



Food Aid and Nutrition

Food Aid

Around the world people continue to be displaced due to conflict. Often they need to flee quickly, and don't have time or the necessary stocks or carrying capacity to take any food with them. The government of the country these people are staying in should provide food in crisis situations. This does not always happen.

Organisations such as the United Nations World Food Program and Médecins Sans Frontières work with local authorities to distribute food to people in crisis.

Distributing the food:

The food is usually brought in by truck in large bags. In refugee camps, every family group is given a food distribution card. Refugees need to show this card in order to receive food aid. This ensures that food is equally distributed to all people in the camp. Family groups will normally receive a combination of grains, beans or lentils, cooking oil, and some sugar and salt.

The minimum international standard is to provide each adult with 2100 calories of food a day. That amount of calories will sustain a reasonably healthy person.

Nutrition

Malnutrition is not the same as hunger. It is a disease that mainly affects children under the age of five when their rapidly growing bodies do not receive the right balance of nutrients, vitamins and minerals.

Malnutrition weakens resistance to disease, and increases the risk of dying from pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria, measles and AIDS.

Médecins Sans Frontières has successfully used RUF (ready-to-use food, a peanut, milk based product containing minerals and vitamins) to treat severe malnutrition, but it is difficult to reach all those children in need with limited resources. It is estimated that only 3% of the 20 million children suffering from severe malnutrition will receive the treatment they need.

The World Health Organization estimates there are 178 million children that are malnourished across the globe, and at any given moment, 20 million suffering from the most severe form. Médecins Sans Frontières has treated over 150,000 children in 2006 and 2007 in 22 countries with therapeutic food (ie food they **need** in order for normal growth and resisting diseases).