Food

The right to food is protected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Conventions, and therefore should be granted to every human being in every situation. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights introduced the concept of “adequate food” (Article 11) as one of the crucial rights to guarantee “an adequate standard of living.” This definition is further clarified in the “General Comment No. 12, The Right to Adequate Food,” which defines “availability, accessibility, adequacy and sustainability” as key elements in the right. The first definition of a “world food security system ... which would ensure adequate availability of, and reasonable prices for, food at all times” appeared in the Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition (UDEHM, section g). The United Nations has two agencies that grant access to food: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Program. These organizations work together with a variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other institutions. The main humanitarian issue related to food is famine. Following the 1974 famine in Bangladesh, the UDEHM was approved, and introduced the concept of Food Security (FS), which aims to guarantee access to food in any context. FS acquired global importance during the famines in Ethiopia and the Sahel (1984–1985), whose representation in Western media generated a massive food delivery (Edkins 2000). Amartya Sen (1983) defines famine as a reduction of “exchange entitlement” that someone has towards food, overtaking the traditional Malthusian approach that associated famines with a population growing faster than the food production capacity. Sen defines the “exchange entitlement” as the “set of all the alternative bundles of commodities” that someone “can acquire in exchange for what he owns.” Thus, famine happens when “the exchange entitlement does not contain any feasible bundle including enough food” (Sen 1983: 3). Alex de Waal (1997: 23) emphasizes how Sen contributed to “the institutionalization and professionalization of fighting famine”: famines are defined as a technical problem produced by several (including natural) causes that can be solved by appropriate institutions. However, despite the effort of Sen to connect famines to their political causes, humanitarian organizations could not fully deal with them, as exemplified by the Ethiopia famine of 1984–1985, when the responsibilities of the government had to be hidden to allow relief interventions (Edkins 2000). Moreover, humanitarian organizations narrowed the definition of famine as an “epidemic undernutrition” (de Waal 1997: 55), focusing on food mainly as a source of nutrients and further depoliticizing the treatment of famines. In the 1990s, in the wake of free trade agreements including

staple food, social movements connected to peasants' organizations in the Global South drafted a critique of this approach and promoted the concept of "food sovereignty," which connected the idea of "adequate food" to characteristics such as "healthy and culturally appropriate" and "produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods" (Declaration of Nyéléni 2007). This concept was partially taken into account by the FAO and some governments in their development policies.

In the last two decades, humanitarian approaches towards food have been partially revised by the idea of a "relief development continuum" (Scott-Smith 2018a: 668) and the frameworks of the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. Following these debates, two approaches became influential in RS policies: the idea of resilience as a clue for famine prevention and the reliance on "Ready to Use Therapeutic Food" (RUTF) as a standard remedy for malnutrition. Resilience emphasizes the need of communities to reduce vulnerability to external shock, diversifying the production and increasing the capacity of local producers, so that they can quickly react, relying on humanitarian organizations only for some support. RUTFs are pastes enriched with nutrients easy to administer to malnourished people, which is a quick solution that can potentially be applied to any context and can be handled by local communities as they do not require heavy infrastructure or trained staff to be administered (Scott-Smith 2018b). However, the 2007–2008 food price crisis made evident the difficulties in controlling the fluctuation of the markets and protecting the more vulnerable strata of society by promoting their "resilience." The reactions to the famines in the Horn of Africa and Sahel in 2011 were also criticized as slow and incapable of reaching vulnerable groups (Save the Children and Oxfam 2012), while NGOs and scholars criticized the "fetishization" of the RUTFs as a sort of miraculous solution for any forms of malnutrition (Scott-Smith 2018b). Despite efforts to revise their strategies and assumptions, the main challenge for humanitarian institutions remains to better contextualize food in its complex circuit of production and exchange on both global and local levels.

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Foreign Aid

Foreign aid can be defined as an international transfer of resources (capital, goods, or services) on a voluntary basis from one country or international organization (a donor) to another country (recipient). This transfer aims to benefit the population of a developing country in the form of either grants or loans. Foreign aid includes military, economic, or humanitarian international assistance. The United Nations target for foreign aid is 0.7 percent of a donor country's gross national income.

In the post-Cold War context, foreign aid combines humanitarian intervention with political action and can be considered as a pillar of political humanitarianism. Humanitarian intervention was limited by the principle of non-interference into the domestic affairs of the sovereign states in the post-1945 bipolar world. In the multipolar world after 1991, foreign aid has become a product of the interventionist approach to international relations (Macrae and Leader 2000).

Foreign aid is based on the foreign policy interests of donors, embedded in humanitarian and development projects, and on the engagement between aid organizations and political authorities in times of crisis on issues of population access and aid distribution (Ehrenfeld 2004). Donor foreign policy interests vary from getting access to the country's strategic natural resources in exchange for aid to reducing the number of refugees coming out of crisis zones. This means that, in some cases, the provision of foreign aid benefits the donor countries more than the recipients (Atlani-Duault and Dozon 2011). The dependency between the donor and recipient countries is indeed two way: "although