

Hunger News & Hope

A Seeds of Hope Publication

The War in Ukraine & the Global Food Crisis

by Michael Williamson

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to a major humanitarian crisis both in Ukraine and around the world. Given the region's importance as a breadbasket to humanity, the impact on key food commodities such as wheat and sunflower oil has been dramatic. There have been massive shortages and price shocks. Moreover, Russia is a key producer of fertilizers and of the energy needed to distribute available food and to grow more.

According to the World Bank, global food prices are on track to increase between 10 and 20 percent in 2022, after having risen 31 percent in 2021. And the cost of the inputs and fuel required to produce and move the food that the

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Farmers gathering corn in Kenya. Photo: Curt Carnemark / World Bank.

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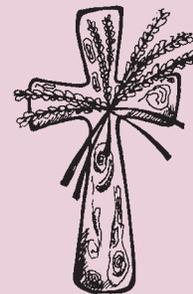
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art by Erin Kennedy Mayer

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world will need in the near future is also rising. The result: immediate distress and the likelihood of reduced farm yields for as long as the next four years.¹

We live in a world where more than 40 percent of caloric intake comes from just three crops—wheat, corn and rice. Production of these grains is concentrated in just a few regions and a scant few players dominate each step of the value chain. Because of this high level of concentration, disruptions in the supply chain in any critical region can have devastating ripple effects across the rest of the world. Many countries that are most exposed also suffer from high debt loads and uncertain weather conditions attributable to climate change.

Humanitarian agencies are scrambling to prepare themselves for even more critical levels of hunger, as they face a \$13.6 billion annual gap in food security spending, according to a 2020 report by Ceres 2030, a think tank. Russia's war in Europe's breadbasket has severely rocked global food markets, forcing humanitarian agencies to slash food rations in countries like Yemen. Thirty-six countries rely on Ukraine and Russia for more than half of their wheat imports.²

A special UN crisis task force is monitoring more than 60 countries that are struggling to pay for food imports. High energy prices and volatility in the food markets have put extra pressure on cash-strapped developing countries.

As more people grow hungry globally, the UN goal to end hunger by the end of the decade looks further away than ever.

Drought is gripping the Horn of Africa, leaving some 26 million people facing food shortages in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia over the next six months. More than 7 million livestock animals have already been wiped out. Across East Africa as a whole, some 50 million people are facing acute food insecurity.

Global trade is and will remain an integral part of modern food systems. But many problems that have arisen are symptoms of larger, systemic issues in our long, highly intermediated, complex and fragile global supply chains.

In Lebanon, also a large importer of Russian and Ukrainian wheat, food price inflation has been running at 122 percent. Domestic food price inflation is high in almost all low- and middle-income countries, according to the World Bank.

Therefore, it is difficult for people to afford food even in places where there isn't a shortage. People are paying more for basic necessities everywhere from Peru to Burundi. According to the UN World Food Programme (WFP), a record high of 49 million people in 46 countries could fall into famine or "famine-like conditions" amid the food crisis. The worst affected countries are Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen, where there are 750,000 people facing starvation and death—of which 400,000 alone are in Ethiopia's Tigray region, where there has been an ongoing civil war.³ [Watch for more about Tigray in the next issue of Hunger News & Hope.]

Low foreign exchange reserves made it difficult for Sri Lanka to import food. The ousted government sought to improve its balance-of-payments crisis by banning the import of fertilizer, which—coupled with an outright ban on using—led to the destruction of half the country's rice crop.



A produce market in Cayo, in western Belize. Photo courtesy of Sara Alexander.

An agreement between Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and the UN to restart food exports from Ukraine's Black Sea ports has helped ease markets somewhat in recent months. Wheat prices dropped by 14.5 percent during the summer, encouraged by the prospect of some 20 million tons of grain locked in Ukrainian silos being exported.

But the agreement got off to a slow and shaky start after being signed in July. Russia immediately hit the port of Odesa with missiles.

The international development world is also holding its breath.

A flurry of international political initiatives has sprung up to tackle the crisis, including from France and Germany, but experts believe they won't be effective without an unprecedented injection of cash. The WFP has banked \$8 billion of donations this year but needs a total of \$22 billion.

If the money comes in, emergency aid may help stave off the worst ravages of the hunger crisis this year, but experts say the world needs systemic change.

An estimated 1.7 billion people—most of them in developing economies—could suffer greatly in the coming year, due to severely heightened levels of food insecurity, energy prices and debt burdens, according to the UN Task Team for the Global Crisis Response Group. And the effects will be felt disproportionately. Most residents of countries where food makes up less than 10 percent of consumer spending (such as the US, Australia and the UK) will be

by the war in Ukraine. Global trade is and will remain an integral part of modern food systems. But many problems that have arisen are symptoms of larger, systemic issues in our long, highly intermediated, complex and fragile global supply chains.

The war in Ukraine began 11 months ago, but its negative effects on global food systems—coming on top of higher food and fertilizer prices brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic—have been swift. Although the immediate causes of each crisis differ, this is the third major food crisis we have faced in the past couple of decades, including the rapid escalation of food prices in 2007–2008 and again in 2010–2011. Several factors underlie all three crises, including chronic underinvestment in local food systems by both governments and the private sector and a lack of the diversity, resilience and flexibility needed to respond rapidly to sudden shocks related to weather, market disruption, or geopolitical conflict. However, the current crisis could be far more catastrophic than those that have preceded it.⁴

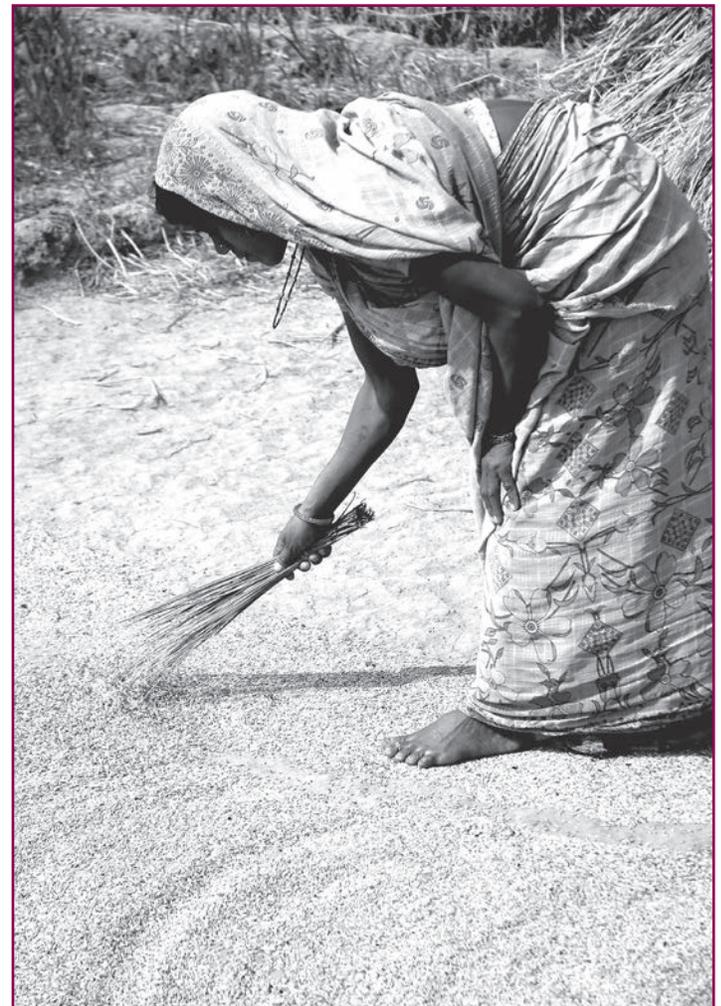
Together, Russia and Ukraine supply about 12 percent of the total food calories traded around the world and both

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The war's impact on the price of fuel has been equally dramatic. Aside from the added cost to farmers of the fuel they need to power their equipment, last-mile inland transportation can account for as much as 40 percent of food costs in many developing countries.

modestly impacted by rising food prices. But the effects will be far more severe for the most vulnerable populations in the many countries around the world where food comprises over 40 percent of consumer spending—including Pakistan, Guatemala, Kenya and Nigeria, to name a few.

Critically, the looming global food crisis isn't about the world's capacity to produce enough food. Rather, it is about the inability of our food systems to store and distribute enough food—and the inputs that are needed to produce it securely and equitably—in the face of the disruption caused



A farmer dries wheat near the Pusa site of the Borlaug Institute for South Asia (BISA), in the Indian state of Bihar.

Photo: M. DeFreese/CIMMYT.

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are critical exporters of key commodities such as wheat (28 percent of global trade) and sunflower oil (69 percent). The WFP buys from Ukraine half of the wheat that it distributes around the world. Even more alarmingly, as exports from these countries tumble, other leading food-exporting countries have announced export bans or licensing restrictions designed to protect their own food stockpiles. For example, Indonesia, which produces roughly 60 percent of global palm oil supplies, banned all exports of palm oil products last spring. The impact on countries that rely on imported food has been severe.

The war's impact on the price of fuel has been equally dramatic. Aside from the added cost to farmers of the fuel they need to power their equipment, last-mile inland transportation can account for as much as 40 percent of food costs in many developing countries. So as fuel prices go up, the total cost of food increases, creating a vicious cycle.

Making matters worse, the current crisis coincides with high debt levels in many developing economies, due in part to public spending in response to the challenges presented by COVID-19. As a result, governments are struggling to support fast-rising food, fertilizer and fuel costs—and in many cases are rolling back food subsidies or eliminating them altogether.

According to the UN, 193 million people in 53 countries already faced “acute food insecurity” in 2021. That number was 40 million higher than the previous record level in 2020. Now, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has strained fragile global food systems to the breaking point. The full effects, in both the short term and the medium term, have yet to be fully revealed.⁵

Classification as a high-risk country reflects exposure to a variety of potentially harmful factors. Virtually all countries in this classification face severe levels of extreme poverty, compounded by the ongoing economic and social challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional factors include heavy reliance on food imports, high import bills, high inflation, a high debt burden, climate risks and civil unrest. Also, a disproportionate share of the

The short supply will inevitably impact crop yields, particularly for wheat, which requires a lot of fertilizer and is essential for feeding millions. The WFP has warned that the fertilizer shortage could push an additional seven million people into food scarcity.

highest risk countries is located on the African continent.

Some African countries are exploring local manufacturing capabilities amid a critical shortage of synthetic fertilizer.⁶ The amount of fertilizer available globally has almost halved, while the cost of some types of fertilizer have nearly

tripled over the past 12 months, according to the UN. Africa—which already uses the least amount of fertilizer per hectare in the world—is at high risk.

The short supply will inevitably impact crop yields, particularly for wheat, which



*A produce market in Brazil.
Photo by Joa Souza.*

requires a lot of fertilizer and is essential for feeding millions. The WFP has warned that the fertilizer shortage could push an additional seven million people into food scarcity.

Russia, which is under Western sanctions, produces large amounts of potash, ammonia and urea. These are the three key ingredients needed to make chemical fertilizer. They helped to fuel the Green Revolution, which tripled global grain production in the 1960s and helped to feed millions.

Russia exports around 20 percent of the world's nitrogen fertilizers and, combined with its sanctioned ally Belarus, 40 percent of the world's exported potassium, according to data from Rabobank.

The cost of fertilizer was already high following the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, the sanctions on Russia and Belarus, compounded with export controls in China, have made a bad situation worse.⁷

This perfect storm of factors means not only that this is a near-term crisis, but also that any reprieve over the next couple of years could be unlikely. The burden on smallholder subsistence farmers who produce food mostly for their own and their family's consumption will be especially severe. Therefore, it is critical to give them the means to protect themselves from the effects of repeated food crises.

In conclusion, food systems are not structured to respond adequately during times of crisis—and so far, we seem to have learned little from the crises of the past. Relieving the current crisis requires, most importantly, a coordinated and immediate emergency humanitarian response by all stakeholders—governments, development institutions and banks, NGOs and private companies—to meet people's most pressing needs. We can do so by providing humanitarian aid—including food, financial support, seeds, inputs, tools and technical assistance to support in-country sustainable intensification and other crop substitution

actions. In addition, multilateral institutions and bilateral creditors should pursue debt relief and restructuring to give affected countries much-needed financial liquidity, so that their governments can provide emergency safety net funding and support livelihood activities.

—Michael Williamson, an ordained minister and hospital chaplain, is a former Seeds intern and wrote, for Seeds, *A Guide to World Hunger Organizations, Volume II* (Jones Press, 1994). He has served in cross-cultural urban ministry with Latino immigrants in Los Angeles, a cross-cultural mission in the Mississippi Delta, and economic development/public health mission projects in the Balkans and Mexico. He lives in Clinton, MS, with his wife Amy (also a former Seeds intern) and their daughter Rosemary.

Endnotes

1. "Food Security Update: World Bank Response to Rising Food Insecurity," The World Bank.
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7. Edwards, IMF.



A maize farmer weeds in a field near the Pusa site of the Borlaug Institute for South Asia (BISA), in the Indian state of Bihar. Photo: M. DeFreese/CIMMYT.

Facts about the Global Food Crisis

introduction and compilation by Mitch Martina

Editor's note: This information was originally compiled for the 2022 Sacred Seasons Hunger Emphasis worship packet from *Seeds of Hope*. We think this will serve as a good complement to Michael Williamson's article about the global food crisis that begins on page 1.

In 2019, the United States celebrated its lowest rate of food insecurity in 20 years as low unemployment rates and unhindered food supply chains endowed many Americans with affordable, consistent access to food. After two decades of gradual, non-linear progress, things were headed in the right direction and there was reason to rejoice.

The US—and the world—had little choice but to watch, however, as COVID-19's onset in 2020 instigated economic recessions that brought years of consistent progress to an abrupt, devastating halt. Today, the nations are still adapting to the fight against food insecurity in a post-pandemic world as economies slowly recover from unemployment shocks and widespread supply chain disruptions, significantly hindering reliable access to affordable food resources.

Prospects dimmed even further on February 24, 2022, as Russia invaded Ukraine and the two nations—together comprising nearly a third of the world's cereal exports and 12 percent of the world's calorie supply—found themselves in the throes of war, resulting in bottlenecked exports and the hindered production of essential foods in one of the world's most vital breadbasket regions.

Our victories ought to be celebrated, both large and small—but these past three years have demonstrated that

we cannot afford to become complacent in the fight against hunger.

The Three Cs of Food Insecurity

Although food insecurity is unrelentingly complex and multifaceted, there are a handful of interrelated causes that have recently served to exacerbate hunger and limit reliable access to food on a global scale. These are conflict, COVID-19, and climate, colloquially referred to as the “three Cs” of food insecurity. Taking the time to understand these three causes and how they interact is necessary if we want to develop an informed, effective series of responses to hunger on the local and global levels.

How It Began

In March of 2022—almost immediately following Russia's invasion of Ukraine—the global food price index reached its highest level since 1990 at 159.7 points, indicating the highest global price-per-basket of food commodities in thirty years. The index was nearly 60 points lower in 2020, averaging at 98.1 points throughout the year. (Devex Newswire)

The surge of world food prices experienced globally in March is the fastest one ever recorded, clocking in at a record-breaking 13 percent jump. This surge will be particularly devastating for low-income nations that primarily depend on imports for essential food resources. (Reuters, US Global Leadership Coalition)

Prior to the conflict in Russia and Ukraine, tens of millions were already approaching famine status “due to existing local conflicts, rising costs of commodities, climate change and the pandemic.” The escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian war has caused the world to encroach on the boundaries of a bona-fide food crisis. (Devex Newswire)

Economies in Africa are especially susceptible to the crippling effects



*Loss of access to wheat from Russia and Ukraine played a large role in the present global food crisis.
Photo by Manfrid Richter.*

of the Russo-Ukrainian War, as approximately 25 African economies “import at least one-third of their wheat from those two countries; for 15 of them the proportion is greater than 50 percent.” (World Bank)

As such, significant disparities for particular regions exist on the global stage; 20.2 percent of the African population experienced hunger in 2021 “compared to 9.1 percent in Asia, 8.6 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 5.8 percent in Oceania, and less than 2.5 percent in Northern America and Europe.” In total, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimated that between 702 and 828 million people were affected by hunger globally in the past year. (FAO)

Not only has hunger increased in a *quantitative* manner, it has also increased in terms of *intensity*—that is, the severity of global hunger has increased. This is due in large part to COVID-19’s universal disruption of supply chains in tandem with gradually increasing demand for food resources on behalf of consumers. (US Global Leadership Coalition)

Due to the demands of COVID-19 on the global supply chain, commodity prices were indirectly driven up as national financial policies sought to mitigate the immediate effects of the coronavirus on local economies, with actions such as the reduction of cereal exports. (McKinsey & Company)

The disproportionate loss of income for poorer households compared to their wealthier counterparts as a result of COVID-19 means that the poor are especially hindered from acquiring consistent access to food resources. Likewise, because poorer populations tend to be composed of physical laborers, these populations were disproportionately affected at the outset of the pandemic in terms of unemployment and, therefore, access to food. (International Food Policy Research Institute)

Coronavirus-induced “border restrictions and lockdowns” have obstructed harvesting efforts globally and left massive quantities of seasonal workers unemployed. Furthermore, “meat processing plants and food markets” as well as transport services have been interrupted by the threat of COVID-19 as external stressors inhibit each function of the supply chain. (United Nations Sustainable Development Group)

According to Arif Husain at the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), “This [global food] crisis is about affordability, meaning there is food available, but the prices are really high.” The UN predicts that, by 2027, an 8.5 percent raise in food prices is possible. (CNBC, FAO)

Rural populations are the most vulnerable to hunger, despite the fact that they produce the bulk of the global food supply. (Action Against Hunger)



—Mitch Martina, a native of Houston, TX, is a senior Professional Writing and Great Texts major at Baylor University. He is the Seeds intern for the fall of 2022.

Note: The original compilation included statistics about hunger in the US as well as global hunger. For a copy of the complete piece, email seedseditor1@gmail.com.

Looking for ways to introduce your congregation to hunger issues?

Hunger in God's World

Email seedseditor1@gmail.com for a pdf of this four-session workshop from Seeds of Hope. If you are in the Central Texas area, a Seeds representative will lead the workshop for you for gas money.

Report from the White House Hunger Conference

by Mitch Martina

“The moment is at hand to put an end to hunger in America itself. For all time.”

These were the words of former US President Richard Nixon in 1969 during the original White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. However bold Nixon’s words might have been 50 years ago, the action that followed was equally bold. Following the conference, a number of historical and seminal policies were implemented, and millions of dollars were allocated to action items chosen at the conference.

Many of these programs are in effect to this day. The revision of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) to target low-income students, as well as the implementation of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) were both born out of this pivotal conference. Nixon may not have ended American hunger “for all time,” but the conference was decidedly a step in the right direction.

On September 28, 2022, US President Joseph Biden took cues from his predecessor as the Biden-Harris administration reconvened the second White House Conference on Hunger. Biden’s opening remarks resembled those of President Nixon. “I really do know we can do this: end hunger in this country by the year 2030.”

As food systems worldwide have encountered near-ubiquitous destabilization from stressors like climate shifts, conflict-based interruptions of food systems, and COVID-19’s continual disruption of supply chains since 2020, the reconvention of the conference is timely. According to the *Washington Post*, the White House came to the conference ready to back up their claims with financial action. Officials announced that \$8 billion in funding—from both public and private sectors—would be pledged towards the ambitious goal of extinguishing hunger by 2030.

But the underlying causes of hunger in modern America are very different from the causes of 50 years ago. To that end, our responses must adapt to the ever-shifting landscape of food insecurity.

At the conference, the White House enumerated five pillars that will serve as the foundation for stabilizing food systems against modern aggravators of hunger: (1) improving food access and affordability, (2) integrating nutrition and health, (3) empowering consumers to have access to food and to make healthy choices, (4) supporting physical activity for all, and (5) enhancing nutrition/food security research. Here’s a brief look at each of those pillars and some of the particular actions that agents in both public and private sectors are planning to take.

1. Improving Food Access and Affordability

For Americans, the problem of food insecurity is not one of food scarcity. It’s a problem of reliable access to food. It could be due to geographical limitations like proximity to grocery stores, or it could be a lack of financial means that bar Americans from purchasing food with sufficient nutritional content or limiting their quantity of food consumption. The Biden-Harris administration reaffirmed its commitment to providing access and affordability of food resources to Americans of all economic brackets.

In response to these problems, the White House aims to work with Congress in order to provide school meals for 9 million more children by 2032, primarily by funding enhanced equipment for the school nutrition workforce alongside the development of more robust training. The administration also endeavors to close the gap between those *eligible* for federal assistance programs—such as the

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and WIC—and those *enrolled* in such programs, by working with individual states to more comprehensively inform under-enrolled demographics.

Private sector actors as diverse as Chobani, Doordash, and Google have all pledged to adopt specific measures to combat these causes of food insecurity. For example, Google intends to facilitate greater SNAP enrollment by providing users of the search engine with easier access to information about their eli-



gibility for the program, as well as applications for SNAP benefits. Doordash aims to partner with 18 cities to remove locational barriers to nutritious food access.

2. Integrate Nutrition and Health

Beyond providing access to food resources in general, the White House made known its commitment to rectifying nutritional deficiencies in the American diet. This plan is mediated by a “food as medicine” framework, in which the nutritional content of a diet is understood as integral to the treating of diet-related diseases, as well as the promotion of general well-being and the reduction of health-care spending.

In order to practically apply the “food as medicine” framework to the American public, the administration will promote legislation in support of medically tailored meals for both Medicare and Medicaid users who are eligible. Greater measures will be taken to assess at-risk populations for food insecurity—such as the veteran and disabled communities—so that individuals experiencing hunger may be referred to federal programs that can adequately meet their needs. Furthermore, the conferees discussed the possibility of expanding the tax-exempt activities of organizations such as hospitals to include anti-hunger activities like supporting food pantries, screening for food insecurity, or growing produce.

3. Empower Consumers to Access and Make Healthy Choices

Alongside reallocations in funding that prioritize the effective communication of nutritional information, practical modifications were proposed in order to make such information more readily accessible to the general public. One of the proposed changes was the development of a “front-of-package” labeling system, with a simpler rating system—such as one that employs the use of stars or traffic light schemes—so consumers can more easily understand an item’s nutritional value. Likewise, the US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) plans to develop a symbol that companies can employ to denote products that are high in nutritional value.

The White House also suggested that the cultivation of healthier food environments is in order. Food environments are locales that depend on “proximity to stores, food prices and available food options” to flourish. To that end, the administration intends to work with Congress to incentivize the selection of fruits and vegetables on behalf of SNAP users. The FDA plans to further reduce sodium and added sugar content in food environments nationwide. To bolster these efforts, the White House will invite Congress to fund national nutrition education based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* along with their efforts to encourage nutritional education for diverse cultural audiences.

4. Support Physical Activity for All

Especially within the private sector, efforts toward making physical activity more accessible to the American public are gaining traction. The Community Gyms Coalition has plans to launch a nationwide “Fitness Is Essential” campaign to accomplish several action items, one of which is the provision of one million free fitness consultations for interested members by 2025. MyFitnessPal, a prominent iOS and Android application oriented towards healthy living and exercise, also aims to provide free premium memberships to more than 1 million Americans who qualify as at-risk for diet-related disease.

In addition, the administration seeks to build upon the President’s “America the Beautiful” initiative, which would serve to better connect populations that are separated from natural environments with parks via targeted use of public transportation. Discussion continues regarding the reformation of physical education, with the aims of making it more conducive to the physical and psychological needs of diverse communities.

5. Enhance Nutrition and Food Security Research

Finally, the White House has pledged to continue its support of nutrition and food security research. In 2021, the federal government spent approximately \$2 billion on research in the area of food security and nutrition. In response to historically “inconsistent and insufficient” funding for Dietary Reference Intakes—a “set of values used to plan and assess nutrient intakes in the US”—the White House will seek to provide adequate funds for more consistent research. Efforts towards further diversity and inclusion in research on behalf of the federal government will ensure that solutions are tailored to meet the needs of diverse American populations.

In the private sector, nonprofits and other companies are researching and developing solutions to address the needs of food-insecure children in particular. Children’s Healthwatch pledges to raise approximately \$2 million to fund research targeting impoverished families with young children, while “food tech” companies like Grow Local intend to invest an impressive \$500 million in a campaign which permeates both public and private domains. This campaign will facilitate general research in the domains of nutrition and related habit formation as well as funding a prospective K-12 curriculum that would provide nutritional education to thousands of schools.

—Mitch Martina, a native of Houston, TX, is a senior Professional Writing and Great Texts major at Baylor University. He is serving as a Seeds intern for the fall of 2022.

Author’s Note: Unless otherwise specified, all of the information in this article is taken from two primary sources: the official fact sheet released by the White House Briefing Room, and the executive summary of the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health also released by the White House.

Risk of Severe Hunger for Most South Sudanese

JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN—In 2023, as many as 7.8 million South Sudanese people will be at-risk for experiencing severe hunger, particularly from the months of April to July. This number accounts for approximately two-thirds of the South Sudanese population. Agencies of the United Nations, among which are the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Programme (WFP), have attributed such severe conditions to the compounding effects of adverse weather events—such as flooding and drought—as well as other aggravating factors, the chief of which is geopolitical conflict.

Even the shortages invited by civil war in South Sudan, which peaked in 2013 and 2016 respectively, pale in comparison to the nation’s present situation. A complex web of interacting causes are to blame: Russia’s invasion of Ukraine caused global food prices as a whole to raise, rendering current funding of humanitarian agencies insufficient, while paralleling rises in the cost of fuel have hindered the effective importation of food to the nations that need it most.

South Sudan has suffered especially damaging blows in food security in light of the WFP’s partial suspension of aid, resulting from the organization’s need to reallocate and redistribute their insufficient food resources. The UN agencies mentioned above have suggested that approximately 7.7 million people in South Sudan suffered food insecurity in the most recent April-through-July cycle. Josephine Lagu,

South Sudan’s current Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, insisted that urgent action is required and affirmed the need for the government to “refocus [their] attention and redirect resources” in light of the report released by the United Nations.

—Reuters, “Two-thirds of South Sudan Population Risk Severe Hunger in 2023,” Nov. 3, 2022

Woman Arrested for Feeding the Homeless in Arizona

BULLHEAD CITY, AZ—Bullhead City resident Norma Thornton was arrested this past March after she attempted to feed homeless individuals at Bullhead City Community Park, an activity which has been part of Thornton’s routine for some four years. She was arrested on the basis of a city ordinance which posits that it is unlawful to share prepared food in public parks without a permit. Such a permit, however, would restrict Thornton’s charity to a single two-hour window every month as opposed to her current, regular practice of feeding the city’s homeless.

So Thornton has taken Bullhead City to court. The Institute for Justice, pleading on Thornton’s behalf, has called for the retraction of the city’s ordinance, suggesting that the ordinance violates fundamental civil rights afforded to Thornton via the 14th amendment of the US Constitution. A bodycam recording of the woman’s arrest was released by the Institute for Justice, in which the police officer responsible for her arrest may be heard saying to his supervisor, “I think this is a PR nightmare, but okay.” The officer subsequently arrested Thornton with reluctance.

Though Thornton’s case has had some measure of success (her misdemeanor charge was dropped), the Institute for Justice seeks to go beyond the solving of one particular case and repeal the ordinance as a whole. As a woman with a deep burden for feeding the homeless and the hungry—given that she experienced these things herself earlier in life—Thornton has been forced to relocate her charity onto the private property of a local business. The city’s actions are especially discouraging in view of recent spikes in homelessness across the nation.

—National Public Radio, “An Arizona grandmother was arrested for giving food to the hungry. Now, she’s suing,” Oct. 30, 2022.



Left: Map of Africa showing South Sudan.

Nehemiah Project: Building Affordable Homes in Brooklyn

EAST BROOKLYN, NY—Some 6,500 affordable homes have been built across the nation by the “Nehemiah” project. The project, named after the prophet Nehemiah, who famously rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, found its humble beginnings 40 years ago in East Brooklyn, amid a community wrought with poverty and violent crime. In the very same neighborhood that used to constitute the “murder capital of the state of New York” and formerly hosted a landfill of noteworthy size, a significant number of permanent, affordable homes now stand.

Homebuilding efforts were spearheaded in the 1980s by the Industrial Areas Foundation and congregants of various local churches in East Brooklyn, both of whom gradually began to put pressure on the local government to fund construction and clean-up in the area. The original Nehemiah homes cost \$40,000 when they were first built, a sum smaller than what most hopeful homeowners in the neighborhood paid for rent at the time. From living with “roaches, rats and mice”—as Sarah Plowden recalls—to owning appreciative property has breathed life into the East Brooklyn community and furthered property-owning potential for future generations as well. The flourishing of the East Brooklyn community and the Nehemiah project’s growing national presence are reminders that even the most consequential community efforts begin with the sowing of what seem to be small seeds.

—CBS News, “Nehemiah: Making the American Dream possible for first-time homeowners,” Sept. 11, 2022.

Newsfront was compiled by Mitch Martina.

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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry people in God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group seeks out people of faith who feel called to care for poor and vulnerable people; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

In recent years, God has given me new eyes to see the millions of poor and powerless people near and far, most of whom are hungry. Now, with increasing urgency, I hear God calling me—and all Christians, I think, not only to give to the poor, but to take up a cross and follow Him into the economic and political arenas to change structures and policies which keep people poor and powerless. He is calling us to claim the “new heaven and new earth” of Jesus Christ.

—H. Eugene McLeod, *Roots of Hope, Volume I*
(a 1979 Seeds publication).



art by Sally Lynn Askins

Editorial Address

Seeds is housed by the community of faith at Seventh & James Baptist Church. Mailing address: 602 James Ave., Waco, TX 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745; Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail: seedseditor1@gmail.com. Web: www.seedspublishers.org. Copyright © 2022; ISSN 0194-4495. Seeds of Hope, Inc., holds the 501(c)3 nonprofit tax status.

Seeds also produces *Sacred Seasons*, a series of worship materials for Advent, Lent and an annual Hunger Emphasis—with an attitude “toward justice, peace and food security for all of God’s children.” These include litanies, sermons, children’s and youth activities, bulletin art and drama.

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