Food security is widely recognized as a developmental imperative for Africa. Food prices need careful monitoring because significant increases over short-time intervals can indicate a deteriorating food security situation. This fourth issue of the Africa Food Security Brief highlights global and African food price trends as well as the food security situation in Africa for the period July 2012 to August 2013. We also summarize recent initiatives to improve the food security situation in conflict-affected areas of the region. The Brief draws on indices developed by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to monitor food price trends, both at the global level and in Africa.

### 2.1 International food price trends

Over the period July 2012 to August 2013, global food prices showed significant volatility. The FAO’s global Food Price Index (FPI) measures monthly price changes in a basket of food commodities, including meat, dairy, cereals, oils, fats, and sugar. Chart 1 presents the aggregate FPI for the period from January 2012 through to August 2013. In particular, it reveals a decline between March and June 2012, followed by an upward trend from July to September 2012. This reversal was largely due to reduced food production caused by unfavorable weather conditions in the U.S. and Eastern European countries. Global prices remained flat during the remainder of 2012 and well into 2013, peaking slightly in April and decreasing thereafter. At the end of August 2013, global prices remained high but with a downward trend; prices at mid-year were 5 percentage points below the peak prices of September 2012. Lower demand from tight international markets and improved supply conditions contributed to this decline.

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2. World Bank Food Price Watch.
In summary, during the reference period, the prices of major cereals, sugar and oil generally saw declines of varying magnitudes. By contrast, during the first quarter of 2013, meat prices remained fairly flat. On the other hand, the price of dairy products rose at the start of the year, peaking in April 2013, before assuming a slight downward trend. Notwithstanding, in August 2013, the global Dairy Price Index still stood at a higher level than in any month of the previous year (Chart 2).
International cereal prices are particularly critical to the food security situation in the African continent; the global trends are illustrated in Chart 3. International cereal prices in the second quarter of 2013 showed a mixed picture, with rice declining and wheat rising. Plentiful rice harvests in Thailand and Vietnam counteracted upward pressures from increasing demand and reduced supplies in India, Pakistan, the U.S., and South America. Maize prices remained generally flat during the first quarter of 2013, though posting a decline more recently.

The price of maize in the United States averaged US$ 289 per tonne in the period January to August 2013, which is 14 percentage points higher than its January 2012 level but 39 points below its peak of August 2012. Slow exports from June to August 2013, coupled with an increase in 2013 maize plantings and a stronger US dollar, all exerted a dampening effect. Chart 3 shows the US maize price falling by 15.5 percent from July to August 2013.

The major changes in international prices since June 2012 are approximately as follows: 16 percent and 28 percent declines in Thailand rice and US maize (No.2 yellow) respectively; a 6 percent increase in Australian wheat; and a decline of 6.4 percent in U.S. sorghum.

### 2.2 Food prices in African subregions

Across Africa’s subregions, food prices also demonstrated wide variations, depending on the country and the type of food commodity. The ensuing subsections provide the main highlights for each subregion.

#### i) West Africa

The subregion’s aggregate 2012 cereal output, consisting primarily of coarse grains, recorded a 10 percent increase compared to 2011 production. As a result of the plentiful harvest, the prices of stable coarse grains continued to decline from July 2012 to June 2013, particularly in West Africa’s coastal countries. However, the rate of decline was gradual, due to disruptions in harvesting and in marketing activities, which were caused by heavy rains and floods in places.

Nigeria, which had been badly affected by floods in some areas, was also hit by civil insecurity. This combination of factors led to a 9 percent fall in rice output in 2012 compared to 2011 and to reduced production of maize, cassava, and yam. In Benin (Abomey) and Togo (Lomé), the price of maize declined markedly in September 2012, although remaining at a higher level than 12 months previously. Maize prices in Togo have shown some volatility since the start of 2013, peaking in January then falling in May before recovering in June and July, though still remaining below their April 2012 level. This has resulted in reduced annual CPI inflation rates of 2.4 percent, which is still above the historical average. By contrast, maize prices in Benin dipped in September 2012, before gradually rising until April 2013 (due to tight supply), where it settled

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3 Charts 4 to 7 are based on FAO data (http://www.fao.org/giews/pricetool/).
until the end of July 2013. However, this did not have much impact on the annual CPI inflation rate, which stood at 3.1 percent, below the historical average. In Mauritania (Nouakchott), December 2012 prices for sorghum were 17 percent below their 2011 average levels but increased from January to July 2013. Sorghum prices in Mali (Bamako) continued on a downward trend from July 2012 through to July 2013 (Chart 4).

**ii) East Africa**

Prices of main cereals have continued to fall across the East African subregion since the arrival of the 2012 harvests, although for most countries, they are still higher than in 2012. Chart 5 illustrates price trends in four East African countries. The wholesale price of maize in Kenya saw a moderate increase between March 2012 and June 2012. It fell back in January 2013 and remained fairly flat at the time of writing. However, some areas of Kenya have seen price increases, due to poor second harvests in 2013. In Tanzania, maize prices increased by 37 percent between August 2012 and January 2013, primarily due to the deepening of the lean season, sustained demand from neighboring countries, and poor production prospects in some areas. However, between January and August 2013, the maize price fell by 35 percent, closing at a period low in August. Underpinned by strong local demand and high external demand from Kenya, South Sudan, DRC, and Rwanda, prices of maize in Uganda (Kampala) rose from September 2012 until March 2013, then stabilized up to the end of the reference period (August 2013), in response to falling demand.

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The chart reflects the most recent data obtained from the FAO reference system (GIEWS).
The price of wholesale wheat in Ethiopia has remained fairly flat over the past 12 months. It fell slightly in November 2012 but has now (August 2013) recovered to its September 2012 level. In Rwanda (Kigali), there was a 40 percent increase in the price of rice over the period March 2013 to June 2013, which signifies its highest price level in 18 months. It has since fallen back to its March 2013 level.

iii) Southern Africa

Prices of maize continued to follow seasonal trends, rising in the second half of 2012 and generally persisting at higher levels in 2013 than comparable quarters in the previous year. In South Africa, the price of maize has fallen from its January 2012 record high (for the period in Chart 6), remaining fairly flat in the first eight months of 2013. This primarily reflects weakening international quotations, but with a positive outlook for the 2013 maize harvest. Maize exports from South Africa were approximately 40 percent lower in the first half of 2013 than in 2012, with tighter domestic supplies contributing to this decrease.

Following consecutive bumper harvests of maize in Zambia, the country has established itself as the second largest exporter in the region, with Zimbabwe as the main destination. National average maize prices in Zambia rose by 43 percent from October 2012 to April 2013, exceeding historical seasonal trends. The upward trend was underpinned by a depreciation of the local currency (Zambian Kwacha), strong demand from neighboring countries, and the removal of production and consumption subsidies on maize and fuel by the government, which had the effect of increasing the costs of production, processing and consumption (see Chart 6).
In Malawi, the maize price rose by 59 percent in March 2013 from its January 2013 level. The continued depreciation of the national currency following its devaluation in May 2012 pushed inflation rates higher, which also contributed to the spike in the price of maize. Although the price fell from March to July, it rebounded in August 2013, almost regaining its March 2013 level. The higher food prices in Malawi led to an upward revision of the number of food-insecure people to just under 2 million, from 1.6 million in November 2012. Staple food prices in Zimbabwe (maize) have remained comparatively stable since 2012, reflecting a general adequacy of supplies. However, a significant spike in the price of maize was seen in April 2013, signifying a temporary supply disruption.

iv) Central Africa

Food prices rose sharply in some countries of the Central African subregion during the early months of 2013. In Cameroon, the average inflation rate remained stable during the period January 2012 to March 2013\(^5\) at about 3 percent, underpinned by stability in rice and maize prices (Chart 7). Retail prices of cereals in the Democratic Republic of Congo remained high compared to historic trends. In particular, significant volatility emerged in the price of maize in Lubumbashi, which registered a massive 178 percent increase between July 2012 and April 2013, though it dropped back 45 percent by August 2013. The high prices were largely due to civil insecurity in the region and a reduction in imports from Zambia. In Gabon, prices of imported wheat increased by 35 percent between January and August 2012, but declined in October 2012 following the stabilization measures introduced by government to curb food inflation prices. Nevertheless, prices shot up 34 percent between November 2012 and April 2013, before reducing by 31 percent in July 2013.

\(^5\) March being the latest month for which data were available at the time of preparing this brief.
2.3 Forecast for international food prices

After a relatively tight food situation in 2012/2013, characterized by reduced grain supplies and high prices, favorable prospects for global 2013/2014 cereal production are expected to stabilize markets and prices. According to the FAO’s July 2013 bulletin “Crop Prospects and Food Situation,” world cereal production is forecast to increase by about 7 percent in 2013. This is based on the anticipated high global wheat output and an expected rebound in maize production in the United States. In addition, expected lower import demand should keep 2013 prices in check going forward, mainly due to adequate national supplies in most regions.

On the other hand, prices of dairy products have been increasing due to limited supplies from major exporters, especially in Asia. Tight fish supply and higher

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In the Central African Republic, market distortions caused by the civil strife and conflict that started in December 2012 caused food prices to increase significantly in several areas, including the capital Bangui. End-year CPI inflation for 2012 in the CAR surged to 7 percent (compared to 1.5 percent at end-2011). In the Congo Republic, the average annual inflation rate increased from 1.8 percent in 2011 to 5.1 percent in 2012, partly due to increased spending on infrastructure reconstruction efforts after the March 2012 explosion in the capital.

During the second half of 2012, an increase in international grain prices, especially of wheat, weighed heavily on the national food import bills of most countries in the subregion. This was largely due to a heavy reliance on cereal imports from international markets, with Egypt as the world’s top wheat importer. The rise in international food prices during the second half of 2012 was largely offset by government subsidies on basic food items. On the other hand, prices of unsubsidized goods have been rising sharply in many cases.

During the second half of 2012, price inflation for cereals stood at around 3 percent in Tunisia, while for meat and vegetables, the increase was around 10 percent. In Morocco, food prices increased by 1.5 percent, while Egypt and Algeria posted much higher increases at 9.0 and 12.5 percent, respectively. An improving picture emerged in the first half of 2013, with inflation levels stabilizing across the subregion. Egypt’s heavy dependency on food imports has led to a warning by the FAO that continuing civil unrest and dwindling foreign exchange reserves may threaten food security in the country.

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6 Data for 2013 were not available for the Central African Republic.
7 Data were not available for the Congo Republic for 2013.
commodity-based feed costs have been pushing international seafood prices higher, despite the moderating influence of the growth in aquaculture. Looking ahead, prices of fish, dairy, meat, and other livestock, and fishery products are forecast to increase. This may help to offset anticipated price declines for some of the cereal and other crop commodities. World meat production is anticipated to grow by 1.5 percent, with prices remaining at historic highs, and with no signs of decreasing, despite reductions in feed input costs.

2.4 Food security situation in Africa

In the second half of 2012, the continent was confronted with a bleak food insecurity situation in the Sahel, West African, and East African subregions. This was against the backdrop of a looming food and humanitarian crisis which had characterized the first half of 2012. However, above-average cereal harvests in the first six months of 2013 helped to mitigate the food security risks in these areas and promise a brighter outlook for the second half of the year, except in conflict-affected areas.

Southern Africa’s cereal production in the first half of 2013 was slightly below the 2012 level. However, given the subregion’s low dependency on imported foods, the food security outlook remains generally favorable. For the major food-importing countries of North Africa, less exposure to food price and quantity shocks is anticipated for the second half of 2013, as a result of improved food production and supply performance. This favorable outlook is expected to continue for the remainder of 2013 except in Egypt (due to ongoing civil unrest) and Tunisia (partly due to inadequate rains during the wheat-planting season).

To gain deeper insights into the food security situation across the continent during the period July 2012 to August 2013, each subregion is considered in more detail in the ensuing section.

2.5 Recent food security trends in Africa’s subregions

i) Sahel and West African subregions

The food security outlook during the second half of 2012 in the Sahel and West African subregions remained critical and acute (IPC Phase 3 “Crisis” – as defined in Box 1.1), particularly for Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad (as well as Nigeria in 2013). In July 2012, prices for local cereals were far above their seasonal averages, making it difficult for poor households to maintain food access throughout the second and third quarters of 2012. However, following above-average cereal harvests in 2012, the overall food security situation in the subregion started to improve steadily from September 2012 onward. Some areas, however, did not enjoy the same level of food security as other localities.

In particular, north-central Mali, western Niger, and localized areas of southern Mauritania – where high levels of food insecurity were observed in poor households – were classified as being at the Minimal Acute (IPC Phase 1 – Box 1.1) level.

Box 1.1 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC): Summary

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a set of analytical tools and processes to analyze and classify the severity of a food security situation according to international standards.

IPC Phase 1 - Minimal: This is where more than four in five households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical, unsustainable strategies to access food and income, such as reliance on humanitarian assistance.

IPC Phase 2 - Stressed: Even with humanitarian assistance, at least one in five households in the area has the following or worse: minimally adequate food consumption but unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in irreversible coping strategies.

IPC Phase 3 - Crisis: Even with humanitarian assistance, at least one in five households in the area experiences the following or worse: food consumption gaps with high or above usual acute malnutrition; or marginal ability to meet minimum food needs with accelerated depletion of livelihood assets leading to consumption gaps.

IPC Phase 4 - Emergency: Even with humanitarian assistance, at least one in five households experiences the following or worse: large food consumption gaps resulting in acute malnutrition and excess mortality; or extreme loss of livelihood assets that will lead to serious food consumption and nourishment gaps in the short term.

IPC Phase 5 - Famine: Even with humanitarian assistance, at least one in five households experiences an extreme lack of food and other basic needs where starvation, death and destitution are evident.


9 Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FewsNet) Food Security Outlook reports for East Africa, Sahel and Western Africa and Southern Africa. Accessible at: http://www.fews.net/Pages/default.aspx
10 FAO, Food Outlook Highlights, May 2012.
11 “Crop Prospects and Food Situation,” Food and Agriculture Organization, No. 4, December 2012.
Throughout the first half of 2013, most of West Africa and the Sahel region – i.e., excluding the localized areas described above – held above-average household food stocks from the previous year’s harvests, complemented by relatively robust household incomes from cash-crop sales.

“Minimal” food insecurity levels are expected to last through to September 2013, except in areas such as northern Mali and north-eastern Nigeria, as these areas have recently experienced the combined effects of civil insecurity and strife, market disruption, and weakened household purchasing power.

i) Central Africa

Although the distribution of rains in Cameroon from March to June 2012 was in line with the long-term average, and despite cereal outputs for the year being at above-average levels, the northern regions of the country continued to face chronic food insecurity, due to recurrent climatic shocks experienced during the past three years. By early March 2013, a Food Security Assessment Mission of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) found that cereal stocks were already depleted in 21 out of a total 47 districts in Cameroon’s northern region; this is where about 46 percent of the country’s total population reside. This led to severe food insecurity and malnutrition, affecting about 615,000 people.

The final six months of 2012 also saw a deepening of the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), following the escalation of conflict in the Katanga region and the eastern parts of the country. Agricultural activities were hindered, especially in the eastern parts, while high food prices continue to impede food access by the poor. By June 2013, the continuation of the conflicts brought the total number of internally displaced persons to an estimated 2.8 million, resulting in 6.4 million people living in conditions of food insecurity and livelihood crisis. The increased population displacement also led to disruptions in agricultural and agro-marketing activities.

Another conflict-affected country in this sub-region is the Central African Republic, which witnessed the northern and central parts of the country being taken over by an insurgency of the Seleka (rebel) movement in December 2012. This resulted in population displacement of about 206,000, severe disruption to agricultural activities, and input shortages. An estimated 2 million people in the Central African Republic are affected by serious food insecurity conditions. The Central African Republic, the DRC, and Cameroon are just three of the 27 African countries classified by the FAO as needing external assistance for food (as at July 2013).

ii) East Africa

In the East African countries of Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda, about 16 million people face food insecurity, ranging from “Stressed” (IPC Phase 2) to “Emergency” (IPC Phase 4) levels as of June 2013.

The main drivers of food insecurity in the subregion were poor rains, the aftermath of past conflicts, high food prices, and an inability to access humanitarian assistance in some cases.

The second half of 2012 saw some favorable climatic conditions and positive agricultural developments in the East African subregion. As a consequence, there was above-average agricultural and livestock production for most of the second half of 2012, with an improvement in food security, supported by lower food prices. This reduced the estimated number of people facing “Stressed, Crisis and Emergency” food insecurity conditions to 14.5 million by November 2012, further falling to 12.9 million by June 2013.

However, food security is expected to deteriorate through September 2013 in the eastern and southern parts of Ethiopia and Kenya due to poor rains, and in parts of Sudan and South Sudan due to civil strife. In Ethiopia, although the food security conditions improved as a result of the favorable 2012 meher season harvest, some 3.7 million people were estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2013. Similarly, in Kenya an estimated 2.1 million people were reportedly in need of humanitarian assistance in 2013. In both Sudan and South Sudan, the food security conditions have been consistently deteriorating since 2012 due to poor harvests, the lingering effects and frequent recurrences of past conflicts, ensuing macroeconomic instability, and severely disrupted trade flows. The border areas of the two countries have been the worst affected. As of June 2013, in South Sudan about 1.2 million people were estimated to be in a severe state of food insecurity, whereas in Sudan about 4.3 million people were estimated to be in need of humanitarian and food assistance, mainly in the conflict-affected areas.

iv) Southern Africa

Across the Southern African subregion, favorable food security conditions continued throughout the second half of 2012 as local markets offloaded staple

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13 Crop Prospects and Food Situation, Food and Agriculture Organization, No. 2, June 2013.
foods from the 2012 harvests and 2011 carry-over stocks. This helped to stabilize staple food supplies and also resulted in price reductions. Despite satisfactory overall food availability in the subregion, some localized areas recorded acute food insecurity. Such areas included parts of southern Malawi, semi-arid districts of southern and central Mozambique, parts of the southern provinces of Zimbabwe, and most parts of Lesotho. For instance, heavy rains and flooding in January and February 2011 destroyed 211,000 hectares of cropped land and diminished the food stocks in Mozambique, affecting about 213,000 people. Maize prices continue to rise across the country, impeding the food access situation of poor households.

There were some natural setbacks in the 2012/2013 growing season that dented the favorable 2013 outlook. In early December 2012, several African armyworm outbreaks were reported in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Malawi. Moreover, from late January to late February 2013, there was a prolonged dry spell at a time when crops were in their flowering stage. Though the region’s cereal supply position has yet to be fully assessed, indications point to much tighter supplies in the 2013/2014 post harvest season. Overall declines in cereal production of 6 percent and 11 percent are expected in South Africa and Zambia respectively, while Namibia, Angola, and Madagascar are expecting reduced production of certain cereals in 2013, compared to 2012. Broadly speaking, minimal food insecurity outcomes are expected to emerge across the Southern African subregion, with the exception of some flood-affected areas of southern Mozambique and some southern parts of Zimbabwe that have experienced low rainfall levels.

v) North Africa

In North Africa, relatively large cereal import bills and staple food subsidies exerted additional fiscal pressures on governments in 2012. Notwithstanding, with the exception of Morocco, which experienced a significant decline in wheat production due to unfavorable weather outcomes, many North African countries enjoyed favorable harvests during 2012. In July 2013, however, Tunisian wheat production was forecast to be at a below-average level. As earlier indicated, Egypt, being a major wheat importer, is facing substantial food price hikes and food insecurity as a consequence of the ongoing civil unrest and deteriorating foreign exchange reserves.

The above exceptions notwithstanding, throughout the first half of 2013, positive prospects for the grain harvest prevailed in most of North Africa, and cereal imports for the subregion were forecast to be about 5 percent lower than in 2012. At the same time, the continuation of generous food subsidies in a number of countries in the subregion is expected to keep food inflation at bay throughout the second half of 2013.

Response to food insecurities in conflict-affected areas

Conflicts in Africa are highly diverse, both with respect to their causes and their after-effects. However, a common thread is that most conflicts – and the food insecurity challenges they bring in their wake – do not dissipate naturally; they require spirited multi-stakeholder responses. This is particularly true in view of the severe resource constraints that most African countries face. There is a critical role for African governments, regional economic communities, international (bilateral and multilateral) development and cooperation partners, and other actors in the international humanitarian community to help resolve food insecurity challenges in conflict-affected areas. In the brief discussion below, we have selected examples of key initiatives that have been successfully introduced to resolve emerging food insecurities and strife in conflict-affected areas:

i) Direct food assistance programs:

These mainly provide assistance in the form of food (as well as medical supplies and emergency nutritional supplements) in response to a food crisis in a country or region. Often, specific logistical supply systems for food aid are developed and used by specialized partners.

For instance, responding to the food and humanitarian crises resulting from the conflicts and instabilities in Orientale, North and South Kivu, Maniema, Katanga and Equateur Provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo, a partnership of the (USA) Office of Food for Peace (FFP), the World Food Program (WFP), ADRA, Food for the Hungry, and Mercy Corps targeted about 5.1 million food-insecure Congolese, refugees, and host communities in the affected areas during 2013.

This partnership has been actively working together in the continent for a number of years. Their support is wide-ranging and targets: development and emergency food assistance programs to improve agricultural sector capacity; maternal and child health and nutrition; civil participation and local governance; disaster risk reduction; water and sanitation supply initiatives; natural resources management and biodiversity; microenterprise productivity; as well as food aid distributions. The partnership's total annual allocations to food aid for the DRC are highlighted in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Food Aid Monetary Value (US$ millions)</th>
<th>Food Quantity (metric tonnes, MT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>37,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>71,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>60,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>101.3</td>
<td>94,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>125.0</td>
<td>88,160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ii) Indirect financial assistance for alleviating food insecurities:

One example of indirect assistance was provided to Egypt, to mitigate the effects of the civil unrest and dwindling foreign exchange reserves, since these raised serious food security concerns. In the first week of July 2013, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait promised to extend US$12 billion in cash, loans, and fuel to the Egyptian government. The objective was to stave off a fiscal crisis and allow the country to resume its substantive wheat imports, on which the population relies. Egypt distributes half of the wheat stocks to its 84 million people in the form of heavily subsidized, saucer-sized flat loaves of bread, which sell for less than US$0.01. Bread has long been a sensitive issue in the country; indeed, the civil unrest of 2008 erupted when increased wheat prices caused widespread shortages. The indirect financial support extended by the three Gulf States is intended to ease the food insecurity pressures and thus alleviate the uncivil unrest, at least in the short term. FAO thus did not see any urgent disruption in the food chain as a result of the domestic political problem.

iii) Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) management and reintegration initiatives:

In the aftermath of conflicts, returning refugees and other vulnerable groups (e.g. women, the elderly, and children) face great difficulty in building sustainable livelihoods and gaining access to food, land, shelter, and such basic services as water, sanitation, health, and education. Reintegration initiatives aim to remove systemic obstacles (social, political, financial, physical, human) that impede displaced persons’ ability to return to their homes, communities or countries, and build sustainable livelihoods. IDP interventions are often targeted at the household, community, and municipal levels.

What should be borne in mind is that the success of such interventions usually requires extended time periods and the
maintenance of relative stability in the post-conflict areas. For instance, Liberia’s IDP program is generally heralded as a success story, from which lessons may be learned. Liberia’s civil war claimed approximately 250,000 lives, displaced almost 1 million people, disrupted the entire country, destroyed much of its infrastructure, and destabilized the subregion. The war began in 1989 and ended in 2003, with a return to democracy finally being achieved in 2005. The subsequent programs for rebuilding and returning the country to normalcy have been gradual and are still ongoing today. Liberia developed a realistic and detailed plan to guide the transition from United Nations to national responsibility, in order to maintain security and build the confidence of IDPs. This plan was approved by all the participants and is being implemented in a series of steps, scheduled for completion by 2014.

Other post-conflict African countries that have been successfully pursuing IDP programs include Burundi, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone. Despite the successes, for two countries – Liberia and Sierra Leone – the slow recovery from war-related damages, inadequate social services and infrastructure, and high inflation and food prices (and in Liberia the presence of Ivorian refugees) continue to impact households’ purchasing power and food security conditions. This demonstrates the far-reaching consequences of conflicts on food security.

iv) Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs:

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs are widespread in conflict-affected areas in the world, including those in Africa. DDR should be included as part of broader agreements over justice, police reform, the restructuring of armed forces, elections, political change, etc., as negotiated in a peace agreement. Therefore, DDR is part of a wider strategy of peace building and reconciliation, mainly targeting former militia and insurgents. Reportedly, there can be as many as 15 DDR country-level programs on the African continent in a given year. For such programs to work and for their results to be sustainable, recurrences of insurgency and conflict must be kept at bay: this is something that has been difficult to achieve in many African countries.

Reviewing over a decade of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping and DDR operations, Edloe (2007) describes some of the “best practices” for successful DDR of former combatants in intrastate military conflicts and civil wars. Although, in principle, DDR is a stage that takes place after peace brokering, international best practice dictates that the peace-brokered process should integrate a plan for DDR, to avoid the risk of insurgents resuming hostilities. Edloe highlights that: a) a Peace Agreement must provide the details of the DDR process from the outset; b) warring parties must commit to uphold the terms of the Peace Treaty; and c) the international community must support the Peace Agreement in a coordinated approach to meet the political, military, and financial needs of the DDR program.

Lessons from Sierra Leone demonstrate how a peace agreement could apply some of the above best practices and effectively address DDR. Reportedly, earlier attempts at DDR in 1998 failed because the initial peace-brokering process did not include an a priori process to reconcile all the country’s warring factions. With growing “distaste” for disarmament and mistrust by the rebels, hostilities continued. It was not until the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement in 2002 – with its inclusion of a DDR program – that hostilities finally ceased and disarmament and demobilization were achieved. Sierra Leone successfully disarmed and demobilized 72,500 combatants and destroyed 42,500 weapons by January 2002. Allegedly, the main reason for the success of the DDR program was that it managed to plan for and build the political will of the warring parties to see demilitarization succeed.

v) Interventions focusing on conflict resolution:

1. Early warning systems: There is a growing awareness that preventive diplomacy is needed, coupled with early information gathering, monitoring and rapid analysis efforts. Such efforts will provide insights to governments, international agencies, humanitarian organizations, the media, etc. on the need for action to prevent the breaking-out and escalation of any conflicts.

2. Preventive deployment for peace enforcement: The UN Secretary General’s report of June 1992, “Agenda for Peace,” proposed the preventive deployment of peacekeepers, the creation of peace enforcement units, and the setting up of a UN Reserve Army. Since the report’s publication, regional and international organizations have redoubled their efforts toward peace keeping around the world. In 2002, the African Union began to establish a robust African Standby Force for peacekeeping missions in the continent and has since mobilized numerous important missions to several African countries.
3. **Training, sensitization, and behavior-change efforts:** Training and changes in mind-set are a key requisite for peace and security building and fostering reconciliation. Without training and related interventions, mediation or peace-keeping initiatives may stall or fail, as they require attitudinal changes on the part of all the actors involved. One approach is to undertake case studies to analyze the root causes and histories of such conflicts. The ultimate goal should be to develop appropriate and realistic policies that support conflict detection, conflict containment, and post-conflict resolution and reconciliation in the continent. IDP and DDR programs are good examples of how to use information and knowledge to influence behavior change.

The discussion above illustrates various ways and means to help resolve conflicts, although these are by no means exhaustive. They are presented to encourage debate on the kind of approaches and best practices that are most appropriate for Africa’s pursuit of peace, stability, and food security. It is hoped that policy makers, development practitioners and partners, as well as other stakeholders will use this discussion as a springboard for thinking systematically about how to address, in the short-, medium- and long-term, the interlinked challenges of food insecurity and conflict escalation.
Conclusion

During the period July 2012 to August 2013, food insecurity remained a major development issue for Africa, underpinned by mixed trends in international food prices. In the first half of 2013, aggregate global food prices remained high, with the June 2013 Food Price Index only 5 percentage points below the peak witnessed in September 2012. The slight downward trend evident in August 2013 reflects tight international markets and improved supply conditions.

Consonant with the trends in aggregate global food prices, prices of major cereals, sugar and oil generally declined steadily over the reference period (July 2012 to August 2013). On the other hand, meat prices remained fairly steady. There was a marked increase in dairy prices in April 2013, but with a slight downward trend thereafter. Notwithstanding, in August 2013, the global Dairy Price Index remained at a higher level than at any time in 2012.

On the African continent, food prices also followed mixed trends, with notable variations depending on the subregion, the country, and the food commodity. In West Africa, prices of stable coarse grains declined during the first half of 2013, particularly in the coastal countries, reflecting improved harvest production prospects. In East Africa, prices of main cereals also continued to fall in the early part of 2013 with the arrival of the 2012 harvests, although the prices were still above seasonal 2012 levels in most countries. Prices of maize in Southern Africa continued to follow seasonal trends, rising in the second half of 2012 and generally maintaining higher levels in 2013 than in 2012. In Central Africa, food prices rose sharply in some countries, underpinned by escalating conflicts in many parts of the subregion. In North Africa, increases in international grain prices in the second half of 2012 exerted pressure on the national food import bills of most countries in the subregion. However, the maintenance of government subsidies for basic food items prevented this from translating into higher domestic food prices. Continuing civil unrest and declining foreign reserves continue to pose serious concerns for Egypt, raising the possibility of food insecurity, although this has to some extent been alleviated by government food subsidies and by external financial loans from three Gulf States.

In terms of food security in Africa, many countries saw periods of food and humanitarian crises caused, inter alia, by natural disasters, high international prices, overdependence on imported food stuffs, and conflicts. Indeed, many countries still face possible food and humanitarian crises in view of imminent challenges. According to the FAO’s latest estimates (July 2013), 34 countries around the world are in need of external assistance for food, of which 27 are in Africa.20

In Central Africa, serious food insecurity conditions prevailed on account of escalating conflict, which affected about 8.4 million people in the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo. In West Africa, the overall food situation was more favorable, partly due to the above-average 2012 cereal harvest; however, the lingering effects of the 2011/2012 food crisis and periodic conflicts continue to affect a large number of people. In East Africa, although household food security has improved in most countries, serious concerns remain in conflict-ridden areas of Somalia, the Sudan, and South Sudan, which is placing some 6.5 million people at risk of food insecurity. In Southern Africa, with no imminent threats of escalating strife, the minimal food insecurity outcomes that are emerging are due to weather perils in southern Mozambique and some southern parts of Zimbabwe (floods and poor rainfall, respectively). In North Africa, a relatively stable food security situation is evident; as mentioned above, this is due partly to the continuation of government subsidies for basic food items. Nonetheless, Egypt still faces possible food insecurities emanating from the civil unrest and depleted foreign reserves.

In the period under review, the escalation of conflicts continued in a number of African countries. These had far-reaching effects on communities, economies and regions, including devastating human displacements, food insecurities, and malnourishment amongst many sub-populations. Interventions to address food insecurity and strife in conflict-affected areas in Africa included (but were not limited to) the following: direct food assistance programs; indirect financial assistance for alleviating food insecurities; early warning system initiatives; preventive deployment for peace enforcement; training, sensitization and behavior-change efforts such as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs; and initiatives on the management and reintegration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

When seeking to address food insecurity issues in conflict-affected areas, lessons may be learned from the African experience. The evidence points overwhelmingly to the need for a robust approach by all stakeholders – including governments, regional economic communities, and international development organizations – to reconcile warring factions through a comprehensive peace-brokering process that will lead to disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of displaced populations. Only through such an approach can peace, stability and food security be achieved for the future.