

Mikayla Sullivan  
Ames High School  
Ames, Iowa  
Libya , Factor 14

### **Food Security in Libya: Impact and Implications of Civil War**

A stable government can be difficult to achieve and maintain and stability can become more fragile when a government is in the process of changing, whether it be due to change in leadership or the implementation of a completely new government. This stability is threatened even more so when the general population is not happy and they feel they have little input in the decision making process that affects their lives and livelihoods. They have no opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns. Recently in Libya there has been great unrest and turmoil. A variety of things are impacting the daily life of people in Libya. Increased acts of violence due to civil war and bombing have destroyed cities and homes throughout the country. There is also a lack of food supply for the citizens due to the government restrictions on imports resulting from the political unrest in the country. Most citizens of Libya receive low wages for the work that they do. The government continues to subsidize many products but due to the rising prices all over the world, prices of goods have increased without a corresponding increase in wages. These issues have led the country into a civil war between the government forces of Colonel Gaddafi and the opposition, the National Transitional Council who represent a large proportion of the Libyan population. These events have led to instability in, and potentially the collapse of the former Gaddafi government resulting in a lack of supplies, food and water in some parts of the country. This has also led to loss of life, and destruction of cities agricultural production, and delivery of food and services. A move to democracy may help to stabilize the country and provide an adequate food supply to the general population. The citizens of Libya will need assistance from foreign countries as well as international organizations to accomplish this goal.

Libya has several areas of urbanization where most of the country's population live and work. Wages are typically low but in contrast the Gaddafi state did control aspects of the economy, which enabled the cost of certain items such as gas and food to be kept low. Official statistics regarding poverty rates are not available but it is thought that the number of people living below the poverty line is between 7% - 40%. National subsidies on a few basic food items had been previously provided although these have reduced quite drastically over the past few years (National Transitional Council). These reductions have a large impact on families. A typical family, living in the city, usually consists of five or six people. As an Arab country it is common in Islamic homes for married sons to live with their fathers until they die and for the unmarried daughters to remain with their parents too. Hence the larger family unit compared to family sizes in the United States. It is more common in Libya for the extended family as well as the immediate family to all live together but with such low incomes it makes adequate food provision difficult.

During the Gaddafi era the people of Libya had access to free, mandatory education as well as free basic health care, which were provided by the government. The free medical care however is viewed with distrust because many of the medical institutions are corrupted and they don't provide the adequate care the people need. Public health expenditure for 2007 was only 1.9% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and 5.4% of total government spending. The health system is not adequate to cover the population's needs, with many Libyans having to travel abroad for simple procedures (National Transitional Council). These simple procedures range anywhere from basic immunizations to any number of medical surgeries and procedures and cost quite a bit more since families have to travel out of the country to have them done and with a low income that creates the problem of disease spreading.

Many of these families that live in major cities get their income from factory jobs or services including oil drilling. Drilling is a huge part of the Libyan economy; it is 70% of the country's GDP. However there has been little transparency about all of the government funds, a lot of the funds have remained unaccounted for. They have been deposited into the pockets of the government officials instead of being used to benefit the general public. That money that is being taken from the country to benefit individuals could be used to raise

the paychecks of the general public that works for the government. Due to the corruption many people don't receive the wages they deserve and don't receive them on a regular basis, causing many families to struggle to keep food on the table.

The average monthly income is estimated to be \$170 (U.S) but it is reported that employees are paid irregularly, especially those employed in the public sector (Labor-Libya). Most spend their income on housing, food and clothing and usually shop at the local market. The houses that families live in are usually small and crowded and have little personal space. Families usually buy their food from local markets, where they purchase items for their main diet main of grain, dates, milk, and olives. The diet that they have is a remarkably healthy one compared to other countries around the world, and they eat food that is not only healthy but is supposed to help prolong your lifespan. Families in Libya sometimes have a hard time acquiring the food they need to support their families because they don't have a high income. This limits the amount of food they can purchase at local markets. Local farmers are also feeling the burden of increased prices and limited markets. Farmers depend on foreign laborers for the planting, maintenance and harvesting of the tomato and other vegetable crops. Most foreign laborers have fled, causing a labor scarcity compounded by increased costs of fertilizer and pesticide. The conflict has also cut off farmers from markets in the west, which has historically represented a varied but often important market for tomatoes and other produce grown in the East (Emergency Market and Mapping Analysis). Even with the issues surrounding low wages and food markets it is not the only thing that prevents them from purchasing adequate food to support their families, the government also plays a part in food availability within Libya.

The government stands in the way of the Libyan people because it controls almost everything in the country such as, limiting the imports and exports of certain products. They control the wages each family receives for the work that they do. The government also provide healthcare for all the citizens in that country. Having the type of government that Libya does the country runs more as a dictatorship where one person, Gaddafi is in control of decisions for the whole country. This can either help or a hinder a country, and in this case it limits the countries ability to grow and develop. This current leadership prevents the country from supporting the families and citizens that live there. Officials want to stay in power, doing whatever is necessary to do so, irrespective of the suffering it can cause to the population.

The ongoing unrest and conflict has added to the difficulties families have had in trying to provide for themselves. The National Transitional Council (NTC) is a transitional government whose aim is to rid the country of Gaddafi's dictatorship. The NTC state they are the people of Libya, wanting to create a new Libya that ensures freedom, democracy and justice to all. They oppose Colonel Gaddafi but yet are more than just opposition. They want to create a new future that promises hope and equal opportunities to all (National Transitional Council). Once Colonel Gaddafi has surrendered his position the NTC's aim is to hold democratic elections allowing the people of Libya to decide what form of government they want and whom they want as their leader. Gaddafi's dictatorial rule is no longer tolerated by the people of Libya.

Due to all of this fighting cities are being terrorized, crops are being destroyed, and many citizens fear for their lives. Numerous families have already lost their farms and their only source of income: the crops they grew. Many of the families that live in the cities are not faring much better as they are unable to purchase the food they need to survive. Gaddafi has frozen foreign assets preventing many countries from bringing aid and relief to the people in need. Libya is not only in a civil war but a humanitarian crisis is forming as well. There are people starving and suffering from trauma, and there is very little the rest of the world can do to help. Once agricultural production is stimulated there will be greater access to the food being grown because there would be more of it will be readily available. The necessary importing of food would also be able to increase. Due to all of the fighting, the government has limited the amount of imports the country is allowing inside, which limits the amount of food causing many people to not be able to purchase the food they need to survive and keep their families healthy. Many countries have recognized the NTC as the new government of Libya, and began sending whatever aid they could to help them, but there are countries including the U.S that still support Gaddafi and the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Right now it seems as though the conflict in Libya will not be settled through peaceful measures. Neither side wants to compromise on what they believe is right. According to the NTC, Libya's society and government would improve drastically if Gaddafi's reign was over. Many cities have now been free of Gaddafi's regime for almost two months, and during this period, measurable improvements have been made to society. In Benghazi, for example, crime rates have actually gone down (National Transitional Council). Crime rate, though, is not the only measurement of the success of the government. "Good governance emphasizes the partnership between citizens and government for the common good, specifically addressing how mechanisms, processes and institutions facilitate citizens and groups to articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their responsibilities, and mediate their differences" (Mercy Corps). To truly measure if the government is improving and accountability and transparency are increasing, we must look at all aspect of government, especially the policies that impact the people of the country. There is potential that the state of the situation could change for the better, which would improve people's access to food and markets, but it doesn't appear that this will happen in the near future.

The access to food is essential because the environment in Libya prevents Libya from producing enough food to sustain the country due the arid conditions. The environment hasn't suffered too much throughout all of this chaos. Libya is mostly barren, flat to undulating plains, plateaus, and depressions (CIA World Fact Book). Because of Libya's arid land, leaving little to be inhabited by vegetation. There is nearly no environment to be degraded due to the fact that the country is mostly a desert. The area that is used for agricultural production is less than one percent of the total land. If this land is bombed, it could destroy the country's economy. About 17 % of Libya's workforce receives its income through agricultural production (CIA World Fact Book). If land was destroyed, many people and families would lose their incomes. Not only would families suffer, but the country would also be forced to import more food because they wouldn't be producing as much. Right now Libya imports most of the food it needs due to this barren environment, but that causes a problem for food markets. Non-integrated markets (markets that have linkages to several sources (producers) and markets (places to sell goods) are extremely susceptible to shocks in the market. For instance, because nearly everything was coming in through Tripoli, when the conflict began and the east became cut off from the west, there was initially a HUGE amount of food insecurity and shortages (Jill Morehead). This would mean valuable resources and money that could be spent to help improve agricultural production or learning in the country would, instead have to be used to buy enough food to feed the nation.

Women play a part in the agricultural production of Libya because many of them help their family's farm and provide enough food for their children. However sometimes it is difficult because women under the current government in Libya are not always viewed as equals to men. Since Libya is mainly a population of Islamic faith, women follow the guidelines outlined in the Koran and are still viewed as inferior to men by very religious people. Today there is a more freedom than there used to be, as women do have a voice, and they are allowed to vote and participate in society. Others members of society still believe that their place still remains in the home, taking care of the family. Even though some believe women should be at home, all women receive a compulsory education when they are children, some even go on to get jobs outside of the homes. Women also receive the same labor protection that men do. They can only work only 48 hours a week, and they receive equal pay for equal hours. Even though they receive some of the same opportunities, there are few women in high up government jobs such as judges. Part of this is because women sometimes have to wait longer to receive opportunities than men do. Medical student Hannin Mohammed got a rare opportunity for a young woman in Libya: to work in a hospital beside men during the six-month siege. "When we were students, we were not allowed even on the wards for three years, unlike the boys," said Mohammed, 21. "Now, I know so much" (Libya Rebel Women).

Many women in Libya believe the rebel organization is their best chance to fight for their freedom. Many of them are fighting alongside the NTC, because once Gaddafi is removed from power, the people will be able to vote for the type of government they want. Women will be able to vote for laws that allow equal participation in all fields without limitation. Women will have the opportunities to work in hospitals without

have to wait longer than men. Equality is very important to many women, so they will continue to fight until they receive it.

If this factor of gender discrimination as well as the civil war could be resolved, social life in Libya would dramatically increase. Once all the conflict and civil war in Libya ended, the government could focus on how to rebuild the economy and improve the lives of the Libyan people. The government can start to focus on schooling, transportation, agricultural production, all stimulating the economy. Foreign countries can also send food and medical supplies to help all of the people suffering from trauma and malnutrition more easily once the conflict is resolved. This would help save the lives of the people in Libya. If foreign countries just sent food aid it would only increase the food supply for a while, or at least until that country stopped sending aid. "Feeding programs are most effective, however, when they do not stand by themselves but are part of a relief or rehabilitation program aimed at strengthening the resilience of households and rural economies. Organizing such programs requires a broad understanding of how people usually obtain their food and how these means are affected by conflict" (A. Hussain). To really help Libya, it would be best to set up institutions to focus on increasing the food production, not only through imports but also through local agricultural production. It would also be beneficial to increase education in the areas of agriculture so people can learn new production techniques and become more self-sufficient.

The average family in Libya looks to have a long uphill struggle ahead of them not only to produce enough food to sustain themselves but to also do their part to end the conflict in the country. The country will need to focus on rebuilding and providing for all of the citizens of the country. Families also have the constant fear of local bombings occurring in cities near rebel locations. Once the conflict stops, many people may look to urbanization as a new life. Their homes, family, and or livelihood (their crops) may have been destroyed due to the bombing of the country, and they will need to rebuild and start over so they can survive. This crowding of people into cities of recent destruction can lead to many problems of overcrowding, disease, and a limited supply of water. If this occurs it will potentially make the situation worse in Libya. Not only will fighting ensue, but there would also be less of a food and water supply, and people would be dying from diseases.

To solve the problems Libya is facing right now foreign countries need to offer aid. The first step that needs to be accomplished is to end the conflict and war within Libya. This should be accomplished through the help of foreign countries and NATO. This is a difficult task to say because it means that foreign countries must choose a side, either the NTC or the Socialist State under Gaddafi. Many countries already chose the NTC and sent aid, but for this war to end, more aid is going to need to be sent. If countries are looking at Libya and deciding which side to take consideration must be made to what type of government they believe is best for Libya, whether it be the Socialist State or a government based on what the people of Libya want.

If a country helped the NTC they can aid in institution of the type of government that would benefit Libya. The best way to do that is to set up institutions to aid the country, including the economy and the people. If new institutions were formed food accessibility would be dramatically increased, through agricultural production within the country as well as aid from foreign countries. Education about food production would increase to benefit the country in a positive way. A new form of health care would be implemented that had the trust of the people of Libya. People would no longer have to travel outside of the country to have simple procedures done. Whether health care be provided to all, or it be something that each citizen has to pay for, the country would have to decide that, and then it would need help from other countries around the world to help institute that decision.

Democratic policies would have to be instituted to enforce equality between men and women and protect the rights of people, including life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Many people are afraid of the government that currently resides in Libya and the war that is going on shows that this government won't last for long. It would be best if countries could aid Libya by helping them transition to a more democratic country. We also need to limit the corruption that is occurring in the government in Libya right now. The

corruption is causing a lot of government funds to go into the pockets of officials instead of to aide the people of Libya. If that money were spent to improve education, if it were invested in the economy, if it were used to improve the infrastructure of Libya the success of the country would increase dramatically. If we can assist in an increase education, food production, and institute policies, and limit corruption we can help Libya become the country the people want it to be and end all of the conflict that resides in the country right now.

Libya is going to need a lot of help to institute change in their government. They will need help from many organizations throughout the world. "Of course, averting or stopping conflict will do more to help children and to prevent widespread acute malnutrition than any intervention implemented during armed conflict. Therefore, more efforts and resources should be concentrated on conflict resolution and on creating a climate of political will to create dialogue instead of fighting, both in countries suffering from armed conflict and in countries affected by internal violence that could eventually lead to armed conflict" (A. Hussain). First and foremost, Libya will need help to end the conflicts and the bombing that is taking place, before they can think about implementing reforms. If that can be achieved and the conflict can be resolved helping the government improve will be much more attainable goal.

Once the conflict is resolved there can be movement to improving the policies of the government and even forming a new government. The country will need assistance from non-profit organizations such as Red Cross to come in and help with all of the victims from the fighting and provide medical relief and food aide for all of the families and farmers that lost their food intake during the fighting. The country will also need organizations to not only donate food, but to also sell it to the country cheaply to be used to increase the food markets within the country. It is better for people to have to purchase cheap food rather than become dependant on the food that is provided for free; because once the aide is gone families will not have the knowledge necessary to continue providing for themselves. Libya may also need help from the World Bank in the form of a loan. The cost to rebuild all of the cities destroyed by the bombing will be substantial. It would also be beneficial for the country to consider using some money to improve the education and health care systems of Libya. It will be very important for other countries to invest time and money in Libya, helping it form a new government and providing aide through monetary substances to help with the construction and formation of this new government.

Overall Libya is in a very difficult situation right now. The war within the country has caused many people to lose their lives as well as cities being destroyed. The anger and disruption arose because of the existing Libyan government. There is corruption and dictatorship, and the people of Libya want more of a voice in their leadership. Libyans want democratic institutions installed within the government. They want to be able to vote for the country officials, as well as have an influence on the policies that are created for their country. This conflict needs to be resolved, and it can be, with the assistance of other countries around the world. If other countries can provide technical know how to the new government on how to set up rule of law, how to maintain and foster transparency and allow democratic processes, so that the people can hold politicians accountable for policies that they don't agree with, it could help to mitigate some of these issues. Conflict always disrupts a market, but when a government puts unsustainable policies in place and there is no democratic mechanism to remove the government, then conflict arises (Jill Morehead). Libya needs to set up a government where there is honesty and accountability, adequate health care to take care of the people of the country, and education to promote agricultural production and food imports to supply adequate nutrition. All of these measures are essential to resolve the conflict in Libya and the country will become stronger and more economically sound. However the most important issues is the lack of food supply stability within the country. Libya will not be able to secure their food supply without aid from the global community and international organizations. Over time, as the political situation in Libya stabilizes the people of Libya are going to need to continue to look for ways to supply adequate food and nutrition to the general population. This can be accomplished through not only outside help, but more importantly from the Libyan people themselves, by increased educational opportunities to help increase agricultural supply and productivity.

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