

**Title**

*Social conditions of food-related well-being in times of crisis: A study on refugees and their role as knowledge brokers*

**Summary**

War has harmful effects on health and well-being of people causing mortality and disability, reduction in material and human capital as well as disruption of the social and economic fabric of nations. Its impact may last long after the conflict is over and may include endemic poverty, malnutrition, disability, socioeconomic decline, and psychosocial illnesses. Since 2011, Syria has been witnessing one of the most complex and dynamic humanitarian crisis in the world. This conflict poses extreme challenges to people, with food security as a major problem. Due to this long conflict, a large number of Syrians have fled their homes to safer places; 6.3 M people stayed within Syria, while 4.8 M people took refuge in neighboring countries. Meanwhile, almost 1.2 M have applied for asylum in Europe (HNO, 2017). Those refugees again faced often a long period of reduced availability of food and forcefully changed dietary habits. Irregular access to food and/or low quality diet, but also little knowledge on how to use resources available very often result in malnutrition and cause particular dangers for most vulnerable groups; pregnant and breastfeeding women and their children.

Food is considered one of the specific aspects of life that affects subjective well-being, as it affects the body functioning and physical health, mood, and emotions, global life judgment and social relationships (Ares et al., 2016). Since food consumption has a strong cultural component, people in different culture evaluates food-related well-being in different ways (Ares et al., 2015). Cultural practices like sharing of aliments and meals or the exchange of knowledge on the nutritional value, availability, or preparation of food are decisive factors for the food-related well-being in such extreme and highly variable situations. This is relevant throughout all stages of the migration process, including those in the country being left as well as the time during migration, the starting period in the country of destination, and in some cases also the time when returning to the home country. Moreover, migrants sharing nutrition knowledge with relatives and friends remaining in their home countries via IT-based social networks contribute to the food-related well-being of people in regions of crisis. Departing from a social-ecological resilience perspective, this research project aims at evaluating food-related well-being for refugees and enhancing the understanding of the role of knowledge, social networks and cultural practices for food-related well-being in times of crisis. It will focus on pregnant and breastfeeding women as particularly vulnerable groups. Emphasis will be placed on investigating the potential of IT-based programs and social networking services for enhancing the role of refugees, as knowledge brokers, in sharing nutrition and food knowledge both for people migrating to Europe as well as people remaining in regions of crisis. Accordingly, qualitative and quantitative social-empirical approaches will be combined and targeted Syrian refugees in Germany. Insights may be used to improve the food-related well-being of refugees in Europe as well as of their social networks remaining in the home countries. Furthermore, the result will be highly relevant for tailoring food security programs in regions of crisis towards the inclusion of social aspects.

**Research questions:**

This research will try to address the following questions:

- What is the current food security situation of Syrian refugees in Germany? How do refugees describe well-being from food and eating habits perspectives?

- How the diet and the food habits of Syrian refugees have been changed during the migration journey and after the resettlement in the destination country? How are social structural characteristics of refugees related to their food choices practices and eating patterns? Special focus will be given to pregnant and lactating women depending on the outcomes of the first research question.
- What is the role of social networks and IT-based offers around food and nutrition knowledge in knowledge creation and transfer for the food-related well-being of refugees?