



Protecting access to basic human needs in conflict zones



HRC

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Introduction

In times of conflict, many are stripped of their human rights or are neglected as a result of a lack of resources or prioritization. These human rights and basic needs are essential to a functioning society and so it is imperative that these are maintained in all scenarios. Despite the sheer extent to which conflicts disrupt countries, a way to ensure that these needs are fulfilled must be found to guarantee the safety and lives of civilians who are caught up in the conflict. These basic human necessities include access to water, food, shelter, and clothing. Without these things it is impossible to progress as a society and therefore, even if a country is engaged in domestic or international conflicts, these necessities should be provided for civilians. One of the most severe examples of how basic human needs were and have been neglected is in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has been in a four-decade-long period of instability which has resulted in a fragile and volatile nation. Despite the Afghanistan war ending in August 2021, violence continues to undermine the country's development with almost two-thirds of the population living in areas directly affected by conflict. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, there were approximately 111,000 civilian casualties in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2022. These casualties include people who got severely injured/ill during the conflict which shows the numerous ways in which these casualties could have been prevented if humanitarian aid had been maintained. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) now estimates that over 28 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan alone which accounts for roughly 70% of the entire population. From these figures, it is clear to see the extent to which the provision of basic human needs in this nation has been affected and neglected. The issue of protecting access to basic human needs in conflict zones, not only applies to Afghanistan but stretches further to all corners of the globe. The basic rights and needs of people are most frequently neglected in African regions with countries like Chad, Burkina Faso, and Somalia being some of the worst cases. These countries are all precise examples of how conflict leads to the indirect deaths of thousands due to an inefficient allocation of resources and an overall lack of civilian aid.

Definition of Key Terms

Basic Human Needs

Basic human needs are a minimal list of key elements that are necessary to humans in order to fulfill basic requirements and to be able to sustain themselves.

Conflict Zones

Conflict zones refer to areas in which war or political instability disrupts essential services such as housing, transportation, communication, sanitation, and health care.

Humanitarian aid

Humanitarian aid is assistance that is used to relieve suffering during emergencies. This aid is often provided to refugees, victims of natural disasters/wars, as well as the homeless.

Human rights

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of their race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, religion, or other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, the right to education, as well as freedom of opinion and expression. Not all these rights are maintained in nations around the world however it is believed that a functioning and ideal society would have as many of these rights provided to their population.

Legal frameworks

Legal frameworks are rules, rights, and obligations of companies, governments, and citizens which are set forth in a system of legal documents.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

A theory developed by the renowned American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, which is represented as a pyramid depicting how human motivation is based on the pursuit of different levels of needs and necessities.

Refugees

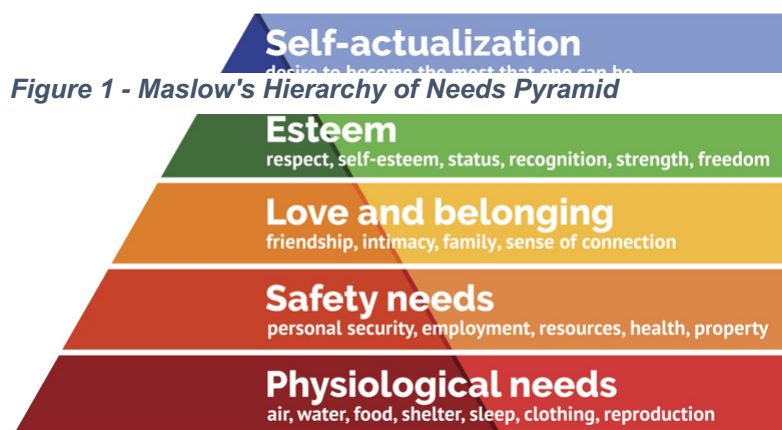
Refugees are people who have been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. Generally, refugees seek safety abroad to avoid the situation in their home country.

UNOCHA

United Nations organization that focuses on the coordination of humanitarian affairs. They are known for their aid in Afghanistan and other international organizations which help alleviate people from dire situations.

General Overview

This issue in particular is such a difficult issue to solve as all conflicts are unique and have their own differences. This means that there is not one ideal and 'perfect' solution to this issue as it may provide convenience in one conflict, but might not be possible in another. As a result of this many world leaders try to find similarities across the conflicts to see if there are correlations between them. By finding similarities in conflicts a solution can be devised to protect access to basic human needs in different conflict zones. One main way of deciding where to start with planning is by looking at what the basic needs of humans are. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory is extremely useful for this as it lays out the different levels of human needs. These different levels were laid out in a pyramid (as seen in Figure 1) in 1943, which was divided into five sections with titles from the base to the peak reading: Physiological, Safety, Love and Belonging, Esteem, and self-actualization. This theory and pyramid attempt to explain that human motivation is based on the pursuit of different levels of human needs. What it explains is that humans are unable to have motivations for Love and relationships, for example, if they do not have their physiological needs available to them. This pyramid shows that all motivations and desires for success are reliant upon basic human needs that must be fulfilled in order to progress further. Without these physiological needs, the pyramid suggests that all other tiers of the pyramid are unattainable which stresses the importance of protecting access to basic human needs around the globe. This theory can be very useful to us when planning out how to protect access to basic human needs as it gives us an idea of what should be prioritized. With prioritization as well as planning the chance that these needs are fulfilled in conflict zones greatly increases.



As seen in the image above, the basic needs of humans include access to air, water, food, shelter, etc. Maintaining these things during conflicts can be extremely challenging and therefore

organizations rally up and aim to find a comprehensive solution to this issue. One key example of this is the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that was established in 1863. Wherever conflicts occur, the ICRC responds quickly to help people who are affected and have their access to human needs put at risk. The ICRC often provides help by supplying things like medicine, food, and water. Moreover, the ICRC tries to repair things like water supply plants in conflict zones so that essential services are protected and remain accessible. Through the collaboration of organizations like the ICRC, and effective planning by using psychological theories like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, access to basic human needs in conflict zones can be protected. Although these methods can assist in ensuring the protection of these services, they don't always act as complete solutions to this issue, therefore the issue still looms and more solutions must be found in order to fully protect these necessities in conflict zones.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is one of the most significant examples where human rights have been violated and the access to basic needs for humans haven't been protected for civilians for decades. Afghanistan has been in a four-decade-long period of instability which has resulted in over half of its population being in need of humanitarian aid. It is clear that Afghanistan is facing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis with a serious risk of systemic collapse and human catastrophe. The end of the 20-year armed conflict between the Taliban, the Afghan National Security and Defense forces in August 2021 saw the takeover of the country by the Taliban, an extremely powerful organization known for collaborating with terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda. Following this change in power dynamics within Afghanistan was a number of new horrific lows for the nation. This new 'era' that Afghanistan finds itself in has so far been characterized by rapid economic decline, hunger and risk of malnutrition, inflation, a near collapse of the national public health system, and almost the total exclusion of half the population (women and girls) from public life. The things affected by the

Taliban's takeover are some of the main essentials to human life according to the previously viewed Hierarchy of Needs pyramid. Access to healthcare, food, water, and equal rights have all been stripped away from Afghani citizens making life in Afghanistan extremely challenging or even impossible for some. Not only have these things been inaccessible to civilians recently due to the takeover of the Taliban, but the nation is also highly prone to natural hazards which only worsen the situation in Afghanistan.

As a result of the inability to access basic needs in Afghanistan 23.7 million people out of the 43.1 million Afghani citizens are in need of humanitarian aid according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). This stresses the importance of finding a solution which will be able to protect the access to basic human needs for civilians in Afghanistan. By helping these people in need, it will also reduce the number of people forced into refuge as over 8.2 million Afghans have been driven out of their homes and country into neighboring countries due to the ongoing situation. Many nations have come together to provide funding in Afghanistan such as the USA which has donated over \$300 million as well as Germany who has donated \$140 million. The majority of this funding has been invested into the food security and agriculture sector of Afghanistan with the aim of developing this area so that food, water, and other necessities can be provided in Afghanistan. These funds have helped the situation in Afghanistan so far however they have not solved the issue. To really put an end to this situation, more funding and new solutions are required. Seeing as the country is also currently experiencing a drought, water supplies have become even more scarce meaning that aid must be focused on supplying water.

Due to the multitudinous amount of issues that Afghanistan is currently facing including droughts, unstable leadership, human rights violations, and food shortages, it is clear to see that a solution to all these problems won't occur in the short term. Instead, resolving this issue will take a significant amount of time and resources but with effective collaboration, this can be completed by offering over 40 million people their homes back as they remembered it. By investing in different key sectors like agriculture and health the country can be built up again until eventually access to basic human needs is fully protected for civilians.

Timeline of Key Events

Seeing as this is a broad issue as it focuses on general conflict zones, a timeline of key international events which have striven for improvements in protecting access to basic human needs as a whole has been created rather than focusing on one particular nation.

Date	Event
12th of August 1949	Fourth Geneva Convention is adopted, establishing protection for civilians in times of armed conflict.
14th of December 1950	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is established.
28th of May 1961	Amnesty International is founded, focusing on human rights advocacy globally
24th of December 1979 -> 15th of February 1989	Aghan-Soviet War
2003	The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP International) is established to improve accountability and quality in humanitarian assistance.
September 2015	The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are adopted including goals related to poverty, health, education and clean water.
2015 -> present day	Ongoing conflicts such as in Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan continue to pose significant challenges to protecting access to basic human needs

Major Parties Involved

Concern Worldwide

Concern Worldwide is a private company founded in 1968, in response to the famine in the breakaway province of Biafra in Nigeria. This organization strives to address the specific causes of extreme poverty in communities around the globe. Their work often fits into categories including emergencies & refugees, health & nutrition, education, gender equality, financial empowerment, and climate change. Concern Worldwide has 25 countries in which they have operations to assist millions of people. In 2022 alone they managed to help over 36 million people with their budget of \$275 million, comprised of donations from the US and institutions. This organization has been very

successful in protecting access to basic human needs around the world whether these areas are in conflict zones or not. Most notably, Concern Worldwide's efforts in Afghanistan have been particularly impactful. They have been involved in Afghanistan since 1998 and recently in 2019, they were officially chosen by the UN for emergency response displacement in Afghanistan. The United Nations recognized their efforts in Afghanistan and decided to collaborate with them which shows their impact and the role they play in ensuring that the needs of people are met even if they are in conflict zones. By collaborating with the UN they will be able to offer more aid as they will now have access to further resources.

Doctors of the World

Doctors of the World is another international human rights organization that provides emergency and long-term medical care to vulnerable people. It serves more than 1.6 million people every year, through 400 programs in over 80 countries around the world. This organization provides help to people affected by conflict, refugees, and rural communities. The Doctors of the World staff go to war zones and the most affected communities that often stay marginalized and invisible to the world. The medical teams all over the world deal with the consequences of wars, natural disasters, and epidemics by taking all necessary measures to support the existing health systems in these nations so that they remain transparent and open throughout the crisis. Following wars, this organization tries to rebuild and improve health infrastructure to make a lasting impact on the nation or community.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is a global humanitarian network of 80 million people that helps those facing disaster, conflict, health, and social problems. It consists of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Similarly to Concern Worldwide, the ICRC responds quickly and efficiently to help people affected by armed conflict. They also respond to disasters in conflict zones, because the effects of a disaster are compounded if a country is already at war. This refers to nations like Afghanistan once again that often suffer from droughts or earthquakes as well as being subjected to conflict which only multiplies the impact of these disasters. The ICRC ensures that people affected by conflict can get basic health care, food, and education to name a few. The ICRC is actually the largest humanitarian network in the world helping people across the globe. They remain neutral and impartial in their efforts as they believe that everyone has the right to their aid and should be supported.

Possible Solutions

Seeing as this issue is a current and ongoing one, there are many possible solutions to this ever-changing issue. Conflicts will always cause disruptions within nations affecting essential sectors like agriculture and healthcare. Wars can also lead to an increase in the number of refugees who are forced out of their country due to the poor living conditions and their inability to access basic human needs. Although all conflicts are different, there are a number of potential ways in which access to basic human needs in these conflict zones can be protected. In previous years many international organizations have offered aid to these nations that have been subjected to conflict for many years. Although these organizations and their efforts are often successful, they do not completely solve the issue, meaning that the issue still looms, making it difficult to identify the most effective solution to this problem. Different conflicts will naturally have different solutions for protecting civilian access to basic human needs, however, some alternative ideas that are applicable in most scenarios include:

- Further International Cooperation
- Implementing security measures to ensure the safety of civilians as well as aid workers
- Humanitarian access agreements
- Psychological support
- Financial aid
- Strengthening legal frameworks to protect the rights of civilians

There are many more potential ways of solving this issue however due to the fact that this problem is ongoing and has been for decades in certain nations, there is no definitive idea and answer for which direction to focus on with regards to protecting access to basic human needs in conflict zones.

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