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The review on the smallholder Farmers' Food security and Conflict in Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

The growing food insecurity in Ethiopia is exceedingly associated with the prevalence of conflict. Thus, the main aim of this paper was to review food security in the context of conflict in Ethiopia. The data of the paper were collected using an intensive literature review of the relevant documents. In the paper, conflict is the cause and the result of food insecurity. Hence, the predominance of conflict, periodic drought, deficiency of infrastructure amenities, human population pressure and traditional farming were the main causes of food insecurity in Ethiopia. More than the rests, the prevalence of conflict affects food security severely. It disrupts food production, reduces the nutrition status, retards access to food and increases the population displacement in the country. Therefore, addressing the situation of food insecurity and conflict requires the involvement of all Ethiopian communities, civil society organizations, governmental organizations and NGOs by increasing the non-farm activities, promoting family-based economics, strengthening the irrigation practice and improving the conflict management techniques.

Keyword: Smallholder Farmers, Food Security, Conflict and Ethiopia.

INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is a country situated in SSA, with adequate natural resources which are vital for it is growing. It has emerged as one of the fastest-growing economies globally with average GDP growth of 11 per cent per annum during 2005-06 to 2009-10. ^[1] Agriculture, being the dominant economic activity in Ethiopia contributes 44.6% to

GDP followed by services, 43.4% and industry 13.1%. ^[2] Accordingly, the country poverty headcount index has declined from 0.45 in 1995/96 to 0.38 in 2004/05. ^[2] Despite the reduction in the food poverty index, the scale of food insecurity and malnutrition remains serious: 23 million people have insufficient income to meet their food needs. ^[3] According to the FAO ^[4], 41% of the Ethiopian population lives below the poverty line and more

than 31 million people are undernourished. The growing food and nutrition insecurity in Ethiopia is exceedingly associated with the prevalence of conflict. FAO^[5] pointed out that the prevalence of undernourishment is about twice as high in conflict-affected countries with a protracted crisis than in countries not affected by conflict, and nutrition outcomes are also generally worse in these countries. The estimated food insecure population increased from 5.6 million in December 2016 to 8.5 million in August 2017 with prolonged drought, conflict, insecurity and crops diseases among the main drivers.^[6] Moreover, the estimate suggests that approximately 45% of the total populations are undernourished and that food insecurity is extremely common.

On the other hand, the circumstance of food and nutritional insecurity is very high among rural communities. The concentrations of food insecurity and malnutrition are prevalent in rural areas with about a population of six to seven million chronically food insecure and up to 13 million seasonally food insecure.^[7] The proportion of the rural areas that are unable to attain minimum requirements, is estimated at 52% (Devereu, 2000). FAO/WFP estimates reveal similar results: over 41 per cent of the population is considered to be undernourished.^{[4],[8]}

Objectives

The main objective of the paper was to review the smallholder farmers' food security and conflict in Ethiopia. The specific objectives of the paper are;

- ✓ To review the Food security-conflict nexus in Ethiopia
- ✓ To review the causes of food insecurity in Ethiopia

To review the impacts of Conflict on food security in Ethiopia

Methods

The paper was developed through a literature survey approach. It was collected secondary information to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data on food and nutrition security in the context of conflict in Ethiopia. The paper has indeed employed an intensive review of a range of official reports, journal article and conference proceedings which were previously published as the sources of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concepts and Definitions

Food Security

The concepts of "food security" have emerged as the acknowledgement of the individual, national, and global impacts of production shortfalls and market failures in agriculture. It is modified through different years with various concepts addition. Food security is defined as adequate availability of and access to food for households to meet the minimum energy requirements as recommended for an active and healthy life.^[9] This definition anchors on the food production and affordability of food. It underestimated the food utilization and the stability over the period. Thus, the latest definition that refined the one adopted in the 1996 World Food Summit states that food security (is) a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.^[10] This definition covers the aspects of availability, access, utilization and the stability of the individuals, households or nation to be food secure.

Conflict

The term conflict becomes a debatable issue that is defining differently. It is defined by Wallenstein^[11] as a situation in which two or more parties strive to acquire the same scarce resources at the same time. This definition sees the conflict as the struggle over scarce resources in a given place (s). On the other way, conflict is perceived as the process in which two or more parties attempt to frustrate the attainment of the other goals-the factors underlying conflict are threefold: interdependence, differences in goals and differences in perception.^[12] It construed the conflict in the interdependence, a difference of goals and perceptions of the people outlook. It is also defined as the struggle between the opponents over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources.^[13] The concept is understood in term of people values and claims over the given resources. Furthermore, conflict is defined as the interaction of interdependence between people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals.^[14]

Food Security- Conflict Nexus

Conflict as Cause of Food insecurity

There is a tough interface between food and security and conflict. The dangers of global food security result from prevailing conflict. Greatly, proof shows that conflict is a primary cause of

food, hunger and poverty and that people live in a country affected by conflict are more likely to be food insecure and malnourished.^[5] Conflict can damage agriculture, disrupt food production and food system, lead to the plundering of crops and livestock, and incomes.^[5] The reduction in production and incomes further decreases food security and reduces the coping capacity of those dependent on these sources for their livelihood.^[15] FAO^[10] has estimated losses of almost \$52 billion in agricultural output through conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa between 1970 & 1997, a figure equivalent to 75% of all official development assistance received by the conflict-affected countries. Therefore, the nutrition outcomes are severe; one and a half billion people who still live in fragile, conflict-affected areas are about twice as likely to be malnourished and to die during infancy as people in other developing countries.

Food Insecurity as a Cause of Conflict

Globally, food and nutrition insecurity initiate the outbreak of the conflict. Conflict does not only lead to food insecurity, but food insecurity and malnutrition can also become conflict multipliers and vectors for others grievances, especially in fragile post-conflict situations, and often contributes to fragility by weakening institutions, one of the main drivers of fragility.^[16] A seminal work by Collier and Hoeffler^[17] concluded that the gap between the return from taking up arms relative to those from conventional economic activities is the key causal mechanism linking low income to the incidence of civil war. Hence, the post-conflict countries with high levels of food insecurity are 40% more likely to relapse into conflict within ten years than those with low levels.^[5]

Causes of Food Insecurity in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, there are innumerable challenges of food and nutrition insecurity among poor households. Agreeing with the preceding study, the causes of the existing food insecurity problem in Ethiopia are numerous and interrelated.^[18] This paper has mainly focused on the lack of infrastructure facilities, recurrent drought, backward agricultural practice, the prevalence of conflict, and population pressure as the main causes of food and nutrition insecurity in the country.

Periodic Drought

Ethiopia food security is highly vulnerable to the adverse impact of drought. The majority of the population depends on agriculture as the source of livelihood, and the sector is dominated by

smallholder agriculture.^[19] The contribution of irrigated land in agriculture is minimal and the whole food production activity has depended on rain-fed agriculture; the disruption of the rain for a season has brought a massive food shortage and consequence hunger and famine.^[20] Thus, the problem of food insecurity has continued to persist in the country as many rural households have already lost their means of livelihood due to recurrent drought and crop failures.^[21] About 10% of Ethiopian citizens are chronically food insecure and this figure rises to more than 15% during the frequent drought years; 2.7 million people require emergency food assistance in 2014 and 228, 761 children require treatment for severe and acute malnutrition in 2014.^[22]

Deficiency of Infrastructure Services

The lacks of pertinent infrastructure facilities cause the food shortage and starvation in Ethiopia. Tsegaye^[23] has guaranteed that the inadequate infrastructures and social services development such as road, transportation, communication, electrification, education and health services and agricultural services would be major challenges to sustain the growth of agricultural production and food security. In the same way, Sewnet^[24] suggested that poor infrastructure including roads; schools and health's services constrain productivity and thereby bringing food insecurity and dependency on food aid. Hence, the lacks of appropriate infrastructure harm the productive resources uninterruptedly. More evidently, Solomon et al,^[25] showed that much of that food loss occurs during or after harvest in developing countries due to inadequate infrastructure, lack of proper storage facilities, lack of education on grain storage and lack of efficient markets to ensure grains move through the supply chain. Therefore, the food loss reduces the incomes of smallholder farmers, raises food prices and contributes to hunger and malnutrition.^[25]

Predominance Conflict

In Ethiopia, the widespread conflict becomes a severe challenge to food and nutrition security. It has been demonstrated that Food insecurity and famine are evident in the area where war and armed conflicts are prevalent.^[20] Worku^[26] also showed that Poverty, malnutrition and food insecurity are some of the major socio-economic consequences of the conflict. In the same token, Mohamed^[24] found that conflict and civil unrest is the major source of food insecurity problem and leads to serious disaster in Ethiopia, by disturbing the country ongoing economic growth and development progress.

Traditional Farming

Agricultural productions are the leading economic activity among rural households in Ethiopia. But, smallholder farming is the dominant livelihood activity and the source of vulnerability to poverty and food insecurity.^[28] Deverux^[29] discussed showed that the dependence on unreliable and low productivity rain-fed agriculture may well be the primary determinant of household food insecurity in Ethiopia. This has resulted in agriculture being poor for several years to the extent that country could not adequately feed its population from domestic production and prevailing both chronic and transitory food insecurity.^[30] As the consequence, the yields are low and post-harvest losses are high, creating widespread food insecurity.^[31] This has been manifested in the prevailing chronic and transitory food insecurity.^[32]

Human Population Pressure

Population pressure is often considered a primary cause of food and nutrition insecurity in Ethiopia. Based on Debebe^[32] finding, an area where households depend on less productive agricultural land, increasing population results in increased demand for food. A similar finding by Sewnet^[33] also showed that the impact of population growth is manifested on farm size, and it leads to high land fragmentation thereby small landholdings and finally reduces productivity. With the rapid population growth of the past two decades, per-capita food grain production has declined.^[19] In the Ethiopian case, since much of the Ethiopians livelihood is depending on agriculture and until people shift from agriculture to other sectors of the economy for their livelihood, population pressure on agricultural land can because of food insecurity in Ethiopia.^[34] Therefore, the Population pressure has become a factor in accelerating food insecurity in situations where: all accessible land is fully under cultivation; failures to improve upon the old methods of cultivation, and opportunity for alternatives employment are absent.^[20] The studies have also shown that the health problems of a large proportion of the population have emanated from a lack of adequate and balanced diet.

Impacts of Conflict on Food security

There is evolving agreement that the occurrence of conflicts creates harmful impacts on food and nutrition security. The people of Ethiopia have gone through uncontrollable conflicts that shake the food security, nutrition security and economic growth of the country as well. This brings adverse impacts to food and nutrition security. Therefore,

the paper has seen the impact of conflict in the perspectives of population displacement, food production, food access and nutrition in Ethiopia.

Increases Population Displacement

The conflict has consistently become a primary cause of people displacements in Ethiopia. Communal clashes have resulted in large scale displacements, civilians' injuries and deaths, as well as damage to properties and public infrastructures.^[36] Worku^[26] findings showed that the inter-ethnic and inter-clan conflicts over scarce resources, administrative boundaries, and others cause displacement of people. So, the number of new displacements in Ethiopia increased sharply in the first half of 2018 to 1.4 million.^[37] This has disrupted the households' ability to engage in their typical livelihood activities such as seasonal cultivation and raising livestock. The latest estimates suggest more than one million people have been displaced, many of whom are likely facing difficulty meeting their basic food and livelihoods protection needs.^[38]

Reduces Food Access

In the conflict-affected regions, there are lacks of access to food items. According to a study by Devereux^[39], almost one in four households (23%) had lost access to farmland that used to belong to them, or grazing land that they used to use, because of conflict. The large scale displacement as a result of conflict primarily along the border between Oromia and Somali regions is disrupting many households access to their typical sources of food and incomes.^[38] This brings the shortage of food and nutrition problems. According to Food Assistance Fact Sheet^[40] findings, the populations in parts of Oromia and SNNP are expected to face crisis level acute food insecurity due to the conflict which has disrupted access to food and livelihood activities. Moreover, in conflict-affected areas, the lack of adequate access to food, combined with poor access to medical facilities-in some cases even a lack of access to clean water, has immediate detrimental effects on malnutrition, especially for vulnerable groups such as children under five, and pregnant or breastfeeding women.^[41]

Impedes Food Production

The continuous internal conflict in Ethiopia adversely distresses food production. This internal conflict in Africa has brought the disruption of agriculture activities in many rural areas^[20]. Based on the Research Report Services findings, many people displaced from rural conflict zones were farmers, meaning crops were left untended and not harvested. Similarly, the conflict and insecurity

constrain development efforts by destroying physical infrastructure, disrupting trade and markets, and diverting human and financial resources away from productive sectors.^[42] As a result, the production losses have severely diminished households' food security and purchasing power, forcing many to sell agricultural assets and abandon their livelihoods.

Harms Nutrition

Conflict is a serious problem in Ethiopia households. It reduces the dietary diversity, caring practices, and distresses the clean drinking water of the susceptible households. In Ethiopia, skirmishes have exacerbated the nutrition situation with the increased food insecurity and cases of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) among under-five children & pregnant and lactating women.^[43] According to OCHA^[44], the living conditions of the IDPs residing with host communities and in the remaining communal shelters is still dire; relief food deliveries are still not adequate; protection risks and hygiene and sanitation issues are still rife; while health outbreak risks are still high. More evidently, Worku^[26] showed that the Somali region with six of its 9 districts affected by war has registered critical nutrition situation and crisis mortality situations.

CONCLUSION

Ethiopia is one of the countries in Sub-Sahara Africa affected by both conflict and food insecurity. There is a strong interaction between food security and conflict in Ethiopia. The conflict is the cause and the consequence of food and nutrition insecurity in Ethiopia. In the meantime, the food insecurity of vulnerable households is caused by several factors in the country. It is a result of the interconnected capacity of recurrent drought, conflict prevalence, deficiency of infrastructure services, traditional farming and human population pressure. In recent times, conflict becomes as a norm among the Ethiopian people; resulting in the entire country food insecurity. It imposes detrimental impacts on the food security of smallholder households. It thus poses unprecedented risks to food production, food access, populations' displacements, utilized food and nutrition problem.

As a result, addressing the situation of food security, nutrition security and conflict requires the involvement of all Ethiopian communities, civil society organizations, governmental organizations and NGOs along with the intervening actions. These actions are; increasing non-farm activities, promoting family-based economics, strengthening the irrigation practice and improving the conflict management techniques. In general, further studies

on the sources and impacts of conflict on food security in all Ethiopian regional levels are required.

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