World Food Programme
Background Guide

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**History of WFP**

The World Food Programme is a leading international humanitarian organization that was established in 1961 to provide food aid to those in need through the United Nations. The specific mission of the World Food Programme (WFP) focuses on emergency food aid and rehabilitation. Although the World Food Programme was intended as a temporary experiment, multiple natural disasters proved the necessity and worth of WFP, leading to a multitude of projects and programs. Ranging from development work to food and school projects, the agency continually approved initiatives throughout the 1960s, solidifying its own role as a leading organization in development work.

**Statement of the Issue**

The effects of climate change range from temperature changes to increased extreme weather events and changing ecosystems. In 2018, the United Nations
released a report citing climate change as a leading driver of global hunger rates.\textsuperscript{1} Despite these phenomena, climate change will continually have an impact on world hunger through its vast effects on agriculture and food supply. The impact of these changes will mostly be felt in differing agricultural supplies, varying and increasing market prices, and increased hunger and starvation rates for at-risk populations. Additionally, individuals with a livelihood that depends on farming or selling agricultural products could see changes to their jobs and a lack of product to sell.

**History**

Climate change has been an issue at the forefront of discussion for decades, however, when people think of climate change, they often think of catastrophic fires, natural disasters, melting ice caps, and holes in the ozone layer. World hunger is not commonly included in the conversation. Nonetheless, the tragic reality is that rising temperatures and unpredictable weather patterns among other major factors such as severe drought have led to less viable land in many areas of the world that have historically relied on agriculture for their income and livelihood.\textsuperscript{2}

Around the world, over 60 million people are facing some degree of food insecurity or crisis as a direct result of climate change. 31.1 million of those people live in the horn of Africa. Droughts stretching from California to Africa to Australia have led to the death of crops and a severe lack of viable drinking water. Sadly, farmers are not the only people whose livelihoods have a dire outlook. Fisherfolks, pastoralists, and all


\textsuperscript{2} “Food Insecurity and Climate Change”. Retrieved from https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/food-insecurity-index/
others who rely on healthy and flourishing land for their income are also facing a devastating reality.

Even more alarming, women and children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change on global hunger. In the areas of the world that heavily rely on agriculture, it is not uncommon for the majority of women to either not pursue a higher education or to simply not have access to education. In these cases, these women, and thus their children, rely on their agriculture as their primary source of food and income. A lack of crops to sell leaves these women and their families open to fall into poverty. A lack of food to eat can quickly lead to malnourishment for all members of the family. As has been previously shown by a myriad of studies, the negative implications of hunger stretch far beyond one’s stomach. Growth and development can be stunted, performance in school falls, and mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and even posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have been shown to occur at higher rates in those suffering from malnutrition.

Further, these food shortages and climate events are impacting the entire world outside of those who are directly impacted. In 2016, “Super” El Niño resulted in maize prices for some areas spiking to prices up to 192% higher than five-year averages and those prices continue to increase as crops fail to flourish in the aftermath of climate based events. In areas such as Sub-Saharan Africa, it is predicted that by 2030, up to 95% of their maize and other coarse grains consumed will come from within the region.

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This results in those regions’ local production, market prices, and consumption becoming even more vulnerable to climate shocks through ripple effects.5

Analysis

Climate change has made some of the world’s worst humanitarian crises worse. In Zimbabwe, 122 degrees’ Fahrenheit weather is promulgating the worst drought in decades. The water flow at the famous Victoria Falls is even starting to slow down. Half of the population of Zimbabwe now suffers from severe hunger.6 Zimbabwe, and countries like it, are in need of immediate assistance from the international community. The World Food Programme’s deputy country director in Zimbabwe, Niels Balzer, noted that assistance is needed urgently because it can take three months for a funding commitment to turn into actual food assistance.7 Delegates should keep the urgent nature of the crisis in mind during debate. While climate change is a long term problem, food shortages require immediate solutions and relief.

In stark contrast to the droughts of Zimbabwe, there has been tremendous flooding in Yemen. These floods not only destroy crops, but also spread diseases such as cholera. This has displaced thousands of people.8 The polarity of these two humanitarian disasters displays the difficult nature of combating climate induced food shortages. Each situation is unique and what might work in one region might not work

7 Ibid
in another. Delegates should keep this in mind throughout the debate. Climate change is a multifaceted issue. Solutions need to be flexible in order to provide relief to all types of regions.

From 2010 to 2019 almost half of the World Food Programs emergency and recovery operations have been in response to climate-related disasters. This has cost a staggering $23 billion dollars.⁹ Worse yet, the World Food Program estimates that it will need more than $10 billion dollars to fund its operations next year in more than 80 countries.¹⁰ These astonishing numbers highlight the need for a sustainable long term solution. The international community will not be able to put a Band-Aid on the issue by providing aid indefinitely. At some point, in the not too distant future, the cost of providing adequate aid will be too great to shoulder. As such, delegates should strive to create a sustainable solution that will eventually render the need for mass food assistance moot.

There are a myriad of potential solutions for the World Food Program to consider. Countries should look to integrate new technologies, tools and services into farming practices. This could include rehabilitating land, improving infrastructure, purchasing insurance and diversifying livelihoods. Governments can also make changes at the national level by developing early warning systems, social protection and insurance mechanisms. An amalgamation of reforms are needed to stem the tide of climate-related disasters.

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⁹ World Food Programme “Climate action” Retrieved from https://www.wfp.org/climate-action
¹⁰ Ibid
Conclusion

Food insecurity is an indicator of how the global community has thus far been unable to adapt sufficiently to the effects of climate change. Aside from combating climate change itself, it is critical to improve the adaptability and resilience of both food systems and communities. International action should focus on both preventative and reactive measures to protect and aid populations vulnerable to food shortages. It is important to keep in mind that solutions must be tailored to the geography and growing capacity of each region. Finally, combating climate change and preventing extreme weather is crucial so communities do not have to continue to readapt to worsening food conditions.

Questions:

- How will you address chronic and long term issues that have been caused by and exacerbated by malnutrition?
- What short term solutions will you use to address the current crises?
- How will you navigate cultural differences and challenges within your solution?
- How might social and educational reforms play a role in your solution?
- How will your resolution address the different groups of people (men, women, and children) and the different ways these individuals are affected by the issue?