CHAPTER - 6

IMPACT OF FOOD AID ON
DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF THE STATE
Food Aid and Development

The food aid regime began operating on the principles that food aid will be provided from donor country surplus as additional imports, on a bilateral basis, to feed the hungry people and serve political goals. However, criticism of this system has led to a shift in the guiding principles to include efficiency and development effectiveness. The older principles not altogether abandoned have been suspended by newer ones. "The changes in food aid which make it a more limited but developmentally targeted resource, one increasingly integrated with other financial resources were not envisioned by its political designs thirty years ago".1

Food aid plays an important role in the economies of the developing food deficit countries. One of the most important longer-term objectives of food aid is to be of use for developmental work. But food aid is a controversial form of developmental assistance. It has been accused of being doubly tied to both origin and commodity, of discouraging local production, of disrupting commercial trade and of causing distortions and dependency within the recipient economies. Among the arguments against it, it is pointed out that the political and commercial motives that sustain food aid flows has a possible disincentive to local agriculture and the risk of increasing dependence on imported foods.

The above mentioned dangers cannot and should not be ignored, but the value of food aid deserves equal prominence. Food aid does play an important role in feeding the poor, saving lives in emergencies and

enabling countries to achieve economic growth and greater social equity. Unlike most financial loans (or grants), food aid tends to be used in support of activities of direct benefit to very food-insecure people in food–deficit countries, often as a wage resource that transfers income to poor households through labour-intensive work programs. Food aid is also used as an incentive to children and mothers to attend school or health clinics.2

Food aid can be particularly aimed at benefiting those most in need of food. Countries with overall food trade deficits and with unemployment problems can do well with food aid for development purposes. The need for employment growth especially through labour using techniques fits well with the prescription that food aid be integrated with financial resources and used where disincentives are avoided, such as ‘food for work’ projects.

Meeting food emergencies necessarily may do nothing to reduce future food aid needs. A country unable to import food commercially this year may be even less able to do so next year. Similarly a family too poor to buy food now may grow even poorer. Dealing with today’s emergencies does not necessarily prevent tomorrow’s causes: therefore, symptoms of poverty, and hunger must be addressed. There has therefore been a strong trend in the post 1980s to treat food aid less as a welfare handout and more as a resource for economic and social development. This trend has effected not only project food aid but also, to some extent programme and emergency food aid.

This trend, however, has not yet succeeded in erasing the persistent image of food aid as just give away from surplus stuff. Nevertheless, it has revealed the great variety of ways, some quite creative in which food aid can be used to promote development and support lasting solutions to hunger and poverty. In order to use food aid to combat hunger and poverty it should be made a part of national development plans and programmes, specifically aimed at those objectives. The United Nations Committee for Development Planning (CDP)\textsuperscript{3} has proposed four interrelated key elements for such a strategy:

- Accelerated economic growth,
- Greater concern for human development,
- Absolute reduction in the number of people suffering from severe poverty,
- Deprivation and restraining deterioration of the physical environment.

The CDP emphasises that these four elements should not be seen as separate issues to be addressed independently but should form four strands of a coherent approach to development.

However, food aid supply is determined partly by the Food Aid Convention, which sets a pledging floor to which individual donor countries commit themselves for a number of years. The extent to which donors exceed that floor is determined by a multitude of market forces, donor policies, and international priorities.\textsuperscript{4}


\textsuperscript{4} Webb., n. 2.
Food aid can play a major role in Sub-Saharan Africa in addressing the problem of hunger and poverty. This is possible only if donors and recipients are determined to apply it to eliminate hunger and poverty on a lasting and sustainable basis through broad based economic growth that respects the natural resource base and builds on the capacities of all people including the poor.

There is a general expectation that food aid budgets will decline, and the projected needs of countries outside Sub-Saharan Africa (Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union) increase. Given this background, there is concern that the pressing political and humanitarian need to meet relief requirements will jeopardise development programs that seek to overcome chronic vulnerability. Emergency aid is assuming greater importance within aid agencies, attracting additional resources and attention.

Since due to a resource crunch staff levels at most aid agencies have been frozen or even reduced, this shift towards emergency aid must inevitably result in decreased attention to developmental assistance to overcome chronic vulnerability. Even if resource flows to development activities remain unaffected, the benefits of those resources may be reduced because less staff time is available to ensure that resources are used in the most effective and creative manner.\(^5\) Increasing pressure to meet immediate relief needs may similarly divert the resources of national governments.

This shift in emphasis from chronic to transitory food insecurity is occurring despite much recent work pointing to the complex interrelationships between the different causes of chronic under-nutrition.

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\(^5\) Hopkins, n. 2.
and hence the need for more sophisticated approaches. Just as the causes of vulnerability to chronic food insecurity was better understood, fewer resources and less manpower and attention may be available to help fight the problem.⁶

**Development through Food Aid**

Food Aid has supported a number of development strategies for the alleviation of Poverty and achieving Food Security. This has been achieved through various programmes and strategies that are discussed below.

**Food-Aided Works Programs**

Food-for-work (FFW) programs have done much to alleviate Poverty and increase food security. FFW programs are labour intensive works implemented by poor households and communities. Such programs result in additional consumption by participants whose income is too low for them to buy sufficient food for a healthy and fully productive life. These works also result in an addition in their incomes. This multifaceted additionality of FFW programs permits the extension of the limits of consumption, income, employment, and investment beyond what would have been possible without the programs.⁷

But FFW programs encounter a great deal of problems in Sub-Saharan Africa because the rural poor are scattered over vast areas and therefore, the programs have been relatively small and costly. As

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⁷ Ibid., p. 261.
compared to Asia the FFW programs have been less structured in Sub-Saharan Africa.8

A review of FFW conducted in 1990 by Bryson, Chudy and Pines9 observed that the WFP and Non governmental organisations (NGOs) use FFW in development projects and emergency operations as a mode of food aid delivery that requires work from the recipient for the food received. This was regarded as an effective way to reach the truly needy in poor households and communities in food-deficit areas. The review found that FFW was successful in reaching poor areas and people, including women.

Development benefits improved significantly when food was combined with other resources (tools, materials, technical and administrative supervision), and when FFW activities were co-ordinated with the development program of the recipient government. The review recommended using FFW in conjunction with other activities (for example, mother and child supplementary feeding programs) to provide sustainability through the creation of employment, income, and assets and to better target benefits to the poor.

Food Aid, Development and Relief

Conditions in Many Sub-Saharan countries, especially in the poorest call for assistance that explicitly supports activities in the area of disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation, and rehabilitation. It has been stressed time and again that even though emergency Ad-hoc relief is necessary in the short run, other measures are required to ensure that such emergency situations do not recur. The need is for developmental

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9 John Shaw., n. 2, p. 262.
measures that can attack the root causes of food shortages. Many Donor and aid agencies are therefore focusing on disaster mitigation, and rehabilitation activities as major elements of their assistance programs. Because these activities are often labour intensive and carried out in areas with food shortages, food aid is a particularly suitable form of assistance when labour needs to be mobilised and income provided.

Over one half of food aid to Sub-Saharan Africa over the period 1988-1992 was for the victims of natural disasters and civil conflicts. In consultation with Other United Nations organisations and IFPRI, WFP has given special consideration to developing an approach to disaster mitigation and rehabilitation in Sub-Saharan Africa. The WFP will examine on a regular basis how the development projects it assists might be used to mitigate the effects of disasters and, conversely the extent to which the large flow of emergency food aid to Africa might serve both relief and development purposes. "There is an increasingly close bond between poverty and vulnerability to recurring emergencies, particularly those caused by drought. If the food security needs of the most vulnerable people was improved at the household and community level through development projects, the continued need for emergency assistance would be considerably reduced".

This development approach of food aid focuses on supporting national disaster mitigation and rehabilitation strategies and programs. These strategies and programs wind through labour intensive works that simultaneously aim at immediate employment and income, alleviation of poverty, strengthening self-help capacity and provide construction and improvement of infrastructure (particularly to increase agricultural

10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p. 263.
production), stimulate rural development, and strengthen protective measures against drought and other disasters. Together, these labour intensive developmental works programs, targeted food, and income and health interventions could improve the well being of the poor and enable them to withstand future food shortages.

Development projects should be so designed that they increase the resistance of the vulnerable people to face periods of emergencies. These development projects should expand rapidly when emergencies occur to provide additional food and employment when food production and income collapses. In Burkina Faso and Ghana for example, WFP responded to the need for rapid food relief in 1991 by enlarging ongoing food-aided development projects, rather than by providing emergency food aid. In a rural works program in drought prone areas of Sudan, WFP is supporting labour-intensive activities that increase employment and incomes during lean seasons, provide rural community facilities, and improve water supplies. In a multipurpose project for rural development in Djibouti, a FFW program is creating more employment opportunities in rural areas and reducing the need for recurrent emergency food aid.12

All these efforts support the coping strategies of the poor vulnerable households and communities faced with hunger. Employment has been provided during the long agricultural off-season and in times of emergency to strengthen the local infrastructure's ability to sustain economic activities. This has checked the movement of people in search of food and work, thereby keeping the household unit intact and assisting the process of rehabilitation and eventually, development. This also

12 Ibid., p. 264
checks the pressure on valuable food resources, exerted due to the dislocation of refugees, on neighbouring areas.

There are countries in Sub-Saharan Africa where the situation of food insecurity exists not because of drought or disasters alone but due to civil strife and prolonged war between warring clans, tribes or groups. In such countries where food shortages are acute, but purchasing power exists, distribution of free emergency food aid is not always appropriate. In such situations emergency food aid may be sold through the market. Here the development approach of food aid would help meet food needs, restrain price inflation, encourage the revitalisation of market institutions and generate local currencies that can be used for humanitarian or reconstruction purposes.

Food aid is vital for survival in the case of refugees and displaced persons. For instance, in a WFP assisted project for refugees and displaced people in Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone, many of the beneficiaries are engaged in a wide variety of productive, self-employment and income-generating activities. These are meant for the development of basic community infrastructure, agriculture, water supply systems, small-scale livestock, trade and transport. The WFP ration scale of the basic commodities is being closely monitored and periodically reviewed with the aim of being gradually reduced as the refugees and displaced persons progressively work toward the goals of relative food security and economic self-sufficiency.

Therefore, emergency food aid must be provided to overcome emergencies where necessary to ensure survival. But in order that food aid provides the optimal benefit to the beneficiaries, it should be used in ways that promotes self-reliance and help alleviate the root cause of such emergencies, support national food security and reinforce long term development efforts.
It is important to note here that the effectiveness of the national governments, the bureaucracy, local administration, technical services and infrastructure development are an important requirement if development projects are to be speedily implemented when disasters strike. The afflicted population then can be quickly employed in construction projects and assisted with food aid to provide sustenance and income. People would then be less likely to leave their homes in search of work or relief, their health would be protected and household assets would be protected. Such effective disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation activities requires a state of national readiness to meet emergencies and will require a training programme for personnel at all levels.

Food Aid for Environmentally Sustainable Development.
The environmental price of food production is the loss of natural vegetation and biological diversity, soil erosion, and surface and groundwater depletion. Inevitably, there are divergent views about how land should be used - whether for industrial crops, food, nature conservation or industry. These conflicts exist for coastal and inland areas and common property resources such as forests, grazing lands and even oceans.

Experience has shown that countries in which there is good governance reap the benefits through more stable and sustainable economic growth. This involves promoting dialogue with all interest groups and sharing decision-making authority and control over resource allocation to district and local levels. A more enlightened role of government also implies working side-by-side with NGOs, farmers’ associations and the private sector. The marginalisation of women from decisions and resources also has numerous negative effects on food production. Government is in the best position to assist women in
sensitising them to environmental concerns by promoting interventions that improve their access to education and training, energy resources, and credit.

For economic, political, food security or other reasons, many countries will continue to promote policies that are expedient in the short-term, but eventually become environmentally degrading and contribute little to sustainable economic development. Whereas regulatory (command and control) structures often create new problems, fiscal measures to promote environmentally friendly techniques and economic incentives have been found to be cost-effective in correcting policy and market failures.¹³

Countries of Sub-Saharan Africa need to promote and support activities for environmentally sustainable development. These pertain to forestry, watershed management and associated soil conservation works, increasing agricultural productivity that includes training of farmers in sustainable agricultural techniques, and range-land management. Food aid can be greatly influential in aiding these activities. Food aid can help offset the local costs of environment protection works at the household, community and national levels. These works under the Food for Work programme are largely labour intensive and can be carried out by unemployed and underemployed workers when there is a dearth of productive work. Employment thus provided can help address the seasonal dimension of hunger and poverty by providing food and work during the most needed off-season. As such activities are often required in poor marginal areas, the provision of food and employment are

automatically targeted at the weakest and poorest most vulnerable households and communities.

...Development activities designed to protect or improve the environment must also address the issues of food security and poverty if they are to be sustained. Therefore, development assistance should focus on enabling the poor food insecure people to be more productive and to obtain assets such as technical skills or essential material goods. Only then will they be able to cope with difficulties and provide sustenance for themselves without degrading the environment.

**Gender and Development**

Women are a key part of the solution to hunger. They shoulder a major share of the responsibilities for household food security, and experience has shown that resources in the hands of women often have a greater nutritional benefit to children than the same resources controlled by men. They are more likely than men to spend a given income on food for the family. Thus, resources for women represent resources for food security. Successful development for women does not stop at the individual; it benefits whole households and communities. Reducing gender disparities by enhancing the human and physical resources commanded by women leads to growth in household agricultural productivity, greater income and better food and nutrition security for all. 

What is more, educating mothers is especially important to reducing child mortality. Educated women are more likely to have the status and power in a household to ensure prenatal care, delivery care, childhood immunisations, better diets for children and even better

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housing. Educated mothers are also more likely to be an effective agent of social change, encouraging their own girls to attend school and playing a crucial role in community development as a whole.

Although there has been much recognition of the role of women in food security programmes, there remains a great deal of tokenism in supporting and strengthening their activities. Women continue to be helped through projects exclusively for them, thereby marginalising their impact.

According to Shaw\textsuperscript{15}, a review of WFP-assisted development projects focussed on women has shown that

\begin{itemize}
  \item Such projects are neither automatically gender responsive nor necessarily beneficial to women;
  \item Socio-economic expertise and guidance is needed in the design, implementation and evaluation of such projects;
  \item Social empowerment and economic viability are often difficult to achieve simultaneously through women’s groups;
  \item Economic enterprises that benefit women should not be under-capitalised; and
  \item The outreach capacity of mainstream economic institutions should be strengthened to deliver
  \item Inputs and services to poor women.
\end{itemize}

Food aid, as one of several resources supporting change among hungry households, often reaches hungry women better than the capital flows that make up close to 95 percent of total development assistance. In short, the self-targeting potential of food aid makes it well suited to expanded use as a kind of resource window for women and others among the very poor.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Shaw, p267.
Food Security and The Role of the State

Food insecurity operates at three levels: individuals and households, nation-states, and the international system. To alleviate food insecurity in today's world there is a need to focus on national policies to enhance food security.

When food is in short supply or food consumption consumes a large part of the population's income, control over prices and marketing along with supply is an essential and powerful state instrument. How food is distributed affects fundamentally the distribution of privilege and a society's prospects for political and social stability. Where political power limits access to markets except through fixed channels, whether of state buying authorities or favoured middlemen, small producer income usually suffers. This increases the potential for mass discontent. When food supplies are unreliable, stability is also affected. In the wake of food shortages, mid 1970 governments in Ethiopia and Niger were overturned. In other parts of the world, merely the threat of food price rises fomented violent demonstrations in Egypt in 1977, Liberia in 1979, and in Tunisia, Morocco and the Dominican Republic in 1984.\(^\text{17}\)

In Sub-Saharan Africa there are basic weaknesses in the structure and performance of the agricultural sector, official food marketing and distribution systems, infrastructure, and government policies. These weaknesses, as mentioned in earlier chapters, have been exacerbated by rapid population growth, increased demand for food, serious natural calamities, economic turmoil, and political unrest or civil strife in the region. Governments of Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the international

community are not in a position to ignore this situation. The governments of Sub-Saharan Africa have responded by making food self-sufficiency a major national objective and in most cases have formulated strategies for increased domestic production. However, few, if any, governments have additional resources available to implement these programs. Hence, there are limited and tough choices for the states of the region.

The norms and expectations governing food security "must reflect an understanding of the way in which state action to provide food security has shifted substantially over the last several centuries. A changing state role and people's expectations about their state's food-security responsibilities have made food security a practical test of whether a government is a success or a failure."18 Therefore, ensuring food security ensures political stability in the state and cannot be neglected by any political power.

The state and government have to play a major role in bringing about food security in Sub-Saharan countries. The state is capable of using a wide range of mechanisms for intervention and can operate in multiple areas. It is only the state or the government of a country that is capable of providing the basic mechanisms for countering food insecurity. "Ultimately, however, in order to achieve food security, insecure states must establish and carry out national policies to improve their adaptive capacity."19

The state can help in the following ways:

- Formalisation of policies
- The creation of conducive and enabling environments for food production and distribution.
- Direct support and assistance

18 Ibid., p. 5.
19 Ibid., p. 4
• Definition of long-term goals and objectives.

There are however, no universally valid prescriptions determining the precise form and content of state action. Instead, the substantive nature of state involvement depends on local, national and international factors. What is certain however, is that in the final instance, it is the state that must define the spatial, temporal and sectoral vectors of its intervention. To do this, it must first identify goals and objectives and then assess the most effective national and sub-national strategies for attaining them. In determining the limits of its intervention, the state must also ensure that other sectors and groups are able to act where required.

There is then, no standard model. A country with a highly developed and efficient private sector will demand very different forms of state intervention than a country with a small, dysfunctional and/or under-developed private sector. Similarly, a state in a country with an organised and participatory civil society may be required to intervene differently from one in a country where civil society is perhaps unwilling or unable to participate in decision-making processes. Therefore, national and local conditions must shape final solutions.20

One of the biggest challenges facing the state therefore is to determine the extent and nature of its intervention in the food security process. "Governments have a bewildering array of potential policy options: Should they intervene in production and distribution? Should they leave the market to work, as it will? Conversely, should they act as a

private producer who profits from food production? Or should they control production and distribution for political and social reasons?"21

There are certain guidelines that can assist the state in deciding the most effective form of involvement. Included within this list are the facts that:

- To be effective, food security initiatives must be sustainable
- Development of infrastructure such as roads, canals, power, and markets, provide a platform for developmental work
- Information is one of the most vital ingredients for effective decision-making
- Science and technology must be mobilised in the struggle for food security
- Development must be gender-equal
- Alliances and participation can only occur when suitable institutional spaces exist

The role of the state in a changing Sub-Saharan Africa

The growing consensus regarding the benefits of political and economical decentralisation and privatisation introduces new considerations into the food security equation. Scholars are now of the view that certain functions can be performed more efficiently and effectively by local and/or non-state groups. There is however, no consensus regarding precisely which roles and which activities. Again, there are no universally valid formulae. Instead, the demarcation of public/private and central/local roles depends on national and local capacities, institutions and cultures. Nonetheless, every context has an optimal arrangement between these two sets of competing choices. The challenge facing decision and policy-makers concerns the identification and implementation of that context’s most appropriate solution.

There is increasing advocacy for the notion that a function should be performed at the lowest level within a system at which it can still be

performed effectively. The decision regarding who performs a function and where and how a given function is performed should be based on the capacity and willingness of different sectors to assume new roles, functions and responsibilities. Similarly, processes and functions should not necessarily be viewed as fixed and self-contained units. In many instances, processes and decisions can be subdivided, or disintegrate, into their constituent components.

There are then, many difficult and complex decisions, to be made by the state. And it must ensure that all strategies and initiatives are sustainable. They must therefore, be suited to national and local capacities and must be able to continue without excessive future inputs or support. It is therefore necessary to examine the precise possibilities available to the state in more detail. We have noted that the state has various options. It can for example, provide direct assistance or it can construct necessary enabling environments.22

The historic dichotomies of national / local and state / non-state are increasingly redundant. Processes can and should be undertaken by a combination of national and local, and state and non-state factors and groups. As a result, one must respect the complementarity and multiplicity of state/ non-state arrangements. There is no longer a simple choice between one or the other. Instead there are an infinite number of possible arrangements linking the state with non-state sectors. The challenge facing policy-makers is to identify the most appropriate option.

Therefore, we can say that; governments bear the greatest responsibility for ensuring food security at the global, national and local

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22 FAO (Rural Development Division). "Food Security and the State: Responsibility and Partnership", SD DIMENSIONS (Internet).
Levels; and the precise form, extent and function of government involvement is determined by the combination of global and exclusively local factors and conditions.

There has never been a better time for the definition of goals and objectives. The 1996 World Food Summit has provided governments with a unique opportunity. The preparatory phases has brought all sectors of the national and international communities together in search of the objectives, perspectives and commitments that should shape the world community's battle for food security.23

Governments are not alone in their struggle for food security. Indeed, in many cases, they must not act alone. Instead, they must incorporate partners, such as non-governmental organisations, International Aid agencies and voluntary organisations, and form alliances and coalitions, where appropriate, in order to ensure the successful accomplishment of these objectives. Partnerships engender many benefits. They can lead to increased scale economies; they can provide a wider resource base and augment the sum of information available to decision-makers. They can also satisfy growing calls for participation and can produce clear efficiency gains.

Potential partners span all sectors and exist at all levels of the global system. They range from inter-governmental organisations and international non-governmental organisations and business enterprises to village groups attempting to improve, for example, local irrigation management and even, a community's oldest resident, wizened by age.

23 Ibid.
and a lifetime's labour, yet the container for the experience and knowledge of this and former generations.\textsuperscript{24}

There are agencies dedicated exclusively to assisting governments in their individual and collective struggles for food security such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the World Food Programme. The World Food Programme is the largest international organisation dedicated to the alleviation of hunger and poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Despite the controversies attached to it, food aid plays an important role in the economies of Sub-Saharan Africa. One of the most important longer-term objectives of food aid is to be of use for developmental work. Among the arguments against it, it is pointed out that the political and commercial motives that sustain food aid flows has a possible disincentive to local agriculture and the risk of increasing dependence on imported foods.

The above mentioned dangers cannot and should not be ignored, but the value of food aid deserves equal prominence. Food aid does play an important role in feeding the poor, saving lives in emergencies and enabling countries to achieve economic growth and greater social equity. Food aid can be particularly aimed at benefiting those most in need of food. Countries with overall food trade deficits and with unemployment problems can do well with food aid for development purposes. The need for employment growth especially through labour using techniques fits well with the prescription that food aid be integrated

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
with financial resources and used where disincentives are avoided, such as 'food for work' projects.

There has been a strong trend in the post 1980s to treat food aid less as a welfare handout and more as a resource for economic and social development. This trend, however, has not yet succeeded in erasing the persistent image of food aid as just give away from surplus stuff. In order to use food aid to combat hunger and poverty it should be made a part of national development plans and programmes, specifically aimed at hunger and poverty alleviation. This is possible only if donors and recipients are determined to apply it to eliminate hunger and poverty on a lasting and sustainable basis through broad based economic growth that respects the natural resource base and builds on the capacities of all people including the poor.

Women's role in food security has been neglected in the past and receives inadequate attention even today. As discussed in earlier chapters, women constitute a majority of the land-less and small holding farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, resources for women represent resources for food security. Reducing gender disparities by enhancing the human and physical resources commanded by women leads to growth in household agricultural productivity, greater income and better food and nutrition security for all. Although there has been much recognition of the role of women in food security programmes, women continue to be helped through projects exclusively for them, thereby marginalising their impact.

For economic, political, food security or other reasons, many countries will continue to promote policies that are expedient in the short-term, but eventually become environmentally degrading and contribute little to sustainable economic development. Whereas regulatory (command and control) structures often create new problems, fiscal
measures to promote environmentally friendly techniques and economic incentives have been found to be cost-effective in correcting policy and market failures. Therefore, the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa need to use food aid to promote and support activities for environmentally sustainable development. These pertain to forestry, watershed management and associated soil conservation works, increasing agricultural productivity that includes training of farmers in sustainable agricultural techniques, and range-land management.

The norms and expectations governing Food security must reflect an understanding of the way in which state action to provide food security has shifted substantially over the last several centuries. The changing state role and people's expectations about their state's food-security responsibilities have made food security a practical test of whether a government is a success or a failure. Therefore, ensuring food security ensures political stability in the state and cannot be neglected by any political power.

The state and government have to play a major role in bringing about food security in Sub-Saharan countries. It is only the state or the government of a country that is capable of providing the basic mechanisms for countering food insecurity. However, the governments of Sub-Saharan Africa have been successfully able to attack food insecurity with technical monetary and human resource help from international as well as national institutions and agencies (such as FAO, WFP, OXFAM, CARE and other NGOs). These agencies are dedicated exclusively to assisting governments in their individual and collective struggles for food security.

There are however, no universally valid prescriptions determining the precise form and content of state action. Instead, the substantive nature of state involvement depends on local, national and international
factors. One of the biggest challenges facing the state therefore is to determine the extent and nature of its intervention in the food security process. Governments bear the greatest responsibility for ensuring food security at the national and local levels; and the precise form, extent and function of government involvement has to be determined by the combination of global and exclusively local factors and conditions.

In doing so, African nations will have to overcome such obstacles as drought, civil war, foreign debt, and economic depression in achieving food for all. Food and nutritional security in Sub Saharan Africa can be markedly improved by political will and commitment and the formulation of well-conceived policies and concerted actions at national and international levels.