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Alleviating global hunger and the role of world food programme: Towards a just world with zero hunger

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Abstract

Global Hunger is one of the most debatable topics in the International arena today, probably due to its rising seriousness and the extent to which it can ripple life of many. World hunger is on a continuous rise without any stop. Despite the rising international institutions, the spectre of poverty has widely been flourishing, therefore the urgency of global consciousness seems more plausible to provide a dissent life standard for all. UNICEF reports that 690 million people still go to bed with a hungry stomach which is equal to 8.9% and if it continues it shall touch the mark of 840 million by 2030. Various institutions are working to prevent the humanitarian crisis at both international and national level. One of such agencies which have been playing a quite commendable role to feed the needy in times of crisis and disaster is the World Food Programme, fighting global hunger crisis. Its foremost core areas of work are improving the nutrition level of foods being supplied, Policy Reforms to enhance food and nutrition security, while taking into consideration of people hailing from all parts, caste. Gender, sex and creed. This humanitarian and food assistance organ of the UN won the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize for 2020 with regard to counter severe food crisis, ensuring peace in conflict affected areas and acting as a contributor to Global Justice. This paper will focus on a wider dimension of Global Hunger, ranging from concepts and theoretical perspectives to problems and solutions, as a whole to prepare the world for a better place to survive with Zero Hunger.

Keywords: Hunger, poverty, nutrition, justice, crisis

Introduction

Violation of human rights emerged as the most generous concern for all the conscious members of this world family to resolve. The importance of human life has been considered as the foremost goal and also included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a comprehensive document with a set of articles, liberties, and protections for all people (Terry 2020) ^[14]. Over the last few decades, the world has been experiencing the shortage of food and also the nutritious elements which are crucial for sustaining a human society. From a broader perspective, the entire nature of global hunger elucidates the framework of justice and its diverse institutional implications, however the global institutionalism must have to consider the chronic poverty, although the anarchic nature is still persisting at the global level. Different parts of the world, especially Africa, Latin America and Asia, are facing the serious hunger including chronic poverty and malnutrition. As per the Global Hunger Index, more than 690 million people are undernourished and the effect of Hunger is much prevalence among the children. The yardstick for measuring the global hunger would be to assess the four indicators- undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting and child mortality. Global Hunger has been perpetuated by different Factors such as climate change, terrorism, migration, therefore to assist all the people with good food and health security, world food programme has carried out several initiatives. As a humanitarian agency, WFP assisted 100 million people in 88 countries by providing food and other assistances in both rural and urban areas. Instead of food distribution, WFP focuses on gender equality, financial assistance and the review of climate change. The present global catastrophe, Corona Virus has altered the very conception of world Hunger by enlarging the scope of hunger from a narrow health issues to a matter of Human Development. Presently 40 countries are still facing the issue of serious hunger where 11 countries are categorized as alarming hunger and many other are depending on the developed west for their empty stomach.

A new strategy has been formulated within the boundary of sustainable development goals, the goal to demise the poverty and hunger by 2030. The world needs to have a collective wisdom for accomplishing its desired goals, from a cosmopolitan standpoint, the human development should be detached from its national boundary and the human rights must be tackle through humanitarian policies.

Objectives

1. To define the concept of global hunger from a humanitarian perspective.
2. To analyse the causes of global hunger in a world of complex interdependence.
3. To understand the relationships between global hunger and global justice with some theoretical frameworks.
4. To examine the role of World Food Programme in alleviating global hunger.

Materials and Method(s)

This paper reflects the qualitative method that has been used during the process of research design and formulation of hypothesis. The understanding of global hunger would not be possible from an empirical scale because of the normative consideration of subject matter. The researchers have carefully designed this paper by collecting data from secondary sources such as academic articles, Journals, Website materials and official reports such as Global Hunger Index 2020.

Conceptualising Global Hunger: A Crisis or A Crime

Despite a tremendous growth at all the spheres of International arena, in a wider scale, people of different regions have been surviving without a required amount of nutrition. With a sense of disappointment, we can condemn the emerging violation of Human Rights, moreover the result of these violence creates both normative and empirical understanding of the Global condition. Global Hunger, as a normative Concept, denotes the widespread malnutrition and lack of accurate nutrition level to lead a happy and prosperous life for all the human beings in different parts of the world. With compare to different wars and epidemics, the death rate of child and others have been perpetuated very rapidly by the Severe level of Hunger.

Global hunger is a result a global poverty that indicates the numerous issues pertaining to human life and security. Since 1990, more than 1.2 billion people have risen out extreme poverty. Now, 9.2% of the world survives on \$1.90 a day or less, compared to nearly 36% in 1990 (Peer 2020) ^[9]. The rising global poverty gives a finer way to hunger and death, however the income inequalities among the regions, lack of collective initiatives and monitoring has become the major reasons for hunger. According to the UN Report “there were 122 women aged 25 to 34 living in poverty for every 100 men of the same age group, and more than 160 million children were at risk of continuing to live in extreme poverty by 2030”.

Before entering into the global level, it is imperative to understand hunger and what does it mean? According to UN Hunger Report, Hunger is the term used to define periods when populations are experiencing severe food insecurity – meaning that they go for entire days without eating due to lack of money, lack of access of food, or other resources (The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020) ^[15]. Hunger can also be analysed through different

parameters such as, food deprivation or lack of 1,800 calories per day, deficiencies of vitamins, both undernutrition and overnutrition, food insecurity due to poverty and resources.

The velocity of hunger at the global level has been defined as per the Index produced by Us-Based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and Germany-Based Welthungerhilfe. The Global Hunger Index analyses the condition of Hunger within the four indicators. These indicators are; Firstly, Undernourishment – lack of enough food to meet a minimum level of energy; Secondly, Child Wasting – low weight as compared to his/her height; Thirdly, Child Stunting – low height as compared to his/her age; Fourthly, Child Mortality – Death rates among the children under the age of five.

Elimination of hunger and poverty are the two vital goals that needs to be fulfilled with the UN sustainable development goals [2015-2030]. But the entire scenario is worse than ever in terms of hunger and rising global poverty. With the recent survey, Global Hunger Index was released in 2020 with different statistical and continental data. It has been estimated that 37 countries will be placed at the serious level of hunger by 2030 due to several geo political and institutional issues. The Index shows 40 countries are struggling with serious level of hunger where 11 countries are at the alarming level. As has been stated at the outset, 690 people are undernourished, however the number may not be consistent. As far as children are concerned, 47 million are suffering from severe wasting, 144 million are struggling with stunting which is a sign of Chronic undernutrition and 5.3 million children are died before their fifth birthdays (Global Hunger Index, 2020). This numbers are much prevalent in African and Asian continent as compared to the Europe and American counterpart.

Hunger, Justice and Theoretical Frameworks

From a wider theoretical dimension, Global Hunger can be assessed through diverse approaches formulated by different political thinkers and advanced by International policy institutions and mechanisms. The close relation between hunger and justice open up the gateway for both normative as well as empirical understanding of the global problem. Justice, as a moral and philosophical concept, denotes who deserves what? Probably it is a matter of distribution such as goods and services, but more generally, the concept has its own application for articulating the institutional arrangements. Many philosophers have been defining justice not as a concept rather an apparent problem of moral and political philosophy, for instance, Platonic justice expresses the social arrangements on the basis of three virtues that had to be nurtured through education but Aristotelian justice proclaimed the distribution of basic standards on the basis of capacity and desert. The modern conception of justice receives a wider framework from John Rawls whose contribution measured justice as both a matter of distribution as well as rights. Therefore in a just society the liberties of equal citizenship are taken as settled; the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests (Rawls 1971) ^[10].

In the global sphere, justice has to be understood from the sphere of Human Rights, however the nature of global justice ensures the distribution of basic human rights such as right to life, liberty, religious freedom, free movements and

so on. Conceptualising global justice seems a cosmopolitan consideration of Justice where individual has to be treated as a human not a national entity. Global justice is a theory that exists within the broader school of Cosmopolitanism, which focuses on the importance of the individual opposed to the state, community and culture (Dietzel 2018) ^[4]. Global justice tries to minimize the gap between national inequalities and sovereign power equation. Since there are some differences between justice within a country and justice between nations, the universal standards that exist in such issues as human rights, democracy, equality, freedom, etc., serve as a common denominator for people between nations to deal with each other (Guo, et al. 2020) ^[5]. Rising global poverty and inequalities create a serious condition to acknowledge the vitality of global justice and the entire institutional process to avoid such problems. There are three major theoretical approaches that has been seen as the most understandable for alleviating global hunger and poverty as a whole. These approaches are;

Firstly, The Rights-Based Approach – global justice encapsulates the inherent rights of human being and prioritize the procedure to accomplish those rights. John Rawls, in his celebrated work, *The Law of Peoples*, emphasised eight major principle of global justice. Among these eight principles, the principle of self-determination and respecting for human rights are the two major priorities that supports the Right-Based Approach. For Rawls, a “people” is constituted by a group of persons who have in common sufficient characteristics such as culture, history, tradition, or sentiment (Brock 2015) ^[1]. The Rawlsian method of distribution at the global sphere based on the two principles that has been revealed in *A Theory of Justice* – Liberty principle and the principle of equality with reasonable discrimination. The protection of rights of every person is a duty for any political institution (Guo, et al. 2020) ^[5]. The global hunger, through this approach, is a crime perpetuated by global institutions and procedures, therefore the rights of the human being must be placed at the high level to provide a decent life with adequate food.

Secondly, The Capability Approach – Amartya Sen, in his work *The Idea of Justice*, discussed the growing injustices in a society rather than what would a just society look like? Sen criticized the Rawlsian method of distribution. Sen argued that the primary goods metric fails to notice the inter-individual variations between people, such as metabolism, intelligence, and political and physical environments (Guo, et al. 2020) ^[5]. Martha Nussbaum, a well-known American philosopher, expanded with the capability approach to identify the good health and food security. Nussbaum identified ten important human capabilities, among those capabilities; life, bodily health, bodily integrity, are really praiseworthy in the present global hunger. The capability approach purports that freedom to achieve well-being is a matter of what people are able to do and to be, and thus the kind of life they are effectively able to lead (Byskov 2020) ^[2]. The Global Hunger Index for 2020 shows the growing gap between North and South, furthermore African and Asian Countries are suffering from severe hunger due to lack of capacity to attain a happy life and they don't have adequate freedom to realise their goals. This approach helps to design the basic distributive standard on the basis of human capacity for attaining primary goods.

Thirdly, Institutional Approach – international anarchy is the primary concern behind the widespread poverty and hunger. Since the establishment of UNO, the nature of global order has been changed but not in well-ordered due to the growing rivalries between emerging power elites. The global hunger has become a result of Institutional weakness at both national and international level. Rawlsian standpoint would be more appropriate for understand the role of social institution. He described “Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought” (Rawls 1971) ^[10]. But here, to alleviate global hunger, we need to have a structural adjustment within the Institutions. The level of adjustment would be carried out at all the levels- Personal, National and Global. At the personal level such as Family, Clubs, Religious institutions, the importance of food security and awareness must be given adequate priority. Similarly, at the national level, the government should prepare the annual report as well as plan to counter the hunger. The global level institutions are considered as world government, their main functions would be to prepare survey data and direct the national government. Thus, the three-level model must prevail to collaborate of family with International Institutions.

The connection between hunger and justice has been pushed to think widely on the growing inequalities and causes of global hunger. Global Hunger Index identified numerous causes behind the global hunger that needs to be eradicated.

Emerging Causes of Global Hunger

Global Hunger is one of the most discussed topics in the International arena today, probably due to its rising seriousness and the extent to which it can ripple life of many. World hunger is on a continuous rise without any stop. Numerous agencies are working on the Global Scale to minimal the effects of Global Poverty and to ensure that no one goes to bed hungry. While a handful of agencies such as the World Food Programme, UNICEF etc reports that 690 million people still go to bed with a hungry stomach which is equal to 8.9 % and if it continues it shall touch the mark of 840 million by 2030. Chad is the world's hungriest country as of 2020. There are numerous causes for the spike in Global Hunger. Some of which are discussed below-

1) Poverty

Poverty is the foremost reason for worldwide hunger. People not earning a living often end up going to bed with an empty stomach. They lag the privilege of going to bed empty stomach. The Democratic Republic of Congo recognized itself as a poor country with a huge population. When Governments fail to feed their public, it minimizes capacity to remain in power and trust.

2) Food Shortages

In many corners of the world, where harvesting is known as the backbone of the country, “hungry seasons” leave the country astound. This leads to wastage of previous food supplies, ultimately forging families to skip one or two meals a day and thus skipping their minimal nutrition.

3) War & Conflict

War and Conflict are among the Prime factors contributing to Global Hunger. War zones often result in lack of proper food supplies. The immigration and migration from war zones leave many hunger dead in the way. It has left around

6 million people food insecure. One such example is of South Sudan, where mass displacements and abandoned cash crop fields lead to food crisis. (The Top 10 Causes of World Hunger 2019)

4) Extreme Weather

Statistics and reports claim that extreme climate conditions can hamper food supply and pause the normal livelihood of the people. Non-Invited Tornados, Volcano, storms and many other natural disasters can uproot the surroundings and hamper the food habits of people. Around 80 million food crisis victims hail from disaster-prone countries. (What Causes Hunger? n.d.)

5) Food Wastage

Food is the most essential source of survival, but the consumers have inevitably failed to value its worth. Even during Covid-19 pandemic, people haven't stopped wasting food. Nearly one-third of food is wasted worldwide, while millions go to bed with an unsatisfied stomach. Covid 19 has accelerated the process of famine in nearly 36 countries.

Alleviating Global Hunger and Effective Solutions

By acknowledging the causes of global hunger, it is really a matter of great concern to check those problems with effective measures. From a humanitarian ground, the role of hunger has been demarcating a line of difference among the continents on the basis of availability of food and development. In Asia and Africa, the rising underdevelopment and inequalities create a dependent mindset upon the West where the process of development has been concentrated on making trade and commerce with the developing nations. It is now clear that the world is not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 (Kharas and Noe 2019) [7]. The above citation defines our incapacities and institutional weaknesses for countering global hunger.

Instead of a widespread inequalities and poverty at the global level, the initiatives are being carried out by different agencies, therefore the solutions need to be highlighted in different areas. Some effective solutions are discussed below:

- a) **Collective War against food insecurity:** All the country must unite to counter the menace of hunger. Different institutions and organizations are working it that area, ranging from data preparation to field works. Such institutions are UN Food and Agricultural Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Children's Fund, World Food Programme, World Health Organization. These institutions are concerned about Food security and Human Development. A special task force for Food Security is necessary at the International level that will be collectively owned.
- b) **Climate Friendly agriculture and Disaster Management:** The major problem behind the food insecurity has been the climate change and rising deterioration of global environment due to deforestation, green house effect and industrialisation. How successfully the world responds to climate change will play a huge factor is being able to combat and ultimately eradicate world hunger (Christensen n.d.). all the farmers from developing economy should be prepared for Climate Friendly Agriculture such as conservation agricultural practices, diversifying crop varieties and low water with high profits.
- c) **Democracy, Freedom and Good Governance:** if we make a comparative analysis between the nations than the result would be vary on the basis of political set up. In African and Asian Countries, the political system is not exactly democracy, except some country like India, their political system based on mixed model of democracy and authoritarian. The people of the Non-Democratic Countries are not allowed to criticize their own government due to the lack of civil and political rights.
- d) **Gender Equality and Women Empowerment:** those Country who have ranked at high in Global Hunger Index rank high in the Gender Inequality Index. The countries of the global south, especially South Asian countries, rank extremely high on the global inequality Index (Wadhwa 2020) [18]. From 690 million people who are suffering from hunger, 60 percent are women and girls as compared to male counterpart (World Food Programme). Gender equality is a viable solution not only to promote family healthcare but also to foster collective agricultural production. Nearly two-thirds of the globe are hunger and among them women are more likely than man. The gender equality would be the best solution to protect a family. On the other hand, the women, particularly in the developing countries, must be given some political voice to prepare a healthy plan for themselves.
- e) **End of War, Migration and Terrorism:** these are the three inter-related causes behind the global hunger. Since first world war, modern technologies and weapons have been dominating national interests, moreover the rising tendency of religious fundamentalism creates tension among the nations and gives a pathway for displacement of the indigenous people. People effected by conflict experience it not only as a threat to their lives but as an assault on their livelihoods that can undermine their ability to provide for their most basic needs, including food (Hammond 2018) [6]. As these disasters compete for people in poor, marginalized and war-torn regions to access adequate food (Samberg 2017) [11]. The growing terrorism in Muslim nations lead to mass migration, however this kind of irregularities impose a threat for global hunger and poverty. Before alleviating hunger from this globe, it would be vital to eliminate war, migration and terrorism through collective endeavour.
- f) **Say "No" to Food Wastage:** from a general Understanding, we often say "Don't waste food" - expresses our moral responsibility towards our fellow being. Around 1.3 billion tons food are being wasted every year. Every individual should be given a fair chance to eat as much as possible to lead a life. Over consumption of food has been imbalanced the natural world, thus a need-based food consumption would be more fruitful for alleviating global hunger.
- g) **Birth Control:** "Small is beautiful" – this assertion denotes a clear picture on family responsibility to control the reproductive explosion. High birth rates create problem for food security and healthy life. Asian and African nations are highly populated and no control over their family size. Many people are not educated on reproduction or do not have access to contraceptives (Patterson 2016) [8]. The effective control on birth rates and population growth will be more beneficial for food security and distribution.

World Food Programme and Its Contributions

The World Food Programme (WFP) was founded in 1961, with its headquarters in Rome with the aim to achieve zero hunger and ensure food security at all times. This humanitarian agency has acted as a strong shield against acute hunger crisis and at times of need. The WFP has assisted around 91.4 million people in almost 83 countries worldwide with the goal to alleviating hunger worldwide and improving the health of the many, so to achieve Zero Hunger by the end of 2030. Each day of WFP starts with ration distribution with the support of 92 planes, 5000 trucks and 20 ships, which accounts to more than 15 billion rations. (United Nations World Food Programme n.d.). Some major roles played by the World Food Programme are discussed below:

1. Assistance in Emergencies

The WFP has been providing food relief and other emergency services to conflict affected countries where one can find the highest percentage of undernourishment. They provide humanitarian assistance and necessary food supplies in those areas.

2. Providing Nutrition

The World Food Programme's primary aim has been to provide nutrition to the many people who lag it. It aims to restructure their homes which has been uprooted by conflicts or natural disasters, by providing maximum food assistance. It also aims to eradicate malnutrition for mothers and children. (United Nations World Food Programme n.d.)

3. Social Protection

Social protection is closely related to the Sustainable Development Goal 1 and Goal 2 of 2030. Social protection stands for able to lead a social life peacefully where you eat good and sleep well. The WFP under its banner of Food security have taken numerous steps to ensure social protection too. It assists governments in implementation of social protection policies and tries to ensure net safety measures in food distributions. Thus, the World Food Programme is hooked up with a truckload of responsibilities upon its shoulders to feed the hungry and contribute maximum in achieving the SDG of "Zero Hunger". (Social Protection and the World Food Programme 2018)

A Just World Order with Zero Hunger

To achieve the targets of sustainable development and account to the goals of a just world, it is very necessary that the world and its people are food and nutrition secured. The economic, political and social growth of a country inevitably depends upon the health of the many who constitute and runs it. One such Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030 is "Zero Hunger" (Goal 2) to which the World Food Programme has been paying immense attention to. Eradicating Global Hunger and malnutrition is one of the most difficult tasks of government's today.

For achieving a just world with Zero Hunger, the following steps are adopted by the Global Community

1. Protect the Vulnerable

The utmost goal of the Global Community should be to uplift the needy and most vulnerable sections. A just world can only be achieved when inclusive growth is given necessity. Governments should ensure social welfare

programmes and shall formulate integrated and inclusive economic policies for the benefit of all.

2. Reduce Food Waste

About 1 trillion people worldwide waste food daily. It has become a trend in the developed countries and in the developing countries food gets wasted during the process of production. It should be taught well to the consumers of food the significance of food, so that it gets equally distributed to those who are deprived of it.

3. Ensure proper sustainability & Variability of crops:

Apart from wheat, rice, corn and soy it is quite important for farmers to produce other variants of crops to adjust as per the changing climate and weather demands. Food availability and accessibility can only be achieved when there exists a variety of food from which people can obtain their nutrients. (Zero Hunger World Food Programme n.d.) Achieving Zero Hunger has become so crucial at the times of Covid-19 pandemic where million are suffering due to shortage of food supplies, specially the target groups such as migrant workers. This goal tries to boost our energies towards achieving food security and focusing on minimal wastage of food. (Sustainable Development Goal:Zero Hunger n.d.)

Conclusion

Human development can only be possible with basic inalienable Rights, from a global perspective, the nature of Rights denotes the cosmopolitan nature of human tendency. The Sustainable Development Goals include the authenticity of Human Requirements that needs to be fulfilled by 2030, but, unfortunately, we are not in a right track to achieve such magnificent Goals. In a world of openness and Communication, people are really unaware about their basic livelihood due to the rising inequality and poverty at the global level. The gap has been increasing between the nations in terms of national household income, Gross Domestic Products and Human Development Score. The global hunger can be justified from the global Justice where all human beings deserve to be treated equally. The dedicated role of World Food Programme has been, in a large extent, eradicated the hunger problem through distribution of food, active surveillance over the developing nations and digital communication. Eradication of global hunger has been the main challenge before the global political environment thus, we need to have a collective wisdom with proper theoretical approach to counter the demon of Hunger.

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