

**Five Lessons Learned at Food for Peace**  
**Luncheon Keynote: USDA and USAID International Food Assistance & Food Security**  
**Conference, Des Moines, Iowa**  
**Dina Esposito, Director, USAID Office of Food for Peace**  
**October 10, 2016**

I was delighted to be invited to speak here at lunch today. I have been in Food for Peace for six years now and there is a lot to reflect upon. It has been a time of real change, in terms of the growing US commitment to advancing agriculture, and food and nutrition security; in terms of the changing face of hunger with new conflicts and record levels of displacement; and in terms of the ambitious agenda we collectively set out for ourselves in the Sustainable Development goals – specifically SDG 2, relating to ending end hunger by 2030.

I spent quite some time thinking about how to organize my remarks and decided that it would be a good challenge for me to consider a question many of us often ask our kids in some form or another when they get home from school – what did you learn today? So, I am going to share my reflections in the form of Five Lessons I have learned at Food for Peace.

My lessons relate to

- ✓ humanitarian emergencies,
- ✓ nutrition,
- ✓ our efforts to achieve more sustainable results, and
- ✓ building resilience of vulnerable communities,
- ✓ and then I have a final lesson on Food for Peace and its partners role in ending hunger.

I want to start first though with a quick overview of who we are for those of you who don't know FFP too well.

**WHO WE ARE**

- Food for Peace is the largest provider of both in kind and cash based food assistance in the world. Our operating budget last year was about \$2.8 billion.
- Funding for our Office is authorized and appropriated in two ways – through Food for Peace Act of the Farm Bill , which we often refer to as the Title II program ; and through the Foreign Assistance Act, which funds our cash based food assistance. We refer to this program as the Emergency Food Security Program or EFSP, and we use it to buy food locally or regionally closer to a crisis, or to support cash based transfers or food vouchers. Our funding was split roughly 60-40 between the Title II and EFSP last year.

- We have more than 200 staff in Washington and in 29 countries around the world. For the most part they are housed USAID Missions and posted to some of the toughest spots on earth – from Iraq to South Sudan to DRC to Bangladesh, Nepal, Haiti and beyond.
- We choose commodities based on what our partners believe is most appropriate to the context they are working in and **we have not been a U.S. surplus disposal program for decades.** Through our Title II programs we buy food in the United States through the U.S. Dept of Agriculture at commercial rates, based on what our partners tell us they need.
- We are the only office of USAID that manages both emergency response and development programs; this gives us a very unique perspective as we prioritize development in very challenging environments – specifically those places that face chronic or recurrent shocks like drought or flooding and might otherwise require year on year HA.
- Our work is implemented either through non governmental organizations which we refer to as private voluntary organizations, or PVOs, or the United Nations organizations like the UN World Food Program or UNICEF. We do not provide money or food directly to governments.
- And finally, our work will contribute to the new U.S. government Global Food Security Strategy which USAID submitted to Congress last week and which you will hear more about tomorrow. The new Global Food Security Act is an historic bipartisan piece of legislation that commits the United States to a comprehensive approach to increase global food security and improve nutrition in the developing world.

So that's a bit of background on who we are.

Now, I turn to some of the lessons I have learned in my six years at Food for Peace:

**Lesson One: –Conflict has returned as the predominant force shaping humanitarian assistance:** Back in 2001, I wrote a chapter on humanitarian trends for a report called *USAID and the National Interest*. And at that time, I wrote that while conflict was a primary driver of humanitarian assistance in the 1990s, future humanitarians would be focused much more on mega **natural** disasters, brought on by ever more severe and erratic weather.

And that premise in fact held true for roughly the first decade of this century. But the United Nations has recently noted that while in 2006, 80 percent of resources were dedicated to natural

disasters and 20 percent were used in response to conflicts, today those numbers are reversed, with 80 percent of humanitarian funding now going towards conflict related crises.

We know that today, more people are displaced by violence – some 65 million –than has ever been recorded.

- The levels of displacement have doubled in the last decade – and grown every year that I have been Director - and this matters to us because we are the U.S. government office responsible for contributing to food assistance for both refugees and persons displaced inside their own countries. And evidence tells us that today the average length of time for conflict related displacement is now 26 years. Think about that. 26 years. Very different from the natural disaster cycles where we can hope for recovery in a few years' time. This has huge implications for us as an office.
- Syria and Iraq are the primary drivers of these record numbers but there are a string of less well known crises that are also wreaking havoc, from Yemen to Ukraine to Sudan and South Sudan, Nigeria, Burundi, Somalia, Central African Republic, Mali, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- **From a hunger lens, when you look at conflicts and natural disasters combined, our partner FEWSNET reports that some 66 million people around the world were in need of emergency food assistance last year.**

**Before I move on to the next lesson, I want to showcase a couple of examples of our emergency response in conflict settings: Syria and South Sudan.**

When I started six years ago we did not have any programs in Syria (or Iraq for that matter) and our emergency response in Yemen was very modest. Today those three countries in the Middle East alone comprise almost 30 percent of our emergency relief budget.

Last week -- as it was the end of our fiscal year – the Food for Peace Syria officer sent a message of thanks to FFP staff and others around the agency who played a critical role in getting lifesaving aid to so many.

I want to share her words with you because whether you are inside the US government, one of our partners or simply a US taxpayer, her remarks also extends to you.

She writes: Thanks to all the support from you, Food for Peace has managed to provide emergency food assistance to feed 5 million of the most vulnerable Syrians **every month**: 4 million inside Syria and 1 million Syrian refugees.

This fiscal year, you helped:

- FFP's PVO partners deliver more than 1 million food baskets cross-border from Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq to vulnerable families inside Syria.
- You helped FFP PVO partners deliver more than 80,000 metric tons of flour to stabilize prices and increase availability of bread, a staple in the Syrian diet.
- You helped WFP deliver emergency assistance to millions of people inside Syria, including 1.3 million people trapped in hard-to-reach and besieged areas, using all available means: airdrops from a plane at 27,000 feet, air bridges from Damascus, nighttime mile-long convoys, and a crane (yes, a crane) across the Jordanian border in the middle of the desert.
- You helped WFP deliver debit-card vouchers to millions of Syrian refugees, helping them shop with dignity for nutritionally balanced meals.
  
- Thank you for doing your part; every bit counts toward our goal of saving lives, reducing suffering, and maintaining the dignity of those affected by this awful war.

**I want to also highlight a very different but equally dramatic and challenging operation: South Sudan.**

Since the conflict erupted in December 2013 conditions have steadily worsened throughout the country. Entire areas have been cut off from commercial trade even as farming and other forms of local livelihoods have been disrupted. Food in many markets is so scarce that prices have risen 800 percent these last three years. As a result, more than 40 percent of the population is now in need of lifesaving aid. In the hardest hit areas, thousands of households are facing famine-like conditions.

The United States through Food for Peace **has shipped more than 368,000 tons of U.S. food** to South Sudan since 2013 and this food moves into the landlocked country from Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia. With the help of the UN World Food Program, UNICEF, and our PVO partners we reach **1.3 million people inside the country every month** as well as helping more than **1 million south Sudanese refugees** in neighboring countries. Our U.S. food, including sorghum, beans, oil, CSB, and Ready to use food reaches hungry people by truck, by barge and in worst case scenarios, by air. Assessments have determined that this aid has been vital in averting famine to date.

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The Syria and South Sudan example showcase the various tools now available to us -- from the in kind food assistance procured in the US, to food procured and packaged into family packs closer to the crisis, to the debit card approach for refugees widely dispersed in urban and peri urban areas of middle income countries. Our staff and our partners continue to invest in context analysis in order to choose modalities that best meet program goals, rather than rely on any pre-determined formula.

While I won't discuss the other operations, here is a list of the top five emergencies Food for Peace responded to last year – four of the top five being predominantly funded through the Title II account. Notably, Ethiopia received almost 700,0000 tons, as part of our response to an historic drought there and Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen all received more than 100,000 tons. All told last year, Food for Peace shipped more **than 1.6 million tons of US food** around the world.

In closing out this lesson, I want to mention that the world gathered this April at the first ever World Humanitarian Summit and again at President Obama's Refugee Summit in New York last month to begin to grapple with the sheer scope and scale of the global crises and the almost unimaginable human suffering they are generating. Countries and implementing agencies:

- ✓ committed to increasing the global availability of resources for these crises;
- ✓ they committed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of ongoing operations,
- ✓ and to bringing relief and development approaches closer together for more durable results.

FFP is addressing these issues in its own way through a growing budget, a drive towards more efficient and effective programming, and piloting of new approaches in both relief and development settings. One constant in all this though is the unflagging commitment of our partners and staff to stay the course in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Your efforts are nothing short of heroic.

My second lessons relates to nutrition, a growing focus of our office these past 6 years. I have learned that:

**Lesson Two: The nutritional profile of food we offer & the way we program it must continue to evolve**

The very reason we are in Iowa this week is to celebrate strides taken to increase the nutrient and micro-nutrient value of foods that make up the normal diets of the poor—sweet potatoes, rice, wheat, millet, cassava and maize. How very important it is, then, that we consider how in-

kind food assistance also addresses not only not only caloric shortfalls, but critical nutrient and micro-nutrients deficits.

Food for Peace began improving the nutritional profile of humanitarian food five years ago thanks to the Food Aid Quality Review process. The U.S. now has 21 new and improved food products in the Title II basket – everything from ready to use foods to improved milled and blended foods like corn soy blend PLUS and supercereal plus, to vitamin A&D fortified vegetable oil and fortified rice. And we are organizing ourselves so that our food basket can continue to evolve as we learn more and more about what works.

But even with more nutritious foods and the promotion of “essential nutrition actions” like exclusive breastfeeding research tells us that there are still significant pieces of the nutrition puzzle missing. Areas of increasing focus for us include:

- **first, Taking a "life cycle" approach to nutrition.** Evidence suggests that women who are well-nourished at the start of their pregnancies have better birth outcomes; and yet in less developed countries, there is a high likelihood that those women will in fact NOT approach their reproductive years well nourished. Our approach must be more comprehensive, addressing the needs of girls and women throughout their lives, not just at pregnancy, if we are to move the needle more aggressively on stunting and improve health indicators overall.
- We also want to think more **about closing the gap between our approaches to acute and chronic malnutrition**. Those approaches have become increasingly specialized and increasingly divergent, and yet, in the field, we know that chronic and acute malnutrition almost always overlap. Our programming needs to more explicitly recognize that fact, working with community health workers and local health services to rejoin them in a meaningful way.
- And finally, we also want to take a closer look at **environmental hygiene and food safety**. We have talked about the importance of both caloric content and improved micronutrient formulations of food for a healthful diet. But we also realize that even if we are able to provide a steady diet of nutritious foods, we are not moving the needle as dramatically as we should be on stunting. Research is beginning to point us towards poor environmental hygiene and mycotoxin contamination as potential “spoilors” in our efforts to date. We are doubling down on our water, sanitation and hygiene efforts but there is much to be learned about what is essentially both an agricultural and a health challenge. FFP is prepared to delve further into this area, recognizing that more nutritious food transfers must be accompanied by complementary activities if recipients are to fully reap the benefits.

### **Lesson Three – Big Results do not always equal Sustainable results.**

In 2009, one year before I arrived in Food for Peace, the Office commissioned a rather extraordinary five year study: it asked Tufts University to look at what factors enhance the likelihood that FFP funded development activities will have sustained benefits beyond the life of the programs. The study team looked at 12 FFP projects across four countries and asked not *only* “*what was achieved at project end?*” but also, “*what of those achievements remained one year after project close out? And two years?*” Researchers returned to project areas over a three year period to find the answers to these questions.

I won't give you the details of the research but I will tell you that the findings challenge us to take a fresh look at our approaches: it calls for greater focus on issues of sustainability and exit strategy at time of project design; it cautions that replacements for free resource transfers (including food) must be identified well before project closure, and states that some actions that drive big results during the life of the project may actually undermine sustainability in the long run. (You can learn more by attending a 10:45 breakout session tomorrow morning on this topic).

As a result of this report we have taken a number of steps:

- Our technical review panels have dedicated points to score applicants' sustainability strategies at the project design stage;
- We have embarked on a discussion with partners on indicators that can help us better measure progress towards sustainability during the life of the program ; and
- We have launched a *pilot “refine and implement”* approach to development programs. Rather than the usual “hit the ground running” approach, we give partners more time after the award to listen and learn, to get to know communities better, get smarter about underlying factors that could impinge on success and refine their overall approach. It is our aim that through a “refine and implement” model that gets us smarter about local context we can achieve both **BIGGER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE** results.

## **Lesson Four – Building Resilience is the core concept that links FFP programs to the larger Feed the Future global food security agenda.**

When I first arrived in my position six years ago my Bureau leadership asked me to delve into the following question, “What is the relationship between the Food for Peace program and the larger Feed the Future global hunger initiative? How do we explain why Food for Peace remains in the relief arm of the Agency rather than be housed in the newly formed Bureau for Food Security? Does that make us “in” or “out” of the initiative?”

I heard a similar question from Food for Peace partners: Are we being left out? The answer to that question has emerged quite clearly over the course of the last few years in the aftermath of two devastating droughts, one in the Horn of Africa in 2011; and the other across West Africa in 2012. They not only caused severe food crises and threatened and lives and livelihoods of millions of people but also generated huge economic losses for the countries affected. In Kenya alone it was estimated that the drought crisis resulted in over \$12 billion in losses to the Kenyan economy.

Something unique happened after that: the international community began to converge around the idea of resilience as an organizing concept and framework for analyzing and addressing the underlying causes of chronic vulnerability and recurrent crisis.

And this is fundamentally changing the way USAID and its partners think about development, bringing many more development experts and resources into what we think of as FFP’s traditional orbit-- extremely poor communities living in areas prone to recurrent shocks.

In the past few years, a number of Feed the Future country teams have expanded the geographic areas of their work – moving to reinforce and build upon FFP development programs in disaster prone areas. USAID’s Bureau for Food Security has also co-invested in our programs, seeing that as a way to improve synergies, building coordination and collaboration in planning and design. From Haiti, to Niger to Burkina Faso, to Mali and Ethiopia and Malawi and Nepal, our years of community based work has informed the Agency’s larger resilience strategies and our programs now serve as platforms for expanding Agency investments to address recurrent shocks. Through this process, we have demonstrated why Food for Peace programming is necessary for the success of Feed the Future.

So today, this question of how FFP fits into Feed the Future is answered in our development results, which we now report directly into the Feed the Future information system; in USAID’s decision to co-invest a portion of FTF resources in these highly vulnerable areas; in FFP and the Bureau for Food Security co-design and joint review of proposals for new programs, and more explicit and advanced thinking around identification of synergies for new programs.

I believe this is a major advancement and is well outlined in the new US Global Food Security Strategy, which, thanks to the work of many you in this room, raises to prominence the issue of chronic vulnerability in a new Strategic Objective focused on Resilience. The FFP strategy we will launch this afternoon is our vision of how we contribute to that larger strategy, by improving food and nutrition security for vulnerable groups.

So these are some of the lessons I have learned as FFP Director, and I close with a final one:

**Lesson Five – FFP and its partners are better placed than ever to advance SDG 2 – Achieving Zero Hunger**

I say this because of

- the new authorities we have gained in the last five years – in both our TITLE II and EFSP authorizing bills, which gives us more flexibility than ever to tailor program to context
- I say this because of the size of our budgets, which allows us to work at scale
- I say this because our community based work is now informing larger resilience programming for vulnerable communities, with more positive knock on effects; and
- because both through the Food for Peace community of practice and our expanding in house technical team we are better placed than ever to do analysis, gather evidence based results and advance learning
- I say this because our new food products offer new opportunities to prevent and treat malnutrition and our programming around nutrition is poised to evolve further;
- **And most importantly**, I believe we will be successful because of the partnerships we have built with so many of you in this room – it is your guiding vision behind the ten year strategy we will launch this afternoon, and it is through your efforts that ideas become reality and the US brings help and hope to the most remote and food insecure places in the world.

I frequently say to my staff – as challenging as these times are, there has never been a more exciting time to work in food assistance. There is lots of room for public and private organizations, and individuals of different backgrounds to bring their breadth of expertise and passion into food security – a truly multi sectoral space that requires collective action if we are to achieve sustained results. I hope you all are as excited as we are to step into the future together to make a difference.

End.



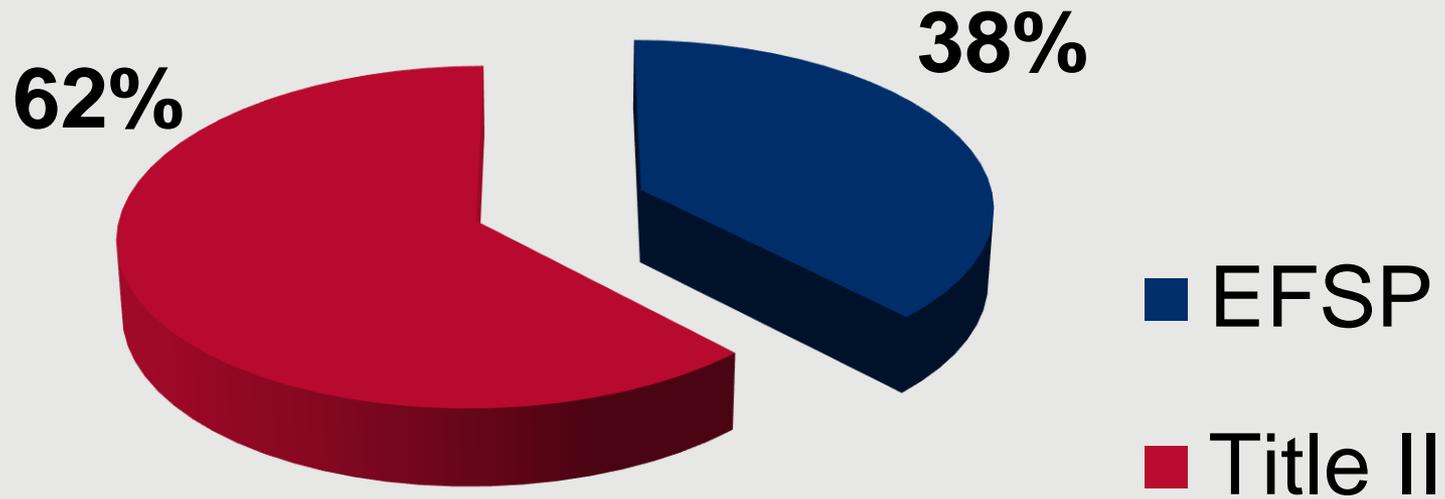
# 5 Lessons Learned at Food for Peace

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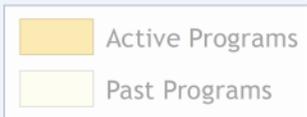
Dina Esposito  
Office of Food for Peace

USDA-USAID 2016 INTERNATIONAL  
**FOOD ASSISTANCE**  
& **FOOD SECURITY**  
CONFERENCE

# FOOD FOR PEACE (FFP) PROGRAMMED ABOUT \$2.8 BILLION IN FY 2016



**FFP has more than 200 staff-based in DC and 29 countries around the world.**



A photograph of a camel caravan in a dry, arid landscape. Two camels are visible, both carrying large white sacks on their backs. The central camel's sack is clearly marked with the USAID logo and the text 'USAID' and 'EMERGENCY SUPPLIES'. Two women are seated on the ground in front of the camels, wearing colorful traditional headscarves and shawls. The background shows sparse trees and a clear sky. The text 'LESSONS LEARNED' is overlaid in the center in a bold, dark blue font.

# LESSONS LEARNED

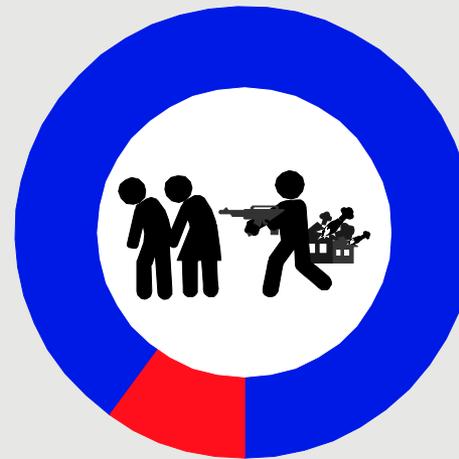
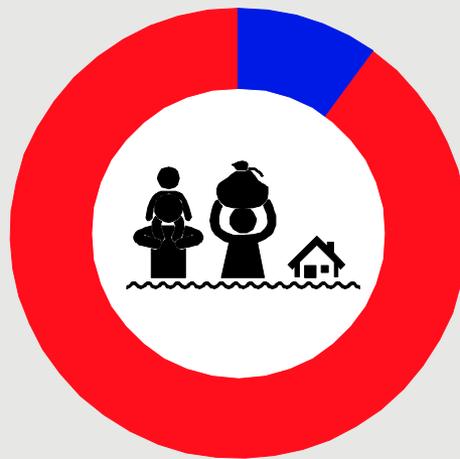


**Lesson 1: Conflict has returned  
as the predominant force  
shaping  
humanitarian assistance.**

# Humanitarian Funding and Displacement

2006  
32.9 million  
people displaced

2016  
65.3 million  
people displaced

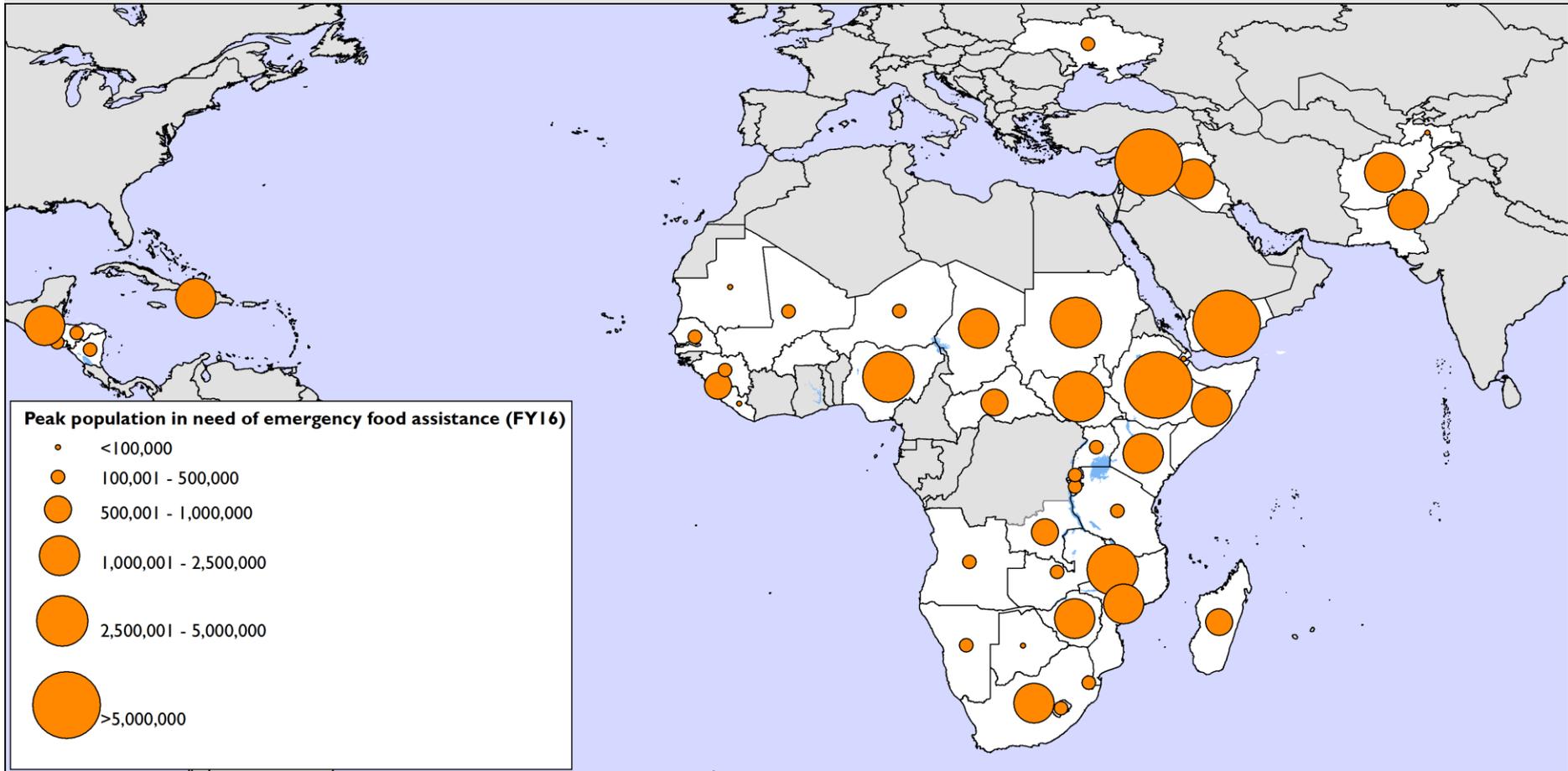


Portion of humanitarian funding in response to natural disasters



Portion of humanitarian funding in response to conflict

# 66 MILLION PEOPLE NEEDED EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE IN 2016



**\$690 Million for  
Syria, Iraq and  
Yemen in FY 2016.  
Almost 30 percent  
of our emergency  
resources.**

# Syria



Credit: Pablo Tosco, AFP



Credit: AFP



Credit: WFP

Credit: WFP



Credit: AFP







Credit: WFP



# South Sudan





Credit: AFP





Credit: WFP



Credit: WFP



Credit: AFP









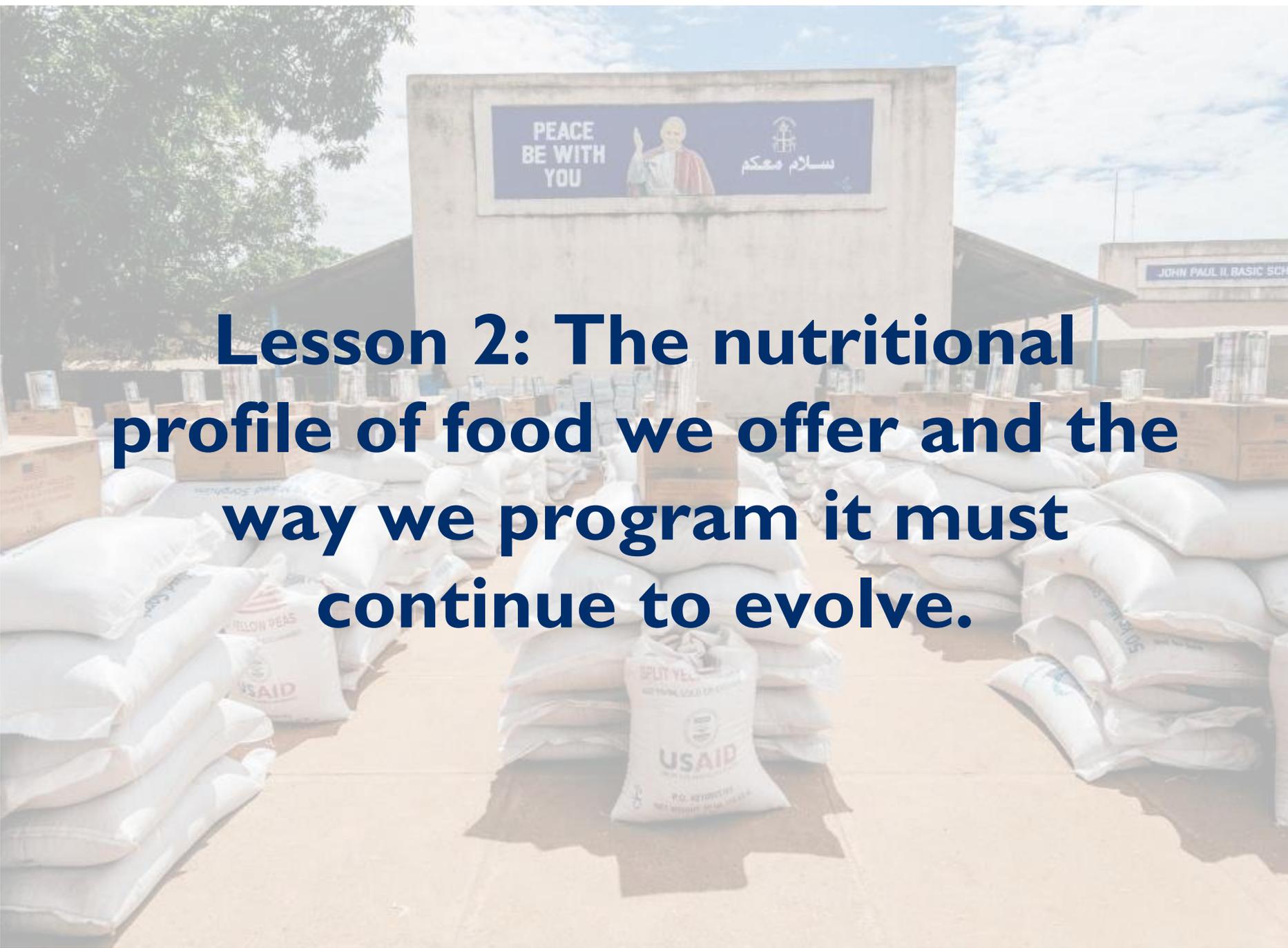
Credit: AFP

# TOP 5 EMERGENCY RESPONSES BY FUNDING IN FY 2016

Country	FY 2016 Emergency Total	Metric Tons
Syria	\$ 387,285,171	<b>1 million food baskets</b>
Ethiopia	\$ 375,179,140	<b>681,840</b>
South Sudan	\$ 304,209,417	<b>155,490</b>
Yemen	\$ 207,171,924	<b>154,960</b>
Sudan	\$158,734,307	<b>120,750</b>







**Lesson 2: The nutritional profile of food we offer and the way we program it must continue to evolve.**

# NEW AND IMPROVED PRODUCTS



# **Lesson 2 Cont'd: The nutritional profile of food we offer and the way we program it must continue to evolve.**

- **“Life cycle” approach to nutrition**
- **Close the gap between approaches to address acute and chronic malnutrition**
- **Environmental hygiene and food safety**



# **Lesson 3: Big results do not always equal sustainable results.**

Steps taken based on lessons learned:

- **Dedicated plans for sustainability**
- **Sustainability indicators**
- **Pilot “refine and implement” approach**

A woman with a black headwrap, wearing a purple short-sleeved shirt and a patterned orange and white skirt, stands in a field of green crops. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a line of trees under a bright sky.

**Lesson 4: Resilience is the core concept that links Food for Peace programs to the larger Feed the Future global food security agenda.**



# **Lesson 5: The Office of Food for Peace and its partners are better placed than ever to advance **SDG2 – ending hunger.****

- Expanded flexibility
- Budget
- Resilience
- Community of practice and in-house expertise
- Improved food products and nutrition programs
- New strategy
- Partnerships

**Thank You**

