

# Conflict and Fragility Are Hunger Issues

Our Christian faith calls us to advocate for policies that address the root causes of hunger. Conflict is a main driver of the recent increase in hunger around the world and of forced migration. Hunger also contributes to conflict. With the effects of climate change, fragile institutions, poor governance, and further complications such as sectarianism, conflict is a major barrier to Bread for the World's vision of a world without hunger.

The challenges we see today are not new to people of faith. Vulnerable communities are part of the sacred stories highlighted in scripture. Famine and vulnerability of women (Ruth 1-4), political instability (1 & 2 Kings), ethnic oppression (Exodus 1:8-16), and religious persecution (Acts 8) have affected people throughout the ages.

Our God upholds the just cause of the poor (Psalm 140:12). To end hunger around the world, we must advocate for U.S. government policies that put us on a path toward this goal and do not contribute to conditions that increase hunger. The following are guiding principles for policies that can address conflict, fragility, and hunger.



Bread for the World

## **Prevention: We support policies that prevent conflicts and fragility, including prevention of shocks and stresses that lead to conflicts.**

1. *Invest in the capacity of communities to solve problems.* Because prevention is less costly—in human life and suffering, in money, in time—than responding to events that have already happened, it is more effective to focus on building resilience and addressing the root causes of shocks, including hunger, poverty, and violence. Foreign assistance should work in concert with diplomatic strategies to foster equitable policies, peace building, and adaptation to climate change.
2. *Partner with other governments, multilateral institutions, and civil society in fragile countries to meet the basic needs of people and build strong institutions.* No single actor can manage the complexity of strengthening fragile countries. Inclusive, coordinated approaches building on the experience and interest of all stakeholders are more likely to succeed. Community-driven approaches, such as support for local faith institutions, schools, or clinics, have worked well in many fragile or conflict zones. U.S. efforts should focus on strengthening local institutional capacity.
3. *Use scarce resources where they matter most* to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations—most often women, children, and indigenous populations that in most cases have been systematically oppressed. Build human and institutional capacity to reduce human suffering. Strengthen local civil society and governance institutions. Invest in agricultural infrastructure to boost food security, nutrition, livelihoods and economic productivity. Expand access to healthcare and education especially among disadvantaged groups.

## **Effective Humanitarian Response: When prevention efforts fail, we support effective humanitarian assistance, diplomacy efforts, and equitable foreign policy to bring durable, lasting peace and address immediate humanitarian needs.**

4. *Fully fund U.N. humanitarian appeals.* The U.N. is the main coordinator of humanitarian response around the world, but

its humanitarian operations are chronically underfunded. Funding for humanitarian needs should include resources to support neighboring countries that host refugees. This is key to protecting countries and even entire regions from destabilization.

5. *Provide food assistance quickly and efficiently* by increasing the flexibility of U.S. food assistance programs and efforts to facilitate humanitarian access to these populations. Where food is available and markets are functioning, locally purchased food along with cash vouchers help people get food quickly, avoid disrupting local markets, and save money by reducing shipping costs. Supporting agricultural production, delivery of basic services, stronger infrastructure, and job skills are critical investments to help people get the right nutrition at the right time.
6. *Engage in high-level diplomacy to bring opposing parties together, starting with regional peace processes where possible.* In communities where conflict is causing hunger, peace is often the only way to avert hunger crises. The United States often holds influence in conflict-affected regions and can support peace processes. Preference should be given to local or regional solutions to strengthen the capacity of local and regional actors and ensure a durable, lasting peace.
7. *Withdraw U.S. military, intelligence, and security support for actors whose actions cut off access to basic needs* such as food, medicine, and safe drinking water. U.S. assistance, including support for development, humanitarian, and military or security support (such as arms sales), should help civilians meet their basic needs. U.S. assistance should not support actions that hinder the well-being of civilian populations.
8. *Impose penalties on companies, networks, and officials involved in corruption and crimes in conflict-affected states.* Corrupt actors often purchase weapons, sometimes intended for use against civilians. Penalties such behavior can deter others from taking similar actions.

### **Responsible Engagement: We support responsible engagement that helps fragile countries to rebuild and thrive.**

9. *Bridge humanitarian and development assistance.* Humanitarian aid alone cannot end conflict. Nor can it fully respond to the devastating impacts of fragility on individuals, their livelihoods, and national economies. Integrating development efforts into emergency assistance can reduce the risk of recurrent crises.
10. *Develop long-term and comprehensive strategies of partnership with fragile countries.* All efforts to address humanitarian and development goals should also strengthen the capacity of local systems and institutions, including safety-net programs and governance structures. It takes time to achieve meaningful outcomes. Efforts to sustain peace after conflict, in particular, require long-term approaches.

We urge our nation's leaders to follow these principles to prevent and respond to the conflicts and fragility that are contributing to so much of the hunger around the world.

For further analysis on conflict and hunger, see Bread for the World Institute's 2017 Hunger Report, *Fragile Environments, Resilient Communities*.