

The Role of World Food Program (WFP) in Overcoming The Food Crisis In Syria 2021-2022

Syazwana Mutiara sf

Universitas Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran” Jawa Timur

Email: Syazwanamutiara24@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research discusses the role of the World Food Program (WFP) in dealing with the food crisis in Syria in 2021-2022. The armed conflict that has been going on for a decade has caused a prolonged food crisis and economic crisis. Government policies that cannot handle the crisis experienced by their country, so the WFP as an international organization helps Syria in handling the crisis through the distribution of ground assistance. This research aims to find out what the WFP is doing to help overcome the food crisis in 2021-2022. This research also uses the theory of the role and function of international organizations. This research is a descriptive qualitative research with data collection methods using library research techniques and documentary studies. The result of this research is that WFP as an international organization in handling the food crisis in Syria acts as an instrument, arena and independent actor. These roles are seen in the implementation of WFP programs in Syria. WFP's main programs are Emergency Operation (EMOP), Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO), and Special Operation (SO). In 2020, the effectiveness of this program was almost invisible due to the emergence of Covid-19 which impacted the following year. This is because with the changes in operational procedures when implementing the program, health regulations must be followed to avoid the spread of Covid-19. WFP's role can be measured and seen from the actual implementation of its programs, depending on the conditions and situations.

Keywords: *Food crisis, International Organization, Role Theory*

INTRODUCTION

This paper explains the role of the World Food Programme (WFP) in addressing the food crisis in Syria in 2021-2022. A food crisis is a food shortage experienced by most people in an area, due to food distribution difficulties, the impact of climate change, natural disasters, environmental disasters, and social conflicts, including the impact of war (UU,2012). There are three conditions under which a country can be considered a food crisis area. First, there is a decrease in the availability of basic foodstuffs for most people within a certain period of time. Second, food prices skyrocket within a certain period of time. Third, a decrease in the consumption of staple foods by most people to meet food needs according to nutritional norms (PP,2015). Syria has been experiencing these three conditions since 2011.

The Syrian Arab Republic is located in the Middle East with Damascus as its capital. Syria covers an area of 185,180 square kilometers with a population of approximately 21.1

million people (BBC,2023). The 2011 Syrian civil war was triggered by the conflict between President Bashar al-Assad and pro-democracy protesters. This led to a food crisis in Syria. The conflict began in March 2011, when 15 Syrian schoolchildren were arrested and tortured after writing graffiti inspired by the Arab Spring. The arrests sparked popular outrage. Before the conflict began, many Syrians complained about high unemployment, corruption and lack of political freedom under President Bashar al-Assad.

Seeing the severe condition of the students after being released from prison made the parents of the students ask the government to take responsibility for the torture of underage students. Massive demonstrations took place and the government solved the problem by deploying soldiers and killing civilians (WFP,n.d). These events led to massive demonstrations in cities across Syria, which led to the civil war that continues to this day. The ongoing conflict has left around half of the Syrian population in need of humanitarian assistance. As many as 11.3 million Syrians have lost their jobs, homes, food supplies and are suffering from malnutrition. The lack of basic food supplies and soaring food prices in Syria have made it difficult for most people to eat and experience hunger. The worsening fighting situation has prompted many Syrians to flee to safer areas. By the end of 2021, 6.8 million people were internally displaced and 5.5 million Syrians had fled to other countries (WFP,2021).

The food crisis worsened in 2020 as prices of key foods reached unprecedented levels. The price of basic necessities in Syria has risen 20-fold in a fairly short period of time. The combination of economic stagnation, the collapse of the Lebanese economy which is important to Syria, and the lockdown due to Covid-19 has caused food prices to increase by more than 200 percent in less than a year. The price of a basket of staples rose from 4,000 Syrian pounds to 76,000 pounds. Within six months, 1.4 million Syrians have become more vulnerable to hunger (WFP,2021).

The long-standing food crisis in Syria has prompted WFP, which is the world's largest international food organization, to launch a food aid program in Syria. The project works with 32 partners to provide monthly meals to 4.5 million people in Syria. WFP provides support by concentrating basic food assistance for people who are vulnerable to the food crisis. The assistance provided by WFP does not just provide food, but also supports communities in meeting food needs by finding livelihoods. WFP also helps meet the nutritional needs of children and pregnant and lactating mothers. Finally WFP provides logistical assistance and emergency services to humanitarian partners in various fields.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive analysis approach. The object of research is the international organization WFP. The purpose of this research covers

WFP's efforts to overcome the food crisis in Syria. Information was collected through books, journals, academic texts and reliable online news to support the analysis in this research. In this research, the author uses the concept of the function and role of international organizations. The role and function of International Organizations can be understood through the views of several experts who focus on the study of International Organizations. An International Organization that is functional must have a task in carrying out its activities. The purpose of the function is to achieve the desired goals related to providing assistance in overcoming problems that arise in related parties. In this research, the author takes the theory of the functions and roles of International Organizations from Clive Archer.

According to Clive Archer (1983), in general, the functions of international organizations can be divided into nine functions, namely:

1. Articulation and aggregation. International organizations serve as a tool for states to express and combine their interests, and can express their own interests. International organizations are one of the ways institutionalism takes place among active participants in the international system, serving as a venue for discussion and negotiation.
2. International Norms. Organizations are entities that act as actors, meeting places, and influential tools in normative activities in the global political system. For example, in establishing values or principles of non-differentiation.
3. Recruitment International organizations play a crucial role in bringing in or recruiting participants in the international political system.
4. Socialization. Socialization is a planned effort to convey values to all members of a system. The process of socialization at the international level affects individuals or groups in several countries and among representatives of countries in international organizations. International institutions therefore play a role in enhancing cooperation and promoting acceptance.
5. Regulators The global system does not have a global government, so global decision-making generally relies on previous practices, ad hoc agreements, or international institutions.
6. Implementation of regulations The implementation of decisions of international organizations is generally left to sovereign states. In practice, the application regulated by international organizations is often limited to supervision, while implementation is vested in member states.
7. Endorsement of regulations. International organizations are responsible for validating the rules of the international system. The judiciary handles the adjudication process without adequate institutional support and coercive power, so it is only visible when there is a conflict between state parties.
8. Information International organizations search, collect, process and disseminate information.
9. Operational. International organizations perform various operational functions that are similar to those of governments. The organization of international work can be seen in the assistance provided by UNHCR to refugees, the allocation of funds by the World Bank, the protection of children by UNICEF, and so on.

According to Clive Archer (2005), the role of international organizations can be divided into three categories, namely:

1. As an instrument. Member states use International

Organizations to achieve specific foreign policy goals. 2.As an arena. International organizations are arenas where members come together to discuss and address their problems. Each international organization is used by some countries to fight for domestic issues or problems in other countries to attract international attention. 3.As an independent actor. International organizations have the ability to make decisions independently without being influenced by external forces or pressures.

As an International Organization, WFP needs public support to address the global food and hunger crisis. Addressing poverty is inseparable from WFP's role and purpose. WFP provides financial and food assistance to Syrians who are starving due to lack of food supply. WFP acts as an independent actor that not only meets the food needs of its member countries, but also has the independence to make decisions in providing food aid according to applicable procedures. In this situation, WFP can request contributions and collection of funds from the international community to help Syria through the WFP assistance program.

In this study, researchers used a descriptive analysis method. Descriptive analysis research is research that describes and summarizes various conditions, situations, or social phenomena in society that are the focus of research, and tries to present these things as characteristics, characters, traits, models, signs, or descriptions of certain conditions, situations, or phenomena (Bungin,2011). The picture will be analyzed in accordance with the data collected and drawn conclusions into a research result.

DISCUSSION

Syria is one of the countries in the Middle East bordering the Mediterranean Sea, located between Lebanon and Turkey. Syria covers an area of 187,473 km². It is bordered by five countries, including Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey (U.S Dpartment,2009,).As of July 2022, the estimated population of Syria is around 22,462,173 people. Arabs, who make up the majority, dominate the ethnic groups with 50% of the total Syrian population. Most Syrians follow Islam, making up 87% of the total population. Syria was a French colony that gained independence on April 17, 1946 but experienced political instability and military coups. In 1958, Syria joined Egypt to form the United Arab Republic. However, the two countries agreed to separate in 1961 and the Syrian Arab Republic reestablished itself. Under the leadership of Hafiz Al-Asad, Syria began to achieve political stability in 1970. After his death, his son Bashar Al-Asad succeeded him. A referendum in July 2000 approved Bashar's election. In May 2007, Bashar returned to the presidency, the conflict started a civil war that still destabilizes the country today.

The ongoing war in Syria since 2011 has left the country devastated in many areas until now. Before the onset of the conflict, economic inequality in Syria already existed

between the rich and the common people. During the reign of Bashar Al-Asad, the economic situation worsened with a decline in GDP per capita from 1980 to 1990. During his presidential bid, Bashar promised a change from a centralized system to a socialist economic system. However, the existence of this system further worsened Syria's economic situation with widespread corruption. This economic system also increased the unemployment rate every year.

The confusion between population growth and employment opportunities has complicated the problem of poverty. In 2004, 39.7% of the total workforce in Syria was employed in the service sector. However, the system of corruption in Syria occurs in government employees who work in the provision of goods and services. After the fighting, Syria still has not recovered economically and is still struggling to provide for itself. In the year of the conflict, Syria experienced a severe economic crisis, which led to increased levels of food insecurity. Rising food and fuel prices along with a weakening informal exchange rate made it difficult for people to obtain the necessary food.

With rising prices, many families have had to take adverse measures to cope. A recent study conducted by WFP found that some families have reduced the number of meals from three to two, an increase in people buying food on credit, and families selling assets and livestock to generate additional income. The increase in the poverty rate of the Syrian population every year reflects the increasingly difficult economic conditions. There are 13.5 million Syrians who have been displaced, more than half of the total Syrian population, with 6.8 million people displaced in the country by the end of 2022. Most of the displaced, or 77 percent, live in neighboring countries such as Türkiye (3.5 million), Lebanon (814,700), and Jordan (660,900) (WFP, n.d).

The conflict in northeastern and northwestern Syria has led to increased hunger and food insecurity as families lose their homes, businesses and sources of income. As fighting continues, families are pushed deeper into poverty and forced to resort to negative actions such as going into debt and reducing food consumption in order to survive. The crisis in Syria worsened with the emergence of the global Covid-19 pandemic in the country in March 2020. The state of civilians in Syria during the conflict lived in camps, overpopulated and cramped camps. This can increase the spread of Covid-19 more quickly. Vulnerable communities due to food crisis, circumstances and prolonged poverty make them more susceptible to Covid-19 due to low immunity levels and substandard health.

To carry out its humanitarian mission in helping the food crisis in Syria, WFP only runs three main programs out of four: 1. Emergency Operationals (EMOPs). Emergency Operations are in line with WFP's Strategic Objective-1 of saving lives and protecting livelihoods in emergencies. 2. Protracted Relief and Recovery Operationals (PRROs). Prolonged Relief and Recovery Operations are recovery assistance carried out at the

beginning of the period after 24 months. 3. Special Operations (SOs). Special Operations are conducted to rehabilitate transportation when necessary.

These programs have six specific programs to help the food crisis in Syria. The six programs are: 1. Emergency Food Assistance to People Affected by Unrest in Syria (200339). One of the EMOP initiatives launched by WFP in Syria is emergency food or food assistance to individuals affected by the unrest in the country. The program is an extension of the emergency response activities (200279) and will involve additional areas to reach more vulnerable households.(WFP,n.d). 2. Food Assistance to Vulnerable Syrian Population in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey Affected by The Events in Syria (200433). Operation 200433 is an EMOP program run by WFP to help Syrian refugees in neighboring Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey (WFP,n.d). 3. Food, Nutrition and Livelihood Assistance to The People Affected by The Crisis in The Syrian Arab Republic (200988). Operation 200988 is one WFP action under the PRRO program in Syria. It will provide vital food assistance to 5.74 million individuals and will then focus on recovery and job search programs (WFP,n.d). 4. Assistance to Vulnerable Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey (200987). Operation 200987 is part of WFP's PRRO program in Syria that provides assistance to vulnerable Syrian refugees and host communities in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Operation 200987 aims to achieve sustainable settlement with WFP assistance to beneficiaries, vulnerable refugees and hosts. It also provides food assistance to individuals who are vulnerable to hunger (WFP,n.d). 5. WFP Air Deliveries to Provide Humanitarian Support to Besieged and Hard to Reach Areas in Syria (200950).

Operation 200950 is one of WFP's SO operations in Syria. This operation is an airborne delivery of aid from WFP to besieged and hard-to-reach areas in Syria (WFP,n.d). 6. Logistics and Telecommunications Augmentation and Coordination to Support Humanitarian Operations in Syria (200788). Operation 200788 is WFP's SO effort in Syria that involves scaling up and organizing logistics and telecommunications to support humanitarian operations in Syria. As the lead coordinator of the Emergency Logistics and Telecommunications Cluster, WFP plans to launch Special Operations to enhance logistics support and telecommunications emergencies in support of WFP's Emergency Operation in Syria. By implementing the six special programs, WFP is contributing to helping Syria as an independent instrument, place and entity.(WFP,2015).

WFP as an Instrument

From 2021 to 2022 in Syria, WFP will perform the articulation and aggregation functions, as well as the operational functions of the six specific programs. In 2021, WFP plays the role of an instrument in the Emergency Food Assistance to People Affected by Unrest in

Syria (200339) program by performing operational functions through the General Food Assistance (GFA) and School Meals Program (SMP). The next program is evidence of WFP playing an important role as a tool in Syria, namely the Food, Nutrition and Livelihood Assistance to Crisis Affected Communities in the Syrian Arab Republic (200988). Through articulation and aggregation, WFP worked with 29 partners to implement the Livelihoods and Resilience project in 2021. In this project, WFP focuses on expanding partnerships, diversifying the partnership base, and collaborating on programming with other UN agencies.

The next program that demonstrates WFP's role as an instrument in Syria for its member states to achieve common interests and goals is the Augmentation and Coordination of Logistics and Telecommunications to Support Humanitarian Operations in Syria (200788). With the help of operational functions, WFP's Cluster Logistics project successfully delivered humanitarian goods across borders from a warehouse in Aleppo, Aleppo province, to a warehouse in Sarmada, Idlib province, in 2021. Each convoy carries an amount of aid sufficient for about 43,500 people for one year. month. WFP directly distributed the goods in December, covering about 42,800 people in 53 sites. Distributions will continue in 2022 in the same places, with the same goal of benefiting every month.

Operating in 2021, WFP through the GFA project reached 6.7 million people across 14 Syrian provinces. Despite the considerable increase, distribution performance has remained stubbornly high over 12 monthly cycles, with an average of 97.5 percent of targeted beneficiaries reached each month. WFP works with 29 partners to deliver humanitarian food assistance through monthly distribution cycles. Under the School Meals Program (SMP), WFP reached 693,100 children in 2021 in approximately 3,500 schools in 12 of the country's 14 governorates (all governorates except Idlib and Dar'a). WFP's provision of fortified snacks is still a major part of the school feeding program, reaching a total of 601,400 children in 2021. However, as schools are not operational, school feeding assistance is only available from January to April and October to December. Fortified foods that are not distributed to schools when learning stops in April are distributed as take-home meals to 400,000 homes. WFP reached an estimated 60,500 out-of-school children enrolled in Curriculum B with CBT in 2021. WFP is working with the Ministry of Education and other partners such as UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and 16 Syrian non-governmental organizations on the SMP project.

In 2022, WFP began rehabilitating four bakeries in two provinces through the Livelihoods and Resilience project: Al-Awwal in Deir Ezzor, Nawa bakery, Busra Es- Sham, and Dar'a Al Balad in Dar'a. These bakeries produce fresh bread daily, which is a staple food for around 160,000 people in Syria. The bakery increased the network's security capabilities to provide fresh bread to the most vulnerable households, by selling bread at subsidized prices. On the other hand, WFP also restored the Al-Tawarij Silo in

AlHassakeh region. The silo can store 12,000 tons of wheat, providing bakeries with enough flour to serve up to 100,000 people daily. In addition, WFP installed a generator at the Yarmouk mill in Dar'a province to reduce power outages and maintain national production capacity of wheat flour used by subsidized bakeries.

With the help of the PRRO program (200988), WFP will be able to provide assistance to 65,800 PLWG and children suffering from MAM by 2022 (37,200 children aged 6-59 months and 28,600 PLWG); a 78 percent increase from the previous year. This collaboration is conducted with UNICEF and WHO under the auspices of the Nutrition Sector and involves 20 collaborating partners. Through the CMAM approach, the program is implemented with community outreach workers conducting screening, referral, on-site treatment, and follow-up visits for malnutrition case management at fixed and mobile clinics. Through the Cluster Logistics program, a total of 7,566 trucks are using the Cluster Logistics transshipment hub to go to Syria from Turkey by 2022. WFP remains the largest user of cross-border operations, with 6,259 trucks transporting WFP commodities moved through Turkey to Syria in 2022; accounting for 94 percent of the total. More than one-third of all WFP aid distributed in Syria in 2022 was in the form of cross-border shipments.

The last aid program that addresses WFP's role in humanitarian delivery in Syria is WFP Air Deliveries to Support Humanitarian Delivery to Besieged and Hard to Reach Areas in Syria (200950). Using its articulation and aggregation functions, in 2022 WFP collaborated with the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) to organize relief operations to hard-to-reach areas in Syria, including Qamishli. Then, through operational tasks, Flights carry humanitarian workers, diplomats and donors along with essential cargo. With assistance from the Food Assistance to Vulnerable Syrian Population in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey Affected by the Events in Syria (200433) and the Assistance to Vulnerable Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey (200987) programs, WFP provided assistance throughout 2021 to 2022. The assistance provided includes basic food assistance, food security support, and nutrition improvement efforts for Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. In collaboration with UNHCR, WFP is both keeping track of all Syrians who have fled to neighboring countries.

WFP as an Arena

WFP is an international organization that focuses on humanitarian assistance, while serving as a forum and venue for discussion among its member states, partner organizations, and other international organizations. In 2021, WFP discussed the Transitional Country Strategic Plan - 2021 to organize humanitarian assistance programs

in Syria during 2021. WFP also served as a discussion forum to develop the Interim Country Strategic Plan (2021-2022), which is WFP's plan for 2021 to 2022. WFP serves not only as a place for discussion, but also as a place to implement programs from the plans that have been developed.

In carrying out its duties in the arena, WFP also qualifies as an International Organization that serves as an information clearinghouse. WFP conducts surveys and information gathering on the ground to collect the necessary data to plan its programs. Every year, WFP conducts data collection from individuals who are vulnerable to food insecurity. In 2021, WFP estimates that there are about 6,963,158 million people at risk of food insecurity. By October 2022, about 6,019,427 people are at risk of hunger.

WFP as an Independent Actor

As an aid actor, WFP has the ability to adjust aid targets according to conditions on the ground and the availability of funds. This was seen when WFP implemented the Emergency Food Assistance for People Affected by Unrest in Syria (200339) program through the GFA and SMP projects. In 2021, in response to increased demand, WFP increased the number of GFA beneficiaries by 26 percent, from 5.3 million people in 2020 to 6.7 million people in 2021, averaging 5.8 million per month. However, resource constraints require WFP to lower the caloric value of the GFA food basket to avoid reducing the number of beneficiaries.

Thereafter, WFP provided fresh food daily to 55,100 children, including 532 children with disabilities. By 2022, the program is planned to cover more provinces with high levels of vulnerability. Activities are currently taking place in Aleppo, Damascus and the rural areas of Damascus, covering 76 schools and 5 social centers. In addition to providing nutritious meals to children, this component also acts as a money-making job for 182 vulnerable women in four healthy soup kitchens, most of whom are internally displaced or returnees with no other source of income.

CONCLUSION

From 2021 to 2022, WFP played its role as an International Organization in assisting the food crisis in Syria. Among these functions, WFP acted as a tool, a field, and an independent actor. Three signs of these roles are visible as WFP implements six specific programs to assist the Syrian state. As a tool, WFP fulfills operational, information delivery, and collection functions through the implementation of EMOP (200339), PRRO (200988), SO (200788), and SO (200950) programs. In its role as Arena, WFP serves as a venue for discussion and fulfills the information function through EMOP (200339), PRRO (200988), and SO (200788). As an independent actor, WFP develops strategic plans and carries out tasks in implementing regulations. WFP also has the authority to make direct

decisions by considering changes in the situation on the ground. This can be observed in the implementation of the EMOP (200339) and PRRO (200988) programs.

In the 2021 to 2022 timeframe, WFP plays a more dominant role than other role indicators. Arena's role was less prominent in 2021 and 2022 because the project that was supposed to strengthen WFP's role as a discussion venue was not implemented in accordance with the Strategic Plan target. Changes in operational procedures in running WFP programs have made their role as an independent actor less visible, as they must comply with health regulations to prevent the spread of COVID-19. WFP's role can be assessed by how its programs are implemented on the ground, depending on the conditions, situation, and performance on the ground. Despite facing obstacles, WFP is still working to ensure food and humanitarian assistance in Syria in accordance with its programs. As the world's largest humanitarian organization, WFP has always provided assistance and alleviated the food crisis in Syria.

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