivoire-and-ghana>

39 International Labour Organization, “ILO’s GALAB project launches community of practice to address child labour in Nigeria’s cocoa sector,” news release, December 6, 2024, <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilos-galab-project-launches-community-practice-address-child-labour>

40 “DIGICHILD: exploring georeferenced data to combat child labour in agrifood systems,” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed December 19, 2024, <https://www.fao.org/childlabouragriculture/news-detail/digichild--exploring-the-use-of-georeferenced-data-to-combat-child-labour-in-agrifood-systems/en>.

41 “GIS Field mapping for agriculture: One of the biggest boons of technology”, SoilOptix® Blog, <https://soiloptix.com/our-blog/gis-field-mapping-for-agriculture-one-of-the-biggest-boons-of-technology/#:~:text=Efficient%20Resource%20Management,improving%20overall%20resource%20management%20efficiency>.

cannot afford the initial investment in the technology. Larger corporations with supply chain farms in these regions have also ignored the necessity of efficient, sustainable, and safe farming practices. It is crucial to hold governments and corporations accountable for the conditions on these farms. While these initiatives are promising, significant challenges remain. In Ghana, cocoa farmers recently filed complaints about low prices and the continued use of child labor in production, emphasizing the need for comprehensive policy reforms and enforcement mechanisms.⁴² In addition to low wages, deforestation driven by unsustainable cocoa farming practices poses a dual challenge of environmental degradation and labor exploitation.⁴³ Challenges such as poverty, weak enforcement, and ecological decline persist, calling for more unified action.

Conclusion

Labor exploitation and inhumane practices in agriculture remain a critical issue. They continue to undermine human rights and threaten the sustainability of global food systems. Efforts to address this problem must prioritize fair labor practices, enforce accountability, and implement systemic reforms that protect workers' dignity and livelihoods. By addressing the root causes of exploitation and fostering cooperation across sectors, a more equitable and sustainable agricultural system can be realized, one that values both the workers who sustain it and the communities it serves. Migrants are significantly more likely to endure labor exploitation and overall poor working conditions. This is often related to their immigration status and whether they are legally employed, which relates to whether they have legal protection.⁴⁴ This often especially extends into the fields of agriculture, clothing manufacturing, and construction due to their seasonal nature. For agricultural

workers specifically, many workers tend to lack the necessary legal contracting to ensure government protection when they are exploited.⁴⁵ Understanding this process and the gaps in the structure is essential to creating more legal work contract practices. In the cocoa industry, labor exploitation has become increasingly harmful.⁴⁶ Considering the world's large reliance on cocoa for chocolate and beans, additional stress is often placed on developing and vulnerable countries.⁴⁷ Child labor is one of the largest problems in the industry, with a lack of comprehensive solutions addressing both the short and long-term impacts. In order to provide sustainable solutions, it is essential to create a global solution that provides developing countries with a support network.

Transforming the food trade industry requires a collective commitment to systemic change that goes beyond addressing individual cases of exploitation. We can dismantle the structures that perpetuate exploitation by fostering collaboration and accountability at every level of the system. We also need to amplify the voices of agricultural workers and movements advocating for labor rights. The lived experiences and insights are vital to shaping policies and practices that genuinely address their needs. Supporting these efforts not only aligns with the principles of social justice but also contributes to building a resilient food system capable of withstanding future challenges. Overall, to combat labor exploitation, it is key to address legal mechanisms of protection, migrant protection, addressing seasonal sectors that tend to employ unfair working conditions, and the integration of safe employment structures.⁴⁸

42 Catherine Early, "More collaboration needed as cocoa firms battle deforestation and child labour risks," *Reuters*, August 19, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/society-equity/more-collaboration-needed-cocoa-firms-battle-deforestation-child-labour-risks-2024-08-19/>.

43 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "DIGICHILD: exploring georeferenced data to combat child labour in agrifood systems."

44 "Keys to address the labor exploitation of migrant populations in Central America," International Migration Organization, accessed January 25, 2025, <https://lac.iom.int/en/blogs/keys-address-labor-exploitation-migrant-populations-central-america>.

45 "Keys to address the labor exploitation of migrant populations in Central America," International Migration Organization.

46 "Child Labor in the production of Coca," Bureau of International Labor Affairs, accessed January 25, 2025, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/our-work/child-forced-labor-trafficking/child-labor-cocoa>.

47 "Child Labor in the production of Coca," Bureau of International Labor Affairs.

48 "Keys to address the labor exploitation of migrant populations in Central America," International Migration Organization.



FAO

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TOPIC B: ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY IN CONFLICT ZONES

Photo Credit: Stephen Morrison



Introduction

Food insecurity and hunger threaten the lives of millions around the world. About 733 million people are facing hunger.¹ Hunger and food insecurity have remained relatively unchanged for three years.² This crisis is especially worse in regions affected by political instability and violent conflicts. A study led by Oxfam reported record-high levels of hunger worldwide due to conflict.³ Between 7,000-21,000 people die each day due to starvation in conflict zones. The study examined 54 countries experiencing conflict, which accounted for roughly 281.6 million people facing hunger.⁴ Many factors contribute to this crisis. The Oxfam report revealed the nature of warring parties actively using food as a weapon. This is done by blocking food aid and targeting food, water, and energy infrastructures. Conflict zones often lose local leaders and basic services, making it harder to rebuild farms. This causes hunger to become a long-term problem, even after fighting ends. Children are the most affected. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that 2024 was the worst year for children in conflict. Over 473 million children live in areas affected by conflict.⁵ Malnutrition has reached alarming levels among this group.

Africa has been hit the hardest. Around 66 percent of the population is going through severe food crises.⁶ In East Africa, areas like Tigray (Ethiopia), South Sudan, and Darfur (Sudan) suffer from ongoing armed conflicts and displacement. This makes access to food nearly impossible for many communities. In Central Africa, ongoing violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic has truly affected agriculture and trade systems, leaving millions hungry.⁷ Similar conflicts exist in parts of the Middle East and Asia. Conflicts in Yemen, Afghanistan, Gaza, and Syria have left millions without access to food, water, or basic services. In these areas, war destroys farmlands, kills livestock, and breaks down trade and markets.

We need short-term and long-term solutions to solve food insecurity in these areas. Short-term solutions like food aid can help fast, but relying only on aid can create dependence, hurt local businesses, and make it harder for communities to

recover on their own. Long-term solutions are more effective. These include supporting local farmers, planting crops that can survive difficult weather, and building better food storage and sharing systems. These steps can stop the cycle of hunger and fix the problem at its roots. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and its partners are working to help farms recover, produce food again, and promote better farming practices. The world needs to act fast and work together to support these efforts. Focusing on long-term, sustainable solutions can help solve the problem from the root causes of hunger and help communities become more assertive in the future.

Food Insecurity in Ethiopia

Ethiopia faces a severe crisis, with over 16 million people needing food support.⁸ The situation is caused by a mix of

1 United Nations Trade and Development, "733 Million People Face Chronic Hunger: Here's How Trade Can Help," UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), December 12, 2024, <https://unctad.org/news/733-million-people-face-chronic-hunger-heres-how-trade-can-help>.

2 Hannah Payne, "2024 FAO Report: 733 Million People Face Hunger — Here's How You Can Help - Rise against Hunger," Rise Against Hunger, July 29, 2024, <https://www.riseagainsthunger.org/articles/733-million-people-face-hunger-2024/>.

3 Al Jazeera, "Global Conflicts Driving up to 21,000 Deaths Daily from Hunger: Oxfam," Al Jazeera, October 16, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/10/16/global-conflicts-driving-up-to-21000-deaths-daily-from-hunger-report>.

4 Al Jazeera, "Global Conflicts Driving up to 21,000 Deaths Daily from Hunger: Oxfam,"

5 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, "'Not the New Normal' – 2024 'One of the Worst Years in UNICEF's History' for Children in Conflict," Unicef.org, December 12, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/not-new-normal-2024-one-worst-years-unicefs-history-children-conflict>.

6 Food and Agriculture Organization, "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024" (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd1254en>.

7 Al Jazeera, "Drive to Eliminate Global Hunger by 2030 Has Stalled, UN Warns," Al Jazeera, July 24, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/24/drive-to-eliminate-global-hunger-by-2030-has-stalled-un-warns>.

8 James Goddard, "Ethiopia: Conflict and Food Insecurity 40 Years on from the 1984 Famine," House of Lords Library, October 10,

issues, including long dry periods caused by climate changes, which have ruined crops and hurt farm animals. This includes harsh weather, conflict, political instability, and dependence on natural water agriculture. Historically, the country has gone through many ongoing droughts and food shortages. This includes the worst in 40 years in 2022, which destroyed agricultural and pastoral livelihoods in southern and eastern regions.⁹ The country's struggles with hunger are also not new. The horrible 1984 food shortage, which caused pain and brought this issue to light, is a reminder of the consequences of not enough food systems. Ethiopia's past and present crises highlight addressing food insecurity and how to combat it. The government and its partners are asking for fast action to reduce the damage caused by "La Niña." This is a natural weather event that makes the weather much drier in Ethiopia and other parts of Eastern Africa.¹⁰ This weather event caused drought in the lowland areas of southern and southeastern Ethiopia. The United Nations has already allocated USD 17 million in aid to the country. USD 10 million comes from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and USD Seven million from the Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund (EHF). This aid is given to try and solve the effect left by the drought.¹¹ The federal and regional governments, along with partners, have started working on projects to address this issue.

Additionally, the Tigray War affected northern Ethiopia from 2020 to 2022. This war negatively impacted agriculture, supply chains, and lives. The war has had a horrible effect on agricultural production in the region. Tigray, a traditionally agrarian area, has had problems like soil degradation, droughts, and insufficient resources, all of which have been made worse by the conflict. One of the first impacts of the war was the destruction of agricultural infrastructure. During the

conflict, military actions targeted essential resources like water points, storage facilities, and irrigation systems, affecting crop production very badly.¹² Many farmers had to leave their land because of the fighting. This has left large areas of farmland unused. On top of that, it has become more challenging to get seeds and farming tools. Combined with the destruction of farming equipment, this caused a significant drop in food production. The war also led to the degradation of land resources. As military operations intensified, trying to conserve soil, which had been implemented in the region before the conflict, was affected. This has led to problems such as low soil fertility, further impeding the potential for crop production. As well, the agricultural labor force has been significantly diminished, with many men being recruited into the military and women often forced to care for displaced family members.¹³ As a result, fewer hands were available to tend crops during crucial planting and harvest periods. Also, the destruction of water infrastructure, including pipelines and wells, has led to water shortages critical for crop irrigation in the dry season. As a result, even where crops were planted, many have been unable to survive due to too little water supply.¹⁴

The Tigray War affected farming and created severe challenges for water access and resource management in northern Ethiopia. In rural areas, agriculture depends completely on rainfall and small-scale irrigation systems. It has become clear that destroying water infrastructure such as wells, pipelines, and reservoirs has had long-term consequences. Families who depended on these systems for drinking water, irrigation, and livestock had problems meeting basic needs. The problem was made worse by an economic blockade that stopped essential goods and services from reaching the region.¹⁵ This

2024, <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/ethiopia-conflict-and-food-insecurity-40-years-on-from-the-1984-famine/>.

9 World Bank, "Enhancing Food and Nutrition Security in the Sahel and Horn of Africa," World Bank, January 4, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2024/01/04/enhancing-food-and-nutrition-security-in-the-sahel-and-horn-of-afe-africa>.

10 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Efforts, "Ethiopia: Situation Update," ReliefWeb Response, 2025, <https://response.reliefweb.int/ethiopia/situation-update>.

11 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Efforts, "Ethiopia - Situation Report, 13 December 2024," Unocha.org, December 13, 2024, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-situation-report-13-december-2024>.

12 Food and Agriculture Organization, "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024,"

13 Yeshwas Admasu, "Forced Displacement, Gender, and Livelihoods: Refugees in Ethiopia," *The Journal of Development Studies*, November 5, 2024, 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2024.2376399>.

14 Hailemariam Meaza et al., "The Effects of Armed Conflict on Natural Resources and Conservation Measures in Tigray, Northern Ethiopia," *International Soil and Water Conservation Research*, November 1, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iswcr.2024.11.004>.

15 Yonas Muleta Gejea and Shibeshi Fekadu Tolesa, "The Impact of National and International War on Ethiopia: A Review," *International Journal of Social Science, Management and Economics Research* 2, no. 4 (September 2024): 55–68, <https://doi.org/10.61421/ijssmer.2024.2404>.



Farming in Ethiopia
 Credit: Mintsnot

has left people without many of the basic needs for them to survive. Food storage buildings were destroyed or stolen, which caused the loss of crops that could have fed people healthy foods or been used for the next planting season. Many animals, essential for people living in rural areas, were also harmed. Some were killed, stolen, or lost because families had to move from their homes. Beyond physical damage, the war caused a lot of psychological and social stress among farmers and their families, reducing their capacity to recover and rebuild. Women and children, in particular, suffered the most from these challenges as they often had to walk long distances to fetch water or look for food, increasing their vulnerability to health issues and violence. In response to these challenges, humanitarian organizations have focused on giving emergency food aid, water purification supplies, and support for rebuilding water and irrigation systems. However, long-term recovery will need restoring local farming systems, improving access to resources, and supporting affected communities' mental health and well-being.

Climate change has dramatically affected Ethiopia's agriculture, which depends on cereal crops like maize, wheat, teff, and sorghum.¹⁶ These crops are vital for food and income, so

their sensitivity to changing weather is a significant concern. Unpredictable weather, such as changes in temperature and rainfall, has led to more frequent droughts and floods, worsening food shortages. For example, maize needs steady rain between 50 and 100 centimeters yearly. The crop has suffered from lower yields because of rising temperatures and irregular rainfall. Studies suggest maize production could drop by up to 25 percent by 2050 due to these changes.¹⁷ Wheat grows best in cooler weather with specific rain and is also at risk as temperatures rise. High temperatures harm crop growth and grain production, lowering productivity and affecting the country's nutrition and economy. Sorghum, an essential crop for both local use and export, grows in tropical and sub-tropical areas and needs specific conditions, such as temperatures between 20 degrees Celsius and 40 degrees Celsius and rainfall of 1000–1100 millimeters.¹⁸ However, rising temperatures and unstable rainfall have caused inconsistent harvests, especially in regions like the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples region and Tigray. These two regions have faced longer and more frequent droughts. To address these challenges, Ethiopia's National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) stresses the need to adjust

16 Willem Marx, "What Is 'Food Resilience'? Ask These Ethiopian Farmers Facing Conflict and Drought," NPR, August 10, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/sections/goats-and-soda/2024/08/10/g-s1-15515/what-is-food-resilience-ask-these-ethiopian-farmers-facing-conflict-and-drought>.

17 Marx, "What Is 'Food Resilience'? Ask These Ethiopian Farmers Facing Conflict and Drought,"

18 Marx, "What Is 'Food Resilience'? Ask These Ethiopian Farmers Facing Conflict and Drought,"

farming practices to deal with climate change.¹⁹ This includes better water management, growing crops, and using advanced farming techniques. Efforts are underway to develop climate-resistant crops, improve irrigation systems, and help farmers manage risks with better weather forecasts and warning systems.

Organizations like the World Food Programme (WFP) play a key role in providing lifesaving food to people in need, especially in areas affected by drought and conflict.²⁰ They also work with communities to improve nutrition and help them become more assertive in the face of challenges. WFP gives food and cash to the most vulnerable families across the country. In the northern regions of Afar, Amhara, and Tigray, WFP provides food to people affected by conflict and coordinates their efforts alongside government authorities. In the Somali Region, WFP gives emergency food and cash to families dealing with severe drought. Their work focuses on areas hit hardest and challenging to reach. These efforts have been effective in providing people with the help they need. For example, WFP supports 580,000 children and pregnant women each month with programs to treat and prevent malnutrition, including vouchers for fresh food.²¹ However, critics argue that aid could lead to long-term problems. If food aid isn't carefully managed, it might lead to dependency, harm local markets, and disrupt trade.²² This would make it harder for communities to achieve lasting development.

Ethiopia has tried different programs to improve food security and boost farming. These programs aim to ensure people have enough healthy food to eat. One program called the Feed the Future Ethiopia Land Governance Activity works to improve how land is managed and to secure land ownership for farmers and herders.²³ This helps them play a bigger role in growing the economy. However, while this program allows people

locally, it still faces challenges in protecting land rights in all areas. This is especially difficult in places affected by conflict. Another program, the Feed the Future Policy LINK: Ethiopia Champions for Food Security, works with government groups, community organizations, and businesses to build leadership skills and improve teamwork.²⁴ This program encourages people to learn from each other and share ideas. This program will help improve farming and food policies. However, the program struggles to ensure these policies are applied in remote areas or places affected by conflict, where infrastructure and governance are weak. The Feed the Future Ethiopia Resilience in Pastoral Areas program has focused on helping herding and farming communities by improving livestock and crop production and encouraging better nutrition and hygiene.²⁵ While these efforts have been helpful, ongoing droughts and climate challenges make it hard for the program to offer long-term solutions. This has left many herders very vulnerable. However, these programs have brought positive changes, including better land management, knowledge-sharing, and support in certain regions. Yet, problems such as lack of funding, poor infrastructure, and ongoing conflicts continue to limit their success. These challenges show the need for better teamwork, more substantial investment, and solutions that work for all of Ethiopia's diverse communities.

Equally critical is the need for international cooperation. Organizations such as the United Nations World Food Programme, FAO, and local NGOs have laid necessary groundwork. Despite their work, the scale of the crisis demands a global response. Governments, international agencies, and private stakeholders must work together to ensure funding for sustainable development projects, infrastructure rebuilding, and community empowerment in Ethiopia. Hunger is a solvable problem, and Ethiopia's food crisis is a call to action for the world. Together, through strategic planning, shared

19 United Nations Development Program, "Ethiopia National Programme of Action (NAPA) | UNDP Climate Change Adaptation," [Adaptation-undp.org](https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/ethiopia-national-programme-action-napa), accessed February 1, 2025, <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/ethiopia-national-programme-action-napa>.

20 World Food Programme, "Ethiopia | World Food Programme," www.wfp.org, accessed February 1, 2025, <https://www.wfp.org/countries/ethiopia>.

21 Acción Contra el Hambre, "Ethiopia," Where We Work - Ethiopia, accessed February 2, 2025, <https://accioncontraelhambre.org/en/africa/ethiopia>.

22 Food and Agriculture Organization, "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024"

23 Sabrina Zurga et al., "Policy Mapping: Women's Economic Empowerment in Ethiopia," Reports (International Development Research Centre (Canada)), accessed February 1, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350108807_Policy_mapping_women.

24 US Agency for International Development, "USAID Policy LINK Program," USAID Policy LINK Program, February 24, 2022, <https://policylinkglobal.org/newsroom/policy-link-brings-together-food-security-champions-in-ethiopia>.

25 World Food Programme, "Ethiopia | World Food Programme," www.wfp.org, accessed February 1, 2025, <https://www.wfp.org/countries/ethiopia>.

resources, and a commitment to equity and sustainability, we can help Ethiopia overcome this challenge and build a future where no one has to endure the pain of hunger. Now is the time to act decisively, collaboratively, and compassionately for the sake of millions of lives.

Food Insecurity Related to Fishing

Food insecurity is a big problem in zones affected by conflict, where access to nutritious food is very little, and livelihoods are affected. Fisheries and marine supply chains are important in fighting food insecurity. For many regions, they give essential nutrition, support local economies, and help ensure food availability worldwide. Fishing is vital for food and income in countries like Yemen and Somalia. However, ongoing issues like climate change and poor infrastructure have made millions vulnerable to hunger. The war in Yemen has badly hurt the fishing industry, making it hard for many fishermen and their families to survive. Before the civil war started, Yemen's fishing sector was a major employer and fishery producer. According to the Norwegian Refugee Council, the industry employed more than 500,000 people before the war and fish was the second-biggest export behind oil and natural gas.²⁶ Coastal communities along the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden depended on fishing for a living, with boats regularly catching tuna, sardines, mackerel, lobster, and cuttlefish from the rich waters. However, the conflict has diminished the industry, as airstrikes have destroyed boats, ports, and processing facilities. Mines in the sea have made fishing increasingly dangerous. Many fishermen have lost their lives either at sea or in attacks on the market. One of the difficulties that are facing is the high price of fishing equipment such as nets, fuel, fishing tools and engines to keep them safe and sustain their livelihoods.²⁷ Fish consumption in Yemen is expected to drop by 3.4 percent annually, from 62,000 metric tons in 2023 to 50,000 metric tons by 2028, with significant economic losses in the fishing

sector estimated at nearly USD 6.9 billion.²⁸

Despite these challenges, organizations like the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) are actively working to address the impact of conflict on the fishing industry.²⁹ The ongoing conflict has disrupted supply chains by restricting access to fishing zones, damaging critical infrastructure, and displacing communities dependent on fishing. The NRC is working to fix important places like fish markets and landing sites to help fishermen get back to their jobs. They also provide training, fishing gear, and safety kits to help protect fishermen at sea. However, persistent obstacles force many fishermen to rely on alternative income sources or take on debt to survive during off-seasons. Some of these obstacles include conflict-related restrictions and seasonal variations in catches. While these efforts offer hope for restoring the fishing sector and enhancing food security, displaced families still face significant uncertainty and hardship. Nonetheless, the resilience of fishing communities and the dedicated support of humanitarian organizations like the NRC provide a foundation for rebuilding this vital industry.³⁰

The conflict has also impacted primarily fishing countries like Somalia. Fishing in Somalia used to provide food and income for many residents. The country is coastal and relies heavily on fish to support its local economy and food supply. Warmer oceans and changing water currents caused by climate change are reducing the number of fish and pushing them away from Somalia's fishing areas. Fishermen in areas like Hobyo and Kismayo say their catches have dropped significantly. Many come back from days at sea with almost nothing. As fish numbers go down, thousands of families who depend on fishing are losing their income. Many are falling deeper into poverty and facing food shortages in a country that has already been struggling for years. Some now rely on food aid, while others are forced to move elsewhere to find work. Somalia's fishing industry is also hurt by violence

26 Nazih Osseiran, "Yemen's Fishermen Left High and Dry by Conflict, Extreme Weather," Context.news (Context, May 29, 2024), <https://www.context.news/socioeconomic-inclusion/yemens-fishermen-left-high-and-dry-by-conflict-extreme-weather>.

27 Osseiran, "Yemen's Fishermen Left High and Dry by Conflict, Extreme Weather,"

28 ReportLinker, "Yemen Fish Industry Outlook 2024 - 2028," Reportlinker.com, accessed February 1, 2025, <https://www.reportlinker.com/clp/country/4210/726429>.

29 Paul Ireland, "Yemen: How Fishing Communities Are Fighting Back," www.nrc.no, accessed February 1, 2025, <https://www.nrc.no/shorthand/stories/yemen---how-fishing-communities-are-fighting-back/index.html>.

30 Ireland, "Yemen: How Fishing Communities Are Fighting Back,"



The daily life of the fishermen in Barawe City, Somalia
Credit: FaarisAdam

and piracy.³¹ This limits access to fishing areas and leaves coastal communities vulnerable. A long history of piracy and ongoing conflicts prevent access to essential fishing areas, which further damages the lives of those who depend on fishing.³² Former fishermen, militias, and unemployed youth turned to piracy as a lucrative venture. As a result, piracy has continued to thrive in the country. This is despite the many military patrols around the area to reduce piracy. Operating in skiffs and dinghies, these pirates have been terrorizing the waters, seizing cargo ships, kidnapping crew members, and holding them for ransom. Their activities have extended to hijacking bulk carriers, cargo vessels, and more.³³ As piracy has continued to develop in the country, it has transformed piracy into a sophisticated enterprise. Many fishing communities are unable to work safely due to this problem. They face a lack of fish and struggle to rebuild their lives in a time of conflict and instability. This creates a cycle where food insecurity gets worse, forcing more people to depend on humanitarian aid while others are forced to leave their homes in search of other

ways to survive.

The situation in Somalia is one of many serious problems facing the country. Climate shocks, rising sea levels, and coastal erosion force fishing communities to leave their homes. These climate-related problems are also destroying essential buildings and facilities. This has made it harder to rebuild the fishing industry. These problems are terrible in the Coastal Deeh Pastoral and Fishing communities, where families struggle to survive. As a result of these issues, the negative impacts on civilians are severe. Between October and December 2023-2024, 4.4 million people are expected to face high levels of hunger.³⁴ Over one million people are in an emergency situation, and 1.5 million children under five are malnourished, with 330,630 at risk of severe malnutrition.³⁵ Fishing communities that once depended on the sea for food and income are now struggling with fewer fish and unpredictable weather, making their work harder and more uncertain. This has trapped many families in poverty, with no

31 Sahnun Ahmed, "Somali Piracy 2.0 - the Angry Fishermen on the High Seas," BBC, December 22, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq8yl8n9gypo>.

32 U. Rashid Sumaila and Mahamudu Bawumia, "Fisheries, Ecosystem Justice and Piracy: A Case Study of Somalia," *Fisheries Research* 157 (September 2014): 154–63, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2014.04.009>.

33 The Business Standard Report, "Why Somalia's Fishermen, Unemployed Youth Turned to Piracy," *The Business Standard*, March 13, 2024, <https://www.tbsnews.net/world/understanding-root-cause-maritime-piracy-somali-waters-808398>.

34 CARE International, "Somalia: Climate Change, Conflicts and Rising Cost Fuels Humanitarian Crisis," CARE International, November 4, 2024, <https://www.care-international.org/news/somalia-climate-change-conflicts-and-rising-cost-fuels-humanitarian-crisis>.

35 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, "Somalia: Acute Malnutrition Situation June to September 2024 and Projection October to December 2024 | IPC - Integrated Food Security Phase Classification," *Ipcinfo.org*, September 23, 2024, <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1157950/?iso3=SOM>.

way to adjust to or deal with the effects of climate change. About 3.7 million people in Somalia have been forced to leave their coastal homes and now live in camps in cities like Mogadishu and Baidoa.³⁶ The decline of Somalia's fishing industry shows how important it is for the world to take action. Support for better fishing methods, protecting the ocean, and building fishing infrastructure is urgently needed to save this important resource. Efforts like teaching new farming and fishing skills should also help fishing communities so they can deal with the challenges Somalia faces, from conflict to other problems. Somalia's fishing industry supports millions of people. Without quick help from other countries, the loss of this industry will make hunger, poverty, and malnutrition worse, pushing more families into crisis and harming one of the world's most fragile nations.

However, these problems with fishing and food security are not unique to Yemen and Somalia. Conflicts around the world have shown how fragile food security is in areas that depend on natural resources. Fisheries are vital for food and income. However, conflicts and instability have allowed piracy, wars, and environmental damage to continue negatively impacting this industry. Coastal communities are facing fewer fish, destroyed infrastructure, and displacement. This has left millions in poverty and relying on aid. Organizations such as the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and One Earth Future's Secure Fisheries program are helping to tackle these challenges. NRC focuses on rebuilding important facilities like fish markets and landing sites while providing fishermen with training and equipment to return to work.³⁷ Secure Fisheries works to promote sustainable fishing and bring together fishermen, businesses, and governments to solve conflicts and strengthen the fishing industry.³⁸ These efforts show how partnerships can support communities in need. A mix of solutions is required to reduce food insecurity in conflict zones. This includes improving fishing practices, repairing broken infrastructure, and teaching climate-smart farming

methods to help communities adapt to changes. Providing training, protecting marine environments, and supporting small businesses are key steps to restore livelihoods and bring stability.

Conclusion

Hunger is a severe crisis that needs quick and united action from around the world, especially in areas affected by war. It is important to remember that simply having enough food is a basic human right. Solving this problem isn't just about giving aid. It's about helping people rebuild their lives and creating strong farming systems that last. Food isn't just about staying alive it's the key to peace and progress.

In regions like Ethiopia, Somalia, and Yemen, the combination of conflict, climate change, and economic instability has left millions struggling to find enough to eat. Families lose access to good nutrition, farmers can not plant or harvest crops, and communities are left on the point of starvation and collapse. Solving this crisis isn't just about giving food. It means helping to restore farming, rebuild important structures, and create food systems that can survive the ongoing conflicts in these countries. Food security is also highly dependent on geopolitical dynamics. The ongoing war on Israel and Hamas is a clear example of that. The conflict has recently increased food insecurity in Gaza. Despite there being clear solutions to allow aid to flow in, blockades and repeated cycles of violence have made it difficult to provide aid.³⁹ Governments have also undermined the role of many humanitarian agencies. This has made it especially difficult to deliver food security to those who need it the most.

To break the cycle of food insecurity, we must prioritize long-term solutions. Rehabilitating agriculture in conflict zones and restoring farmland, livestock, and market access gives communities the tools to rebuild. At the same time, we must address the root causes of hunger by going after peace and

36 European Commission, "There Was No Rain. We Had to Go.' - Surviving Drought and Displacement in Somalia," European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, December 4, 2024, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/stories/there-was-no-rain-we-had-go-surviving-drought-and-displacement-somalia_en.

37 Ireland, "Yemen: How Fishing Communities Are Fighting Back,"

38 One Earth Future, "The Applications of AI and Machine Learning in Fisheries Management," One Earth Future, May 6, 2024, <https://oneearthfuture.org/en/secure-fisheries/news/applications-ai-and-machine-learning-fisheries-management>.

39 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, "Over One Hundred Days into the War, Israel Destroying Gaza's Food System and Weaponizing Food, Say UN Human Rights Experts," OHCHR, January 16, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/over-one-hundred-days-war-israel-destroying-gazas-food-system-and>.

stability. Without peace, sustainable progress is impossible. Women and children often suffer the most in these crises, must remain at the center of our efforts. Together, we can create a future where no one faces the burden of war and hunger and where every community has the opportunity to thrive.

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