



# Humanitarian Food Assistance and Nutrition Outcomes among Refugees: A Historical Perspective

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## Authors' contributions

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Humanitarian interventions are done after a significant disruption of people's daily life which in turn affect their food security and nutrition needs. Food assistance has become a key element of humanitarian aid to conflict-affected populations. Hunger and undernutrition can significantly worsen during situations of prolonged conflicts and where institutional capacities are weak. Humanitarian food aid provided in the form of food or non-food items for people affected by famine, drought, or natural disaster is intended to feed, shelter, and provide legal protection. Malnutrition in children is related to insufficient food intake, poor food quality, and severe or repeated infectious diseases. Therefore, humanitarian food assistance is given to ensure sufficient, safe, and nutritious food is consumed to prevent malnutrition and prevent death.

**Objectives:** This paper seeks to understand the following specific objectives; to explore the evolution of humanitarian food assistance or food aid; to gain an understanding of the contemporary views on humanitarian food assistance; to explore the comparative views on humanitarian food assistance, and to find out the implications of shifting from Food Aid to Food Assistance.

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**Study Design/Method:** Secondary data collection method was used and both published and official documents were reviewed based on the objectives of this paper, and relevant information was picked. The review provides evidence on the benefits as well as gaps related to humanitarian food assistance interventions and their relationship with the nutrition status of children below the age of five years.

**Results:** Food in-kind directly impacts positively on the nutrition status of households and influences the coping mechanisms of the affected populations. In Mali, a study found food transfers exert a protective effect on food-insecure populations in conflict situations and increased micro-nutrient availability. Another study found improvement in nutrition status among children in Myanmar, Kenya, Niger, and South Sudan. While global acute malnutrition (GAM) in Myanmar declined from 6.6% to 2.6% and from 7.5% to 4.7%, in Niger, GAM rates declined from 21.3% to 13.6%, and 11.4% to 7.3% in Kenya and South Sudan, a decline of 6% GAM. Also, a study on the “impact of cash transfers on food consumption in humanitarian settings found cash transfer” is an appropriate and effective modality in humanitarian settings for meeting the needs of vulnerable populations.

**Conclusion:** The strategic shift from food aid to food assistance has the potential to enhance effectiveness in addressing hunger because there is increased use of non-food aid in operational modalities and other initiatives to enhance local production and purchase, and the use of vouchers and cash transfers in humanitarian response.

*Keywords: Humanitarian assistance; nutrition status; refugees; refugee camps.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the effects of humanitarian food assistance on the nutrition status of refugee children aged 0-5 years from the historical perspective based on the available literature. This paper focuses on studying the nutrition outcomes in children below the age of 5 years (0-59 months) regarding the food assistance being provided to the refugees. In this paper humanitarian assistance refers to life-saving relief given to affected populations due to man-made, natural disasters, or complex emergencies and is guided by the core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, and universality [1], “while food assistance is any intervention designed to tackle food insecurity, its immediate causes, and its various negative consequences and may involve the direct provision of food, or essential services, inputs or commodities, cash or vouchers, skills or knowledge” [2]; “and food aid refers to assistance provided in form of food commodities, or financing that supports the procurement of food to beneficiaries in cases of famine and natural or man-made catastrophes” [2]. “The paper reviews secondary data on humanitarian food assistance and nutrition status among refugee children below the age of 5 years. Humanitarian food assistance aims to ensure the consumption of sufficient, safe, and nutritious food in anticipation of, during, and in the aftermath of a humanitarian crisis, when food consumption would otherwise, be

insufficient or inadequate to avert excessive mortality” [2]. Humanitarian interventions are done after a significant disruption of people’s daily life which in turn affect their food security and nutrition needs [3]. Conflicts, political instability, and other disasters compromise people’s ability to manage their day-to-day livelihoods, and these worsen their food and nutritional vulnerability [3,4]. “Food assistance has become a key element of humanitarian aid to conflict-affected populations, intended to promote the survival and growth of infants and young children” [5,6]. Throughout human history, humanitarian food aid was provided in the form of food or non-food items for people affected by famine, drought, or natural disaster [4,7-9]. Hunger and undernutrition can significantly worsen during situations of prolonged conflicts and where institutional capacities are weak [3]. “Malnutrition in children is related to poor food quality, insufficient food intake, and severe or repeated infectious diseases” [10]. Since World War II, humanitarian aid is meant to feed, shelter, and provide legal protection to people affected by conflicts [11]. Traditionally humanitarian assistance has been provided during emergency periods in the form of in-kind goods and services [3]. However, a report by [12], revealed that the proportion of food aid has significantly declined over time due to the shift in relief food from the traditional recipients in Africa and Asia to new recipients in Europe, arising from the economic crisis. This shift

has made the cost of food commodity procurement much cheaper and more accessible. This paper answers the following questions;

- Question 1: What is the evolution of humanitarian food aid and food assistance?
- Question 2: What are the contemporary views on humanitarian food assistance?
- Question 3: What are the comparative views on humanitarian food assistance?
- Question 4: what are the implications of shifting from Food Aid to Food Assistance?

This paper is structured as follows: First, the background to humanitarian food assistance and nutrition outcomes are discussed. Second, the problem statement and objectives are presented. Third, an overview evolution of humanitarian food assistance and food aid. The fourth part of the paper discusses contemporary views on humanitarian food assistance. The fifth part presents the Comparative views on humanitarian food assistance and nutrition outcomes, The sixth part summarizes the implications of shifting from humanitarian food Aid to humanitarian food assistance. The seventh area presents the comparison between food aid and food assistance, and the aspects of food assistance that make it effective. The last part is the conclusion of the paper.

## **2. BACKGROUND TO HUMANITARIAN FOOD ASSISTANCE AND NUTRITION OUTCOMES**

“After World War II, food aid became part of the US government's foreign policy [13]. Food aid has evolved continuously since the 1950s when US Public Law PL480 was enacted to initiate Food Aid Program and Farm Bill” [14]. “With the rapid rise in the number of refugees in the late 1970s, levels of emergency food aid supplied to refugees increased dramatically during the 1980s due to the protracted nature of the operations” [15]. A study by Hoddinott et al. [16] on the relationship between food transfers, electronic food vouchers, and child nutritional status in Bangladesh among the Rohingya refugees found that children 6 to 23 months from households that received an e-voucher instead of food ration had improved growth, and 36 percent of children were stunted in

households receiving the food ration as compared to 27 percent receiving the e-voucher. This implies that food assistance influences nutrition status differently. Similarly in Niger, Hoddinott et al. [16] found households with food baskets had more positive impacts on food consumption and diet quality than those on cash transfers, and coping strategies were less with households on food and less than 5 percent of food received was sold or exchanged for other goods. Food in-kind directly impacts positively on the nutrition status of the households and that food assistance influences the coping mechanisms of the affected populations. In Mali, a study on the “impact of food assistance on food insecure populations during the conflict” by Tranchant et al. [17], found food transfers exert a protective effect on food insecure populations in conflict situations, and that food assistance increased micro-nutrient availability for households. Similarly, “in Nepal where refugees were reliant on food assistance, UNHCR and the World Food Program (WFP) conducted a study that assessed the nutritional status of Bhutanese refugee children between 6 and 59 months of age in Nepal refugee camps, found that 4% of children had acute malnutrition, with the highest prevalence between 1 and 2 years of age, and also found a much higher prevalence of chronic malnutrition and low weight, seen in a few refugee children” [18]. The study in Nepal also found a much higher prevalence of chronic malnutrition and low weight among refugee children. Another review on the “impact of cash transfers on nutrition in emergency and transitional contexts” by Bailey & Hedlund, [19] found improvement in nutrition status among children in Myanmar, Kenya, Niger, and South Sudan. The study found global acute malnutrition (GAM) in Myanmar declined from 6.6% to 2.6% and from 7.5% to 4.7%, in Niger, GAM rates declined from 21.3% to 13.6%, and 11.4% to 7.3% in Kenya while in South Sudan, a decline of 6% GAM was reported after unconditional cash transfers were provided. This implies that both food in-kind and cash transfers improve dietary intake and impact the nutrition status of the households differently. Evidence from a study by Bailey and Hedlund [20], on the “impact of cash transfers on food consumption in humanitarian settings: A review of the evidence” revealed that cash transfer is an appropriate and effective modality in humanitarian settings for meeting the needs of vulnerable populations and that there was an increase in calorie consumption by households

however, it did not lead to improvements in dietary diversity compared to food aid. Similarly, another comparative study by Karuhanga [21], “on nutritional outcomes among children aged 6-59 months in households receiving cash and households receiving dry food rations in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement in Western Uganda, found the prevalence of stunting in children from households on cash was 46.7% and 49.4% in those receiving food, the prevalence of underweight children was 19.6% for those receiving cash and 25.3% for those on food, and the prevalence of wasting was 2.1% for beneficiaries of cash and 3.5% for beneficiaries of food in-kind”. “Overall, the prevalence of stunting, being underweight, and wasting was high in households that received food in-kind than in those on unconditional cash transfer programs” [10]. This implies cash transfer intervention is the better option for humanitarian assistance.

### 3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

“Humanitarian food assistance is given to ensure sufficient, safe, and nutritious food is consumed to prevent malnutrition and prevent death” [2, 22]. “Food aid is used to address global nutrition goals [23], and WFP food aid delivery is guided by its core strategies of saving the lives of refugees and other conflicted affected populations, improving nutrition and quality of life of the most vulnerable people at critical times in their lives” [24] “The majority of refugees in Uganda depend on food assistance provided by WFP to meet their daily food needs, and without sustained assistance, refugees may face acute food insecurity” [25]. “Out of 1.36 million refugees in Uganda as of June 2018, about 1.1 million were receiving food assistance either in-kind or through cash transfers, however, 18% of refugee households have low food consumption score and 67% have insufficient access to food in 7 days for all members of the household” [26]. “Although food assistance is the largest part of humanitarian assistance, food aid levels and rations have declined significantly and refugee children are at high risk for nutritional and health disparities” [10,27]. “Overall, in Uganda, malnutrition is widespread across refugee settlements with wasting and stunting as high as 8 percent and 20 percent respectively” [28]. “Poor food quality, insufficient intake of nutrients such as calories, protein, or micronutrients, and severe or repeated diseases result in malnutrition in children” [10,27,28]. “Similarly, poor diets,

unfamiliarity with available foods, and socioeconomic influences contribute to nutritional problems among children” [25]. “Although Uganda boasts of its most favorable and progressive model, the refugee population according to UNHCR is in dire need of humanitarian assistance” [29,30]. Despite the support from the humanitarian partners, malnutrition cases continue to be rampant among the refugees, and yet funding for refugees is dwindling, leaving many refugees surviving on basic ration provided by World Food Programme (WFP), which many refugees say is inadequate in quantities and quality.

“Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) prevalence in prevalence in children ranged from 4% to 12% among refugees and 5% to 11% in the hosting population in Uganda [31], and the GAM rate for children in settlement areas in Uganda is high, at 7.3 percent, with some of the highest rates found in the West Nile” [26]. “The burden of malnutrition among refugee children as compared to the children in host communities is high” [31]. Refugees mainly depend on food rations that are insufficient in quantity and variety. It is on this premise that this paper tries to gain an understanding of the historical perspective of humanitarian Food Assistance and nutrition status among refugee children under five years.

### 4. OBJECTIVES

This paper seeks to; (1) explore the evolution of humanitarian food assistance or food aid, (2) gain an understanding of the contemporary views on humanitarian food assistance, (3) explore the comparative views on humanitarian food assistance, and (4) find out the implications of shifting from Food Aid to Food Assistance.

### 5. EVOLUTION OF HUMANITARIAN FOOD ASSISTANCE OR FOOD AID

Before the nineteenth century, from around the 1750s to the 1790s, the humanitarian response was based on religious belief and was in response to famine, drought, and other natural disasters rather than war [4]. The concept of humanitarianism started as charity giving mainly by the Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims in the early humanitarian movements to support those affected by disasters [4]. The humanitarian movement today according to

Anderson et al. [4], began in the nineteenth century and the major humanitarian aid responses during this period intended to preserve British power were; (1) Humanitarian aid response to the Indian famines of 1837 and 1866, and (2) Aid response to the Irish famine of 1845 to 1849 [10]. These were meant to retain and consolidate power by the British Government. In 1862, the experience of armed battle in the Italian city of Solferino titled “A Memory of Solferino” (Dunant 1959)”, was presented in Geneva by a young Swiss businessman called Henry Dunant, resulting in the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1863 and later, of the broader Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in 1877 [4,32,33]. This paved way for the establishment of foundations or non-governmental organizations to provide relief aid to populations affected by conflicts or disasters. Around 1914, after World Wars II, the United Nations (UN) was established to provide humanitarian work until today and this shifted attention to humanitarian crises in developing countries, a proliferation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and a growing emphasis on the humanitarian response to civil wars, internally displaced persons and complex humanitarian emergencies in the world [4]. After the establishment of these organizations, the humanitarian response became well-coordinated and prepared to respond to the global crisis. Humanitarian aid now is responding to needs in conflict or natural disaster situations, supporting displaced populations in acute and protracted crises, risk reduction and preparedness, early recovery, livelihood support, conflict resolution, and peace-building globally [34]. Many relief organizations have played a key role in offering relief assistance to avert hunger and deaths in Africa.

## 6. CONTEMPORARY VIEWS ON HUMANITARIAN FOOD ASSISTANCE

Although humanitarian assistance has evolved in recent years [35], Humanitarian assistance has shifted from just focusing on emergency relief, protection, and shelter to refugee self-reliance and integration through income-generating activities, cash transfers, and market strengthening [36]. Cash transfers as a mode of assistance are emerging in humanitarian settings but in-kind help remains the predominant mode [37]. Food assistance activities promote the safety, dignity, and

integrity of the people receiving assistance while integrating the protection needs of beneficiaries [38]. However, nearly all humanitarian assistance, 94%, has been provided in-kind until recently when there is a shift to cash or vouchers because of the belief that there is less cost in delivering cash or vouchers and cash offers to the beneficiaries [16]. While in-kind and cash transfers have advantages and challenges, they both influence food security outcomes [39,40]. Food in-kind is still effective and acceptable assistance to the refugees because it is readily available to avert hunger and malnutrition. The provision of cash assistance requires a paradigm shift [35]. Food aid has grown beyond the practice of shipping excess raw commodities to delivering food products and other services including cash transfers [23]. Cash Transfer Programme (CTP) is a new growing humanitarian assistance modality that has the potential to provide beneficiaries with choice, strengthen local markets, engage the private sector, and empower people and communities [40,41]. Most countries and donors are moving away from giving commodity-based assistance, such as food aid, to alternative transfer modalities such as cash and vouchers for conflicted affected populations [42]. Cash transfer contributes to alleviating extreme poverty, suffering, and death at household levels. There is strong evidence of the benefits of cash transfers on recipients, including increased food intake, asset ownership, and psychological well-being [43-45]. For example, in Uganda, UNHCR introduced cash-based interventions to increase the protection of refugees by reducing the risk of resorting to harmful coping mechanisms for survival [46]. “Cash transfer is the most effective tool for improving several aspects of food security including access, availability, stability, and utilization [47]. Well-managed cash-based interventions have a multiplier effect, directly benefiting the local economy [46]. According to de Bruin & Becker [48], CBT assistance has been suggested to reduce costs, maximize the number of people reached, and improve diversified diets. For example, in Uganda, cash transfers increased children's consumption of starches, dairy (by 66%), meat (by 100%), and eggs; whereas food had no impact on the frequency of consumption of any of the food groups [20]. In Ukraine, where markets were functional, strong banking systems, several delivery options, and a financially literate population, the cash-based approaches were widely used, and the people

preferred cash assistance to physical goods [26]. The presence of developed markets (availability of food communities), infrastructure like roads, and flexible financial institutions are very key in the rollout and acceptability of cash-based assistance for vulnerable populations affected by either man-made or natural disasters. A study conducted by MacPherson & Sterck, [36] found that cash and vouchers support for refugees led to improved dietary intake as compared to in-kind food because cash/vouchers recipients had a range of choices to make on what foods to buy with the cash received. Regardless of the type and scale of the conflict or disaster, affected populations require urgent and timely food assistance to reduce hunger and prevent malnutrition.

## **7. COMPARATIVE VIEWS ON HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND NUTRITION OUTCOMES**

Although power has often influenced humanitarian assistance, Curtis, [49], noted that the politicization of humanitarian aid is the 'pursuit of domestic and foreign policies of donor governments by humanitarian means. Food is a fundamental right that is also protected under many international, regional, and local frameworks [46]. The Food Aid Convention (FAC), was forged more than 40 years ago between 23 donor countries to use grain surpluses, however, over time, food aid practices in some member states and some donors' policies have changed to include cash transfers within broader definitions of food assistance, basically from food aid to food assistance [50]. For example, the majority of the refugees depend on the general food rations given by WFP because they have limited freedom and access to livelihood opportunities [46]. Other than monthly food rations, non-food items, and multi-sectoral services provided, refugees are allocated land for housing and farming, which are small [51]. The persistence of hunger for large numbers of people justifies the WFP transition from food aid to food assistance in response to a changing context, particularly in post-crisis/non-emergency situations cash [52]. The shift from food aid to food assistance also allows for the inclusion of cash within the scope of food assistance [20].

Increasing conflicts amidst limited funding for emergency programs, has limited humanitarian responses, making the shift to food assistance necessary because food assistance encompasses a range of assistance from giving food in-kind, and cash transfers, to a voucher system. Given the nature of humanitarian crises around the world and massive displacements of populations, humanitarian actors need to adopt a more flexible and acceptable intervention approach to meet the needs of displaced persons.

## **8. IMPLICATIONS OF SHIFTING FROM HUMANITARIAN FOOD AID TO HUMANITARIAN FOOD ASSISTANCE**

Food assistance programs and policies according to Lentz & Barrett, [53], have been rapidly changing to include a range of services from direct food, cash, or voucher transfers, to food subsidies to increase access to the quality and quantity of food consumed and hence improve beneficiaries' health and nutritional status. Hunger and undernutrition can significantly worsen during situations of prolonged conflicts, especially where institutional capacities are weak to provide the needed services for the people [3]. Providing conflicted affected populations with sufficient quantities of safe foods necessary for healthy and sustainable diets at the right time is challenging in some situations [3]. Conflict and political instability are major drivers of undernutrition although the use of cash, as opposed to in-kind delivery, has enhanced dietary diversity [17, 54, 55]. The roll-out of cash transfers to refugees has widened the ability to access varieties of food, even when the markets are not fully developed to provide various foodstuffs. The shift to food assistance has increased flexibility and give beneficiaries the option to choose the type of assistance they want to benefit from.

### **8.1 Aspects of Food Assistance that can Improve the Effectiveness**

Although food assistance is preferred to traditional food aid, a lot needs to be strengthened to improve its effectiveness in humanitarian responses. Based on the literature reviewed, some strategies have proposed as include;

**Table 1. A comparison between food aid and food assistance**

Food aid	Food assistance
<p>Food aid is used to address global nutrition goals, particularly for vulnerable populations of children and reproductive-aged women [23]. Food aid is usually to alleviate temporary food crises and to ensure it is safe for human consumption. It does not focus on sustainability and resilience building. This why according to Harvey [56], food aid is more narrowly defined as internationally funded, concessional food commodities.</p> <p>The large proportion of food aid provided during emergency and refugee settings is primarily to provide food for their nutrition [58]. In emergency settings, food aid is an obvious resource for the nutritional improvement of populations affected by conflicts.</p> <p>Food aid has been given throughout human history mainly to reduce famine and suffering, however, in some situations, political motives have also been in play [59].</p> <p>Food aid has grown beyond the practice of shipping excess raw commodities to delivering food products and other services [23].</p>	<p>Food assistance is a key element of humanitarian aid to conflict-affected populations, intended to promote the survival and growth of infants and young children in vulnerable populations [5,6]. Food assistance is an alternative to food aid because it addresses the food needs of people suffering the effects of disasters and war [20, 56].</p> <p>Food assistance activities including in-kind food transfers, local/regional food assistance procurement, cash, and food vouchers have the potential to successfully address nutrition needs among vulnerable individuals [61].</p>
<p>Food aid is significant for a relatively small number of least-developed countries and accounts for some 30% of all humanitarian aid [60].</p> <p>The recipients of emergency food aid have been mainly the world's poorest countries [12]. Food aid has mainly targeted low-income countries that depend on developed countries.</p>	<p>Humanitarian food assistance is a broader consideration of a set of tools tailored to tackle the diverse causes and symptoms of transient food insecurity [2].</p> <p>Humanitarian food assistance is result-based, measuring outcomes and impact across its operations and using it to inform the design of subsequent humanitarian food assistance interventions [2].</p>
<p>Food aid as a default response to emergency food needs to deliver in-kind commodities [2]. Food aid must be rethought as an economic asset rather than just a means to food security [35]. The scope of food aid support is narrowed to giving physical food items as compared to other non-food items.</p> <p>Food aid promotes local purchases (i.e., purchases in the country of operation) or, secondarily, regional food purchases (i.e., procuring from neighboring countries), to maximize the acceptability of food products, protect or support local markets, and reduce transportation costs and delivery timeframes [2].</p>	<p>In the provision of food assistance, beneficiary communities' involvement in identifying needs, and designing and implementing responses is key. HFA ensures that the special needs of vulnerable groups are within the beneficiary caseloads (e.g., disabled, elderly, chronically ill) and always factored into the design of humanitarian food assistance responses.</p> <p>HFA mainstreams gender considerations within humanitarian food-needs assessments, in the design of humanitarian food assistance responses, and in analyzing their impact [2].</p>
<p>Tied food aid is often deemed to compromise efficiency, appropriateness, and effectiveness because it does not take into consideration the use of varied food assistance response options, according to the needs.</p>	<p>HFA ensures that short-term and longer-term food security needs are addressed in an integrated and articulated way to prevent gaps in assistance, prevent duplication, ensure continuity, and maximize sustainability.</p> <p>Humanitarian food assistance is used to protect and strengthen the livelihoods of a crisis-affected population, to prevent or reverse negative coping mechanisms (such as the sale of productive assets, or the accumulation of debts) that could engender either short-term or longer-term harmful consequences for their livelihood base, their food-security status or their nutritional status.</p>

According to [56], food assistance should be more clearly linked to the expansion of social assistance within national social protection strategies; more clearly linked to the overall nutrition strategies that address treatment as

well as underlying causes, and a new food security architecture which incorporates food assistance should be developed. All aspects of food security at all levels other than just food in-kind, cash, or vouchers should be considered a

priority as well. For example, access to land, tools, water, clothing, skills, and knowledge, protection and security of affected persons, psychosocial support, relations with host communities, access to education services, access to primary and secondary health care services, etc, all contribute to ensuring food security for vulnerable persons affected by made-made or natural disaster is attained. The fact that refugees depend on food assistance, they have limited purchasing power, and restricted access to local markets, land, and water for agriculture, and they are prone to developing malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies [57]. Therefore, the economic concepts of food aid disbursement suggest that the distribution of cash, perhaps alongside other programs to maintain food in local markets, would be a better way to secure refugee entitlement [62]. Other than food aid, income generating and livelihood opportunities be promoted to avoid dependence on food and build resilience.

Food and nutrition security is achieved only when there is adequate, safe, and nutritious food is available, accessible, and utilized by all individuals at all times to keep them healthy and productive [25]. To address the emergency food and nutrition security and livelihood concerns of refugees in Uganda, FAO, provided planting materials and inputs for small-scale vegetable, staple food, and poultry production, along with training in entrepreneurship and animal husbandry practices for the refugees [47]. This intervention aimed at increasing access to livelihood opportunities for refugees who depend on food assistance only. However, several views on food assistance exist in the literature, ranging from broad conceptualizations that encompass all food security interventions to narrower approaches that focus on specific tools and partnerships [56]. Evidence has shown that in Uganda, about 58% of refugees were not doing any economic activity, 24% of the refugees do farming activities and only 10% do small businesses, the majority of the refugees depend on food assistance for their daily livelihood [63]. This demonstrates that food assistance should incorporate other complementary programs for effectiveness in emergency contexts.

Monitoring the adequacy of food consumption is a vital management tool in the management of nutrition [64]. For example, the WFP market price analysis indicates an increase in food

prices since January 2019, so, refugees are already experiencing rising food prices [30]. Food intake monitoring offers evidence of the benefits of food assistance provided to crisis-affected populations. For example, according to Webb [65], implementing agencies lack a method for differentiating households at varying degrees of food insecurity to target and evaluate their interventions better. Food insecurity is a daily reality for hundreds of millions of people around the world and when interventions are not well thought out and tracked, creating impact becomes difficult.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The strategic shift from food aid to food assistance has the potential to enhance effectiveness in addressing hunger because there is increased use of non-food aid in operational modalities and other initiatives to enhance local production and purchase, and the use of vouchers and cash transfers in humanitarian response. Populations affected by conflicts and disasters need food assistance to avert hunger and death. Malnutrition among refugee children is one of the serious public health issues as well as the most prevalent cause of morbidity and mortality among young children in refugee situations. Communities caught up in conflict situations, usually lack access to adequate food, shelter, water, and protection services. Therefore, food assistance becomes a priority intervention and a requirement for humanitarian response.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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