Food and Agricultural Organization

Research Report

The Question of:

Improving resilience for smallholders in conflict areas

Introduction

Food is a key element for life. On earth, there are currently 7.6 billion people. All those people need to eat. For a long time, we have been producing food by farming. These farmers are very important to the society, as know it today. There are farmers with enormous amount of land and thus products, but there are also farmers with less land, who are often overlooked. These smallholders suffer a lot more from 'small things'. This can made clear with an example: for someone with millions, a thousand dollars is nothing, but for someone with hundred dollars, a thousand dollars is an enormous amount. Changes in surroundings, have a far bigger impact on the smallholder, than they do on someone with a lot of land. We shouldn't underestimate the smallholders. Together, they support around 2 billion people. That is a fifth of the people in the entire world.

If a 2 billion people do not have food, because something, for example limited access to seeds or a damaged infrastructure, that has severely affected their ability to produce food, then we should act upon this. By improving resilience for smallholders, we can help them not being dependent of their surroundings. They should have the ability to adapt to their surroundings and continue supporting their families. If they are not able to adapt to their surroundings, the consequences can be very severe.

The Committee

Food and Agricultural Organization was established in 1945. In the early decades of the committee it faced issues concerning hunger and malnutrition. Since then the aims has been broadened by other goals, which are the followings; making agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive, reducing rural poverty, enabling inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems, increasing the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.

Food and Agricultural Organization has contributed to many achievements all around the world. The followings are just a few examples of the work of the organization.

- In 1963 Codex Alimentarius was established in order to ensure given standards of food, to protect consumers and to promote fair trade.
- Between 1974 and 2002, FAO worked on the eradication of river blindness in West Africa. A disease transmitted by infected flies has been eradicated by launching a programme, which provided eco-friendly insecticides with a large-scale treatment. This programme has saved millions of lives in Africa.
- In order to reduce the number of hungry in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, FAO made food more available by strengthening political commitment and promoted access to food and nutritional wellbeing.
- A deadly virus called rinderpest, which killed many cows and buffalos was eradicated by a programme established by FAO and WHO in 1994.

Since the establishment of FAO the organization has supported many in need and promoted programmes that worked towards a less polluted environment and towards a world where the essentials for living are provided for everyone.

Key Terms

Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to adapt to difficult situations, without having to entirely change policies. There are several sorts of resilience. In this research report, we'll only be discussing resilience for smallholders in conflict areas. Thus meaning the capacity to continue production of food, even though there are several setbacks as an effect of the conflict in the area.

Smallholders
Smallholders are small farms that often sustain one family.

Conflict area
A conflict area is, as the name says, an area where there is conflict, for example areas where a war is being fought.

Infrastructure
The infrastructure of a country, a city or a village, are the fundamental facilities and systems that support that country, city or village. These are for example, the roads, water supply and sewage system.

Irrigation
The Oxford dictionary defines irrigation as: The supply of water to land or crops to help growth, typically by means of channels. Irrigation is of a vital importance for farmers.

General Overview

Resilience
Resilience is a very vague word. It does have a definition, as stated in Key Terms, but this is still not a very specific definition. It is therefore very important to first define what resilience in this specific situation means. Resilience means the capability of smallholders to adapt to certain problems in their surroundings. It is far more effective and usually a lot easier to improve the resilience than actually improving the situation. For example, in a conflict area, it is far harder to resolve the conflict, as conflicts are often very complex situations, than helping the farmers to continue production whilst the conflict continues. That does not mean that one cannot improve the surroundings.

Conflict and its consequences
In a conflict, a lot is forgotten. As Cicero said, "between the weapons, the laws are silent". When there is a conflict in a country, it often receives the place of number one priority. As a result, the farmers are often placed as less important. This is, though understandable, a very big mistake. When a country is at war, it still needs food and the production of food should still be continued. War almost always increases the need for nutrition as the army or the rebels need to be provided. Another problem is that smallholders are often seen as even less important than mass food producers. This is also very concerning, as smallholders support around two billion people globally.
War does not only have consequences on a social level, it has an enormous impact on the environment. An example is Kuwait. In Kuwait the Iraqi occupation has had an effect on the soil. Ground fortifications, which are buildings constructed to defend in this case the Iraqi, have very complex systems. These systems cause harm to the soil, as it interferes with the normal 'behavior' of the ground. Some of the effects are, destruction of vegetation, destruction of the physical qualities of soil and sand accumulation. These have effects ensure that farmers are not able to produce as much as before the war. It is not fair that farmers, innocent bystanders, who provide for the rest, have to suffer so much without being properly supported.

Furthermore, war has an impact on the infrastructure as well. Infrastructure is of vital importance for the farmers, as they need water for irrigation and they use the roads to transport their products.

Infrastructure is actually important for each civilian and it is always better to improve the infrastructure. A good infrastructure can have an enormous effect on the economy and the efficiency. For example, in the USA, if there would be a 1 percent increase of investments in infrastructure, productivity in the private sector would go up with 0,2 percent. Even though this does not seem as much, the increase in productivity can stimulate an economic growth, leading to more money for, among other things, infrastructure. Continuing, a war also destroys a great deal of the infrastructure. This speaks for itself. E.g. bombs, battle. Also, a big part of the infrastructure is used for the military camps in that area. If the water, that in a lot of countries is already scarce, has to be divided even more, irrigation becomes harder and harder. Also, a lot of money in a country goes to the army. Of course this depends on the country, their social status and power. But it's safe to assume that if all that money would go to infrastructure, the smallholders would be in less trouble. Having said that, it is not possible to, convince everyone to suddenly quit war and direct all the money reserved for the army to infrastructure.
Even if the majority of the countries in the world would agree to this idea and one country wouldn't, that one country would have so much power that is not hard to imagine that it would eventually take over the world, seeing as they are only one with an army. With two countries not agreeing to the treaty, the world would find itself once more in the middle of a cold war or even worse in an actual enormous war. It is therefore not even remotely possible to include this in a resolution. It offers only a perspective on the relations between conflict and infrastructure.

In Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Bermuda, Brazil, Burma, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Greece, Iran, Israel, North Korea, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Singapore, Switzerland, Republic of China, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates there is conscription. Conscription is obligatory military service. Usually conscription refrains itself to recruiting only men, with exception of some countries, such as Israel. In this text, I will concentrate on conscription for men, but please do remember that women can also be affected.
When a war starts men from allover are called to fight for their country. A big percentage of these men return with wounds, missing body parts etc. This is horrifying as it is, but there are other illnesses that affect the soldiers. Often they return with PTSD. PTSD is post-traumatic stress disorder. After experiencing a life-threatening event, some people develop a mental health problem. Symptoms are for example reliving the experience over and over or avoid situations that could remind you of that certain events. Soldiers with physical and mental health problems are restricted to return to their old life. Resulting in the fact that the soldiers' family suffers in two perspectives. First, they lost their old husband/father/brother and secondly, they lost someone who works on the farm. Often their land has suffered destruction because of bombs, tanks etc. Meaning that someone with PTSD cannot rest at home, no, they have to rebuild their property before they can even start farming. Even worse, is the situation where the soldier dies in the war. The consequences of this event speak for themselves.

Another thing to keep in mind are the circumstances in a country before the war starts. A lot of countries at war are at crisis before the conflicts spirals to a war. Examples are that a country could be less economically developed and that the inhabitants are not satisfied. A revolution could be started leading to a civil war. For smallholders there probably wasn't enough attention before the war and even less during the war. Often smallholders also have to provide for the rebels or army forces, meaning they have even less food for themselves and the public. Sometimes the land of the smallholders is needed by the rebels/army for military reasons; meaning that the smallholders lose land that probably will be destroyed. The smallholders probably have to evacuate, which leads to no production of food and thus no money.
A solution could be to let NGO's bring food or water or help to the civilians and the smallholders. This means that de civilians would rely on charity. This is a short-term solution that can be found in many

resolutions. But in this situation one has to think, how can a NGO bring food or water when a country is at war. It is very hard to educate the smallholders when there is an army base nearby. An answer would be to install a cease-fire so that the NGO's can help. Though hard to install, one should never stop trying.
In conclusion, conflict has an impact on the soil, economy, civilians, productivity, health and so on. It is very important to keep all those effects in mind, as they all have an effect on the smallholders. By improving the resilience, the smallholders will be able to respond better to these situations and not suffer as severely as they do now.

Major Parties Involved

FAO
The Food and Agricultural Organization is a NGO that has several goals, concerning food and agriculture. One of their main goals is to improve resilience of livelihoods to threat and crises. That is why it is not strange that the FAO is a major party involved in this issue. The FAO mostly concentrates on developing, protecting and restoring sustainable livelihoods in order to help societies that depend on farming, fishing etc. The FAO works on long-term solutions as well as short-term solutions.

World Bank/World Bank group
The World Bank is a monetary international financial institution that gives out loans to capital projects. It has also made some commitments in order to help the world. One of those goals is to end poverty. The World Bank is part of the World Bank group, which exists out of five big international organizations. The World Bank is important in this issue, as it has given out a lot financial help in order to sustain agricultural based countries and to improve resilience. It has also done research on this particular issue.

IFPRI
The International Food Policy Research Institute has remained active in this issue for the last couple of years. This organization provides research to find sustainable solutions to reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition. They have a systematic approach to reshape food systems. One of their main goals is to foster climate-resilient and sustainable food supplies. It is, thus, not strange that they are very important in this issue.

UNDP
The United Nations Development Programme aims to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDG's). These goals concern poverty and inequality and hope to end both. Their main approach to achieve the SDG's is by building resilience and ensuring that all countries can stimulate economic growth and ensure a good life for its citizens.

Conflict Areas
Normally in this section of a research report one would find specific countries that play an enormous role in the issue. But, with this issue it is not that simple to pinpoint one country that has played an important role. As smallholders provide for the whole world, this issue actually concerns the entire world. However, one should concentrate on countries with conflict areas, so those countries automatically play an important role. Especially states that rely heavily on the agricultural market. The majority of the countries in Africa, for example, are known for have a huge amount of smallholders. Though we could improve resilience for smallholders as a whole, your resolutions should focus on conflict areas.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

The UN has been active in this particular branch of resilience. In 2015 the Millennium Development goals deadline passed. The first goal was to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. This could be achieved by improving resilience, thus ensuring more job opportunities and stimulating an economic growth. Though there has been an enormous improvement in several countries, not all goals were equally met in the world. Meaning that some countries improved a lot, whilst other stuck behind.

The Future

The UN sees the improvement of resilience as a very important goal. They have, for example, created and altered their plan of action on disaster risk reduction for resilience. Disaster can be natural disaster or created by humans. In this plan of action the UN has decided to have a system-wide approach, a coherent system to limit the losses caused by disaster and climate change and monitoring progress in UN operational work. The UN has also set a 2030 agenda. In this agenda the UN aims to achieve all 17 sustainable development goals. Several of these goals are important for this particular issue.
The World Bank group has also decided to remain actively seized in the matter by setting a goal: ending poverty in 2030 by improving resilience.

Important Decisions a Resolution Must Take

First, I would like to make clear that the suggestions made in this paragraph, are solely suggestions. It gives you an idea of what a resolution should include. Please do not refrain from including other solutions. Every work is good work as long you keep the goal in sight. Having said that, I'll now continue with possible solutions. These can also be read in the General Overview.

When working on a resolution, it is important to keep in mind that a country at war probably doesn't see improving resilience as its main priority. It is thus important to not solely concentrate on the countries at war. It is far more effective to include NGO's or even multi-nationals when searching for solutions.

Resilience can be improved in several ways, but one of the most obvious solutions, is by making the smallholders efficient. This can be done by educating the smallholders and investing in them. Questions to think about are: what will they be learning; who will be educating them; will multinationals invest or should we rely on the national government; to what extent can the UN interfere in the agricultural sites in a country? Also important is to think about the curriculum and how the smallholders will be reached.

Certainly, smallholders have to learn how to produce efficiently so they will experience an individually based economic growth. More products can also ensure a more nutritious diet for the buyers, resulting in better health. How can the UN ensure this; should this be done in collaboration with NGO's or governments.

It is vital for resilience to have the space and flexibility to adapt to certain situations. If one only knows one way of, for example, irrigating that only works in that specific situations, they are not able to adapt. Sometimes smallholders are forced to use only one method, because they simply do not have the resources to develop other methods. How can we help the smallholders become more

flexible; what methods can they use; will this actually improve their situation or will this be a loss of money?

But, please remember that the smallholders should be independent. On a long term, that will be the most effective and help them the most. Helping smallholders is great, but they shouldn't be totally dependent of for example the foundation.

In conclusion, a resolution should include ways to improve the financial situation, without taking over.

Further Reading

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