

ON THE RISE: CONFLICT-INDUCED HUNGER
HOW UN MEMBER STATES CAN REVERSE THIS ALARMING TREND



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The number of people going hungry in the world has been rising for seven years now. In 2021, close to 200 million people were in a situation of acute hunger and in need of urgent help across 53 countries and territories.¹ This is nearly 20% more than in 2020. In addition, 750,000 people – six times more than in 2020 – are facing catastrophic famine-like conditions (IPC Phase 5) across Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

While 2021 already saw record levels of hunger, the situation is getting worse in 2022, particularly as we have entered the lean season. The current conflict in Ukraine has been aggravating the existing global food crisis. Indeed, Russia and Ukraine are two of the main global suppliers of grains, edible oils, fertilisers as well as fossil fuels, so the conflict has led to soaring food and fuel prices and shortages of food supplies. As a result of changing dietary patterns, many countries are over reliant on staple crops such as wheat (along with rice and corn) and depend heavily on imported wheat to meet their needs. This particularly applies to countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Even those that don't directly import food from Ukraine are feeling the effects of rising food, fuel and fertiliser prices. The conflict in Ukraine therefore represents an extreme new challenge for global hunger, particularly for low-income, food import-dependent countries and their populations. The poorest households are the most vulnerable to food price shocks as food accounts for a significant part of their expenditures².

In 2022, conflict remains the main driver of global hunger and levels of conflict and violence against civilians are continuing to increase. The UN has warned that acute food insecurity is likely to keep deteriorating in 20 hunger hotspots

by September 2022.³ All of the six crises with populations projected to face starvation and death⁴ are experiencing violence and protracted conflict.

Forced displacement within and across international borders is also surging due to people fleeing conflict, persecution, violence, or human rights violations, rising to a staggering record of 100 million people worldwide in May 2022.⁵ Humanitarian access also remains limited, preventing thousands of people from receiving life-saving support.

Climate change and environmental degradation are also gravely affecting many people experiencing severe hunger. The current severe and prolonged drought in the Horn of Africa has become catastrophic: four consecutive failed rainy seasons, have caused one of the worst droughts in decades and resulted in crop failures and the death of livestock. Likewise, the situation in west Africa Sahel region is critical due to very poor rainy seasons that have worsened the food and nutrition crisis.

Targeted humanitarian action is urgently needed to prevent this trend from escalating further and to save lives and livelihoods in response to emergency needs now. Anticipatory action and resilience building in longer term systems strengthening to prevent these crises worsening is also needed. This must all be backed by diplomatic action to compel conflict parties to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians in conflict.

Focusing on the regions of Africa, Asia and the Middle East, this report highlights the situation in key countries of particular concern and provides a number of recommendations to halt the rise of hunger around the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Addressing global hunger must be a key priority for UN Member States, informing aid, trade, diplomacy and foreign policies to better anticipate and respond to humanitarian crises.

UN Member states should:

1. Uphold international humanitarian law

1a. Humanitarian access: comply with political commitments and legal obligations under international humanitarian law, including by respecting humanitarian principles (UNSCR 2282) and preventing indiscriminate attacks on civilian infrastructure (UNSCR 2573). Support the UN High-Level Task Force on Famine Prevention to improve its impact on humanitarian access and the application of international humanitarian law.

1b. Diplomacy: champion international humanitarian law through all diplomatic channels to help overcome humanitarian access obstructions to those most at risk, ensure the protection of humanitarian aid workers, prevent the use of starvation as a weapon of war and hold perpetrators accountable.

1c. Sanctions: include humanitarian exceptions in all sanctions regimes to enable the delivery of lifesaving humanitarian assistance to all civilians in need.

1d. Counter-terrorism: ensure counter-terrorism measures, including sanctions, are designed not to impede the access of vulnerable populations to essential humanitarian support.

2. Support improved reporting to the UN Security Council on conflict and hunger

2a. Systematic reporting: include UNSCR2417 on conflict and hunger in all relevant country-specific and thematic discussions and resolutions within the UN Security Council.

2b. White papers: call for regular White Papers and OCHA briefings on contexts where famine risk is present with clear, actionable recommendations to Member

States and follow up progress reports after six months.

2c. Expert group: establish an informal independent expert group to advise members of the Security Council and Group of Friends of Action on Conflict and Hunger, and other interested Member States, on current crises.

3. Prevent emerging or escalating food crises

3a. Funding: meet existing commitments, such as the G7 Elmau commitment to lift 500 million people out of food insecurity and malnutrition by 2030. Further urgently commit to increase funding to address hunger, including new or improved funding modalities for anticipatory action.

3b. Anticipatory action: provide investment that matches political statements supporting anticipatory action, to prevent humanitarian crises from escalating in the most at-risk countries. Strengthen existing multi-sectoral and multi-hazard early warning systems .

3c. A 'nexus' approach: the humanitarian, development and peace sectors need to work towards achieving collective outcomes that reduce risk and vulnerability over the long term. This approach is preferential in chronic emergencies and protracted crises, as it addresses root causes while still enabling humanitarian assistance.

3d. Food systems: support states to reduce their dependence on imported food, through diversification of supply sources and support for localised, diversified, and sustainable food-oriented agricultural production.

3e. Social protection: work with the most vulnerable countries to strengthen social protection systems and ensure people can afford a nutritious diet. G7 countries should include a mechanism for additional financing in the recently proposed Global Employment and Social Protection Accelerator to rapidly make up for the financing gap for universal social protection floors in the poorest countries.

3f. Nutrition: scale up investment in the prevention and treatment of child undernutrition, prioritising

countries with high levels of undernutrition and ensure that the goal of preventing malnutrition is at the heart of all initiatives designed to respond to the current global food security crisis. States and regions prone to disasters should also plan and prioritise for nutrition reserves for affected populations.

3g. Food price speculation: curb the impact of speculation on cereal and raw material prices by communicating data on private stocks, by releasing stocks of countries with large reserves and by implementing measures to regulate cereal markets. Governments should avoid export restrictions that contribute to upward trends and price volatility.

THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

Russia and Ukraine are two of the main suppliers of agricultural commodities and fossil fuels globally. Since 2016, Russia has been the world's leading exporter of wheat and fertilisers, while Ukraine is a major producer of critical crops including wheat, sunflower oil and seeds, and corn. In fact, Ukraine is the world's fifth largest exporter of wheat, with 40% destined for Africa and the Middle East⁶.

In Ukraine itself, the conflict has been marked by the targeting of densely populated areas and civilian objects and the inability of civilians to meet their basic needs and access essential services, humanitarian assistance and safe evacuation.

The 2022 agricultural season in Ukraine is also severely disrupted because essential road and sea freight infrastructure, including the key port of Odessa, have been blocked or destroyed. Freight is now insecure in the Black Sea, preventing food exports from Ukraine to countries facing severe hunger. Nearly 25 million tonnes of grains are currently stuck in Ukraine from the last harvest.⁷

International wheat prices were already worryingly high in early 2022, exceeding the levels reached during the 2007-2008 economic crisis and approaching those of 2011. Global food commodity prices have now risen by nearly a third since last year⁸ and the FAO has predicted further rises.⁹ A myriad of importing countries rely on Ukrainian and Russian food supplies. This is particularly

the case in North Africa and the Middle East region (Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Syria, Yemen etc.). However, imports also concern countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria, Senegal, etc.), East Africa (Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, etc.) and Asia (Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines). Since the start of the conflict in Ukraine, the price of wheat has soared in Africa over 45% and fertiliser prices have gone up by 300%.¹⁰

Several of these countries were already grappling with the negative effects of soaring prices before the conflict started. In the Horn of Africa there has been a quietly worsening hunger emergency due to protracted drought conditions. In Somalia and Kenya alone, nearly 9.5 million people are facing crisis or worse level food insecurity, an increase by more than 3 million compared to the first quarter of 2022.¹¹ Both countries declared national emergencies due to the impact on communities.

The conflict in Ukraine is also expected to affect humanitarian assistance significantly as the UN World Food Programme (WFP) has relied heavily on Ukraine to obtain supplies. In 2021, Ukraine was the largest single source of food for the WFP by volume, providing 9% of its total food procurement,¹² including over half the wheat grain for WFP operations.¹³ The conflict is therefore driving a humanitarian crisis well beyond Ukraine's borders.

COUNTRY SITUATIONS

EAST AFRICA

In 2021, nearly 90% of the global population facing famine conditions were in East Africa, affecting half a million people in Ethiopia and South Sudan.¹⁴ Hunger will persist well into 2022, driven primarily by the impacts of conflict, drought, floods, and economic shocks.¹⁵

ETHIOPIA

The current conflict in Ethiopia erupted in the northern region of Tigray in November 2020 and is now expanding into the neighbouring regions of Amhara and Afar. Nineteen months into the conflict, the human rights and humanitarian situation in the country has rapidly deteriorated.

There is evidence of mass killings and sexual violence, indiscriminate shelling, attacks on schools and hospitals, and both physical and administrative barriers to humanitarian access. The devastating impact of the conflict on civilians has led to a steep rise in mass forced displacement, with nearly 6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) across Ethiopia as of March 2022.¹⁶ As a result, Ethiopia is facing

a major humanitarian crisis and the largest food crisis in East Africa with over 400,000 people facing starvation in Tigray alone - the highest estimate anywhere since the 2011 famine in Somalia.¹⁷

Compounding the conflict in the north, Ethiopia also faces the worst drought in 40 years - particularly in the south-eastern Oromia and Somali regions. Pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in these areas are consequently suffering from failed harvests and deteriorating livestock body conditions, which lead to reduced income and food stock. The other main challenge is the lack of access to water, sanitation and hygiene services which increases the likelihood of water-borne diseases and malnutrition.

In mid-2021, at least 18 million people required food assistance in Ethiopia, including 5.2 million in Tigray alone. In December 2021, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) predicted that the already high humanitarian needs in Ethiopia would increase in 2022 due to these driving factors, to reach an estimated 22.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.¹⁸ As of March 2022, only 10% of required assistance had arrived in the Tigray region.¹⁹



Peter Caton for Action Against Hunger

SOMALIA

In June 2022 Somalia was added to the list of countries with the highest levels of hunger.²⁰ 5.2 million Somalians – 33% of the total population – need urgent humanitarian food assistance, including 38,000 people likely facing ‘catastrophe’ despite the ongoing delivery of humanitarian food assistance.²¹ Child malnutrition has also risen by 40% between January and April 2022 alone. The situation is expected to deteriorate further and faster by September 2022 to reach an estimated 213,000 people in Catastrophe.²²

Food insecurity and malnutrition in the country are driven by a number of factors, including over 20 years of nearly incessant conflict, political instability, forced displacement, recurring droughts, high food prices and chronic food shortages. This has all been compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. Delayed presidential elections and increased attacks by the armed group al-Shabaab have also worsened the situation, resulting in heightened insecurity²³ and the forced displacement of 731,000 people in 2021, over 70% due to conflict.²⁴

2022 is the third consecutive year of below-average rainfall in Somalia. The severe ongoing drought has led to acute water shortages and the loss of livestock essential to Somalia’s pastoral and agropastoral livelihood systems. This, compounded by the country’s dependence on wheat and sunflower imports from Russia and Ukraine, has also driven up staple food prices to around 150% above their five-year average, rivalling the prices recorded during the 2010/2011 and 2016/2017 droughts.²⁵

Nearly half a million people were internally displaced just between January and February this year.²⁶ Somalia faces a ‘perfect storm’ of poor rainfall, insufficient funding, globally disrupted supply chains and rising food prices, that could quickly lead to famine.²⁷ Approximately 81,000 people are already suffering from famine conditions and it is feared this number will rise across multiple regions where people face extreme food shortages, severe malnutrition, and excess mortality as a result of starvation.²⁸ In fact, Action Against Hunger is currently seeing the highest admission rates to its hunger treatment centres since it began working in Somalia in 1992.

WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

The West African Sahel region is facing complex simultaneous crises that co-exist and mutually reinforce each other. Several factors contribute to food insecurity: poverty, conflicts, climate change - all of which are causing vast numbers of people to be forcibly displaced. Further, bad governance, unequal access to basic social services and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have all led to high levels of hunger in the region.

Action Against Hunger teams have witnessed the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Sahel year after year. Since November 2021, Action Against Hunger has been anticipating this crisis by contributing to the Cadre Harmonisé (CH) which gathers data to inform affected areas and enable anticipatory action to avert emerging crises. But even with the right warnings, there is a severe lack of political will to fund Humanitarian Response Plans.²⁹

In 2021, 30.4 million people were in crisis or worse level food insecurity across the region, including around 1.5 million people on the edge of famine.³⁰ Food insecurity and malnutrition are expected to reach record levels in 2022. The conflict affected border areas of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, as well as the Lake Chad Basin are the most vulnerable.

Every year, the lean season further aggravates this situation. Early warning reports indicate this year could be catastrophic, with a dramatic increase from 29 million people in 2021 to 35 million in need of urgent food and nutrition assistance in 2022, which is triple the estimates from only four years ago.³¹ If the conflict in Ukraine results in a continued rise in food prices, things could get worse.

BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso has been facing a deteriorating security crisis marked by conflict and violence since 2018. In 2021, Burkina Faso became the region’s epicentre of violence, replacing Mali, with a sharp rise in abductions and attacks, such as the attack on the northeastern village of Solhan in June 2021 in which 160 people were killed.³² The internal conflict recently intensified with months of tension

and protests culminating in a military takeover in January 2022. The conflict also extended to previously unaffected areas in southern Burkina Faso.

Widespread and increasing conflict remains the main driver of acute food insecurity in the country. Surging abuses, including indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructures, committed by all parties to the conflict have degraded Burkina Faso's human rights and humanitarian situation.

The drastically deteriorating security situation resulted in a sharp increase of forced displacements by more than 40% in December 2021/January 2022, particularly in the Liptako-Gourma border areas. March 2022 also saw the second biggest monthly increase since the beginning of the humanitarian crisis in 2018, with 160,000 newly displaced Burkinabe.³³ In fact, Burkina Faso is now the country with the highest number of internally displaced persons in the Sahel region with 1.9 million IDPs out of 2.8 million in the region.³⁴

As a result, the humanitarian situation has been deteriorating quickly in Burkina Faso, one of ten poorest countries in the world. 16% of the population is currently food insecure, with more than 3.4 million people in Crisis or worse, representing a 20% increase compared to levels reported in 2021.³⁵ The closure or disfunction of health facilities in provinces has significantly limited the population's access to care and social services. Insecurity has also severely affected humanitarian access to the most vulnerable populations and communities. Because of conflict-induced displacements, cereal production in Burkina Faso is down by 10%, and pulses production by 28% compared to figures reported in 2021. Insecurity on the roads disrupts supply-chains connecting markets to food production areas and drives up food prices: local inflation can vary from 25 to over 60% for staple food (cereals, millet, beans, oil, and wheat flour).³⁶

In November 2021, Action Against Hunger alerted on the possibility of unreported localised risk of famine in isolated areas where de facto blockades prevent humanitarian actors to access and deliver emergency food assistance.



Lys Arango for Action Against Hunger

A poor rainy season resulting in a 10% drop in cereal production in the country³⁷ and high food prices, aggravated by the war in Ukraine, are all compounding Burkina Faso's food security crisis.

MALI

Following a coup in March 2012, much of northern and central Mali has been occupied by non-state armed groups. Since 2016, the country has been plagued by local conflicts and insecurity, hampering humanitarian access and leading to the increased displacement and vulnerability of conflict-affected communities. The cumulative effects of armed conflict, violence and frequent drought have contributed to a progressive deterioration of livelihoods in the country. As a result, Mali is now facing its worst food and nutrition crisis in a decade. 7,5 million people – one third of the population – need humanitarian assistance.

At the end of 2021, the number of people facing hunger had increased threefold in a year whilst the Cadre Harmonisé projected a further 60% increase – an additional half a million – by the 2022 lean season, culminating in over 1.8 million people living in a food crisis.³⁸ The country is

facing serious levels of malnutrition. The number of acutely malnourished children under five is expected to increase by 53% compared to last year, reaching, at a conservative estimate, 1.2 million children between September 2021 and August 2022.³⁹ This is the result of a combination of poor-quality diets, high food insecurity and a high prevalence of communicable diseases like diarrhoea, which can be deadly for a malnourished child.

Sanctions imposed by ECOWAS in January 2022 as a result of the postponement of the presidential elections, and the suspension of public aid from the main development donors, have further deteriorated the situation. As Mali imports 70% of food items it consumes and is already highly dependent on foreign assistance to finance its basic social services (up to 30% of the health sector for example), the sanctions are likely to create additional needs for humanitarian assistance. The sanctions also make it harder for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to operate and provide swift humanitarian assistance, as they cause administrative, financial and logistical barriers.⁴⁰

The trend in rising food prices is particularly pronounced in Mali with staple crop increases of 79% for millet, 95% for sorghum and 55% for maize between 2021 and 2022.⁴¹

NIGER

More than 3,5 million people are going hungry during the 2022 lean season according to the CH projections for the period of June-September.⁴² This staggering figure represents 15% of the total population of Niger. As a result, households will, at a minimum, face food deficits causing high levels of acute malnutrition, or they are only able to cover their minimum food needs by selling livelihood assets and using other negative coping strategies. This current situation can be compared to the previous large-scale crises of 2011/12 and 1983/84.

Further, food prices are likely to increase due to the consequences of insecurity in the country and the conflict in Ukraine as well as growing agricultural inputs prices. Additionally, the consequences of climate change, with seasonal flooding and pockets

of drought that increased in 2021, have resulted in a dramatic 38% drop in cereal production. According to the CH findings over the past three years, the hunger hotspots in Niger overlap with the regions most affected by conflicts emanating from neighbouring countries: those bordering Mali (particularly the Liptako-Gourma region), and those of the Diffa region in the Lake Chad Basin. Conflicts there have led to unprecedented levels of displacement, severely disrupting access to livelihoods, transhumance, farming, and trade.

The declared state of emergency, particularly in the regions of Diffa, Maradi and Tillabéry, limits free movement and access to essential social services. Increased attacks on civilians and humanitarian agencies have further affected the ability of humanitarian organisations to reach populations in need, thereby reducing the affected populations' access to assistance and services, particularly affected by the closure or functionality of health structures.

NIGERIA

Nigeria faces acute food insecurity, in particular in the conflict-affected Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States in the North East. Since 2009, protracted conflict across these states has disrupted agricultural and market activities, resulting in reduced incomes and new displacement of people. Recently, increasing violence and conflict in the Northwest and Northcentral states, have been driving high levels of displacement and disruption to household engagement in livelihood activities. Food access in these regions is expected to decline during the June to September period.⁴³

Nigeria has also experienced a below-average main season harvest due to poor rains, resulting in low stocks and worsened livelihoods. Rising food prices, on top of this, have been driven by market disruptions, currency depreciation, foreign exchange shortages, and sustained high inflation. Inflation and the soaring food prices were already expected to persist in 2022 before the Ukraine conflict began impacting the food prices further.

In 2021 the number of people facing Crisis or worse level food insecurity reached a six-year high in Nigeria.⁴⁴ This is projected to worsen in the June-

August 2022 lean season with up to 18 million people expected to be in acute food insecurity and over 1.74 million children under the age of five expected to suffer from acute malnutrition by August 2022⁴⁵ if humanitarian interventions are not sustained.⁴⁶ 48% of the people facing Crisis or worse condition in the Sahel are located in Nigeria alone. Further, nearly one million people, largely in Borno and Yobe states, remain in areas that are inaccessible to humanitarian actors mostly due to insecurity. Therefore, the situation cannot be assessed. It is estimated that many more people in these areas are on the brink of famine.

Nigeria remains the most insecure country in the West Africa region. Basic services in the North East, such as health, education, access to safe water, which were already weak before the conflict, have been severely disrupted by insecurity.

The food security and nutrition situation in the North West of Nigeria is also of great concern. The projected situation from June to September 2022 shows that Sokoto and Zamfara North-

western Nigeria's rural areas would be at a crisis level. Banditry and kidnapping from organised criminal groups prevent farmers to conduct planting activities. The Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) for Sokoto, and Zamfara are at least at a serious level (above 10% of GAM) while the burden of stunting is very high at above 30% in Katsian, Sokoto and Zamfara.⁴⁷ Further, North Western Nigeria is not included in the Humanitarian Response Plan.

As a result, limited funding is available and very few humanitarian actors are working in these areas, leaving tens of thousands of malnourished under-five children without any assistance.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

In Southern Africa, conflict and drought remain the key drivers of food insecurity. In 2021, 45.56 million people were in Crisis or worse level food insecurity in Central and Southern Africa, most of which were in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Alexis Huguet for Action Against Hunger

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains of particular concern as it continues to face a protracted food crisis. The DRC has the world's largest number of people facing high food insecurity: as of November 2021, more than 27 million people – 28% of the population – were living in crisis conditions. Amongst these, around 6.1 million people are experiencing emergency levels of acute food insecurity,

Two territories in particular, Irumu (Ituri Province) and Gungu (Kwilu Province) are most at risk with respectively 65% and 45% of their populations facing critical levels of food insecurity. This demonstrates that even in provinces that are not affected by conflicts, such as Kwilu, levels of hunger can be very high due to structural issues including lack of basic services, gender imbalance and lack of livelihood opportunities. For those provinces, sudden destabilising factors such as epidemics, natural disasters and man-made crises can have an extremely concerning impact.

Armed conflict remains the main driver of hunger in the east of the country, where insecurity has been ongoing for around 30 years. This continues to displace families, disrupt livelihoods, harvests and planting seasons, and hinder humanitarian response efforts. This is particularly the case in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri provinces where conflicts have been the most violent. Food insecurity is likely to deteriorate further if violence intensifies. Over the past twelve months, there has been a sharp rise in reported attacks on civilians, including burning of civilian premises and housing and indiscriminate attacks on IDP camps by armed groups in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and Ituri. Humanitarian organisations are also facing increasing difficulties in providing urgently needed assistance. There were 125 attacks against humanitarian workers since the beginning of 2022. Large pockets of Congolese territory are further affected by lack of basic services and infrastructures and profound gender inequality, which are strong drivers of hunger. Further, rare and below average rainfall has aggravated the crisis, leading to poor harvests and crops, particularly in the South East. Rising food prices are, as elsewhere, taking their toll.

The large majority of funding meant to address root causes of hunger and malnutrition are channeled through public institutions. While this approach has a strong potential in terms of addressing at scale the root causes of hunger, it needs to be supported by accountability-related measures to prevent corruption schemes to be put in place. The DRC remains one of the countries that are most vulnerable to corruption and diversion of financial resources, according to the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index.

ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

In 2021, nearly 30 million people in South Asia, were in Crisis or worse level food insecurity, with around 80% of them in Afghanistan, while in the Middle East over 30 million people are affected, the majority in Yemen. The Middle East region has to contend with structural challenges, including conflict, protracted crises, climate change and crop-damaging extreme weather conditions, that make feeding a growing population particularly difficult.

AFGHANISTAN

In August 2021, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), commonly known as the Taliban, took control of Kabul. This shift in power followed a major escalation in conflict between the IEA and the Afghan government over the course of 2021 eventually leading to the rapid withdrawal of international military forces from the country. The Taliban's control of the country also resulted in the immediate suspension of most non-humanitarian funding by international donors and the freezing of US\$9.5 billion in national assets.

Sanctions have resulted in an unprecedented economic crisis marked by disruptions to markets, financial and trade mechanisms. These disruptions significantly affected employment. International sanctions have resulted in assets freezes and contributed to cash shortages, a liquidity crisis, and the increase in the retail prices of basic commodities. Humanitarian exemptions to international sanctions, such as those included in UNSC Resolution 2615, but also in US, UK and EU legislation, are essential to enable timely humanitarian action in Afghanistan but have yet to be fully implemented on the ground. Humanitarian operations are also affected by the ongoing suspension



Sandra Calligaro for Action Against Hunger

of funding by key donors, which raises concerns about the sustainability of the existing health system.

Four decades of crisis have weakened the country's ability to cope with new shocks and now humanitarian needs are increasing rapidly. A large-scale food catastrophe continues. Currently, 2 million children are malnourished and nearly 20 million people – half the country's population – are in crisis or worse food insecurity, an alarming increase of 35% compared to 2021. This includes nearly 6.6 million Afghans – 21% of the population – facing Emergency levels of hunger, an increase of 58% compared to 2020. This year's harvest is expected to be below average, worsening the hunger outlook through 2022.

The country is facing shortages of food, rapidly rising food prices, growing unemployment and falling incomes, as well as an ongoing drought with the lean season approaching. All this is forcing people to flee their homes. So this must also be approached as a regional crisis as the number of Afghans migrating to neighbouring countries, including Pakistan, continues to rise.

SYRIA

Syria's economy has halved in size since 2011. Nearly 14 million people are facing hunger – this number has doubled in 3 years – the situation is now the worst it has been in a decade. Many factors are combining to drive this crisis: conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic, currency depreciation and surging prices, sanctions, drought, protracted displacement, and the decline of neighbouring Lebanon as a key economic partner.

In 2021, Syria faced the worst wheat harvest in 50 years and it is set to fail again this year, due to low rainfall. Meanwhile staple food prices are sky-rocketing with global price rises. The country has now adopted austerity measures in response.

Farming is hard in Syria. The cost of cultivation rises each month, including seeds, fertiliser, and fuel to operate water pumps to feed crops. Conflict dynamics and insecurity, including the looting of harvest, farm machinery and tools, and even the doors from people's homes, endanger Syrians. The destruction of public service infrastructure (wells,

irrigation channels) makes cultivation more expensive and harvests less productive and profitable. In addition, access to arable land can be restricted by physical barriers like mines or bureaucratic measures.

There is food in the markets but as most people live below the poverty line they can't afford it because food prices have risen by nearly 800% since 2019. We are likely to see health impacts and an increase in negative coping mechanisms like skipping meals. Surveys reveal lack of stable income is a key driver of being unable to access a healthy diet, as the proportion of income that must go on food continues to increase. This phenomenon is aggravated during the planting season, when many families are investing their savings in cultivating lands.

YEMEN

The people of Yemen have lived through over eight years of war, with all its devastating direct impacts, such as the bombing of schools and hospitals, and wider impacts on the economy and food security. On 2 April 2022, for the first time in six years the parties to the conflict agreed to a two-month ceasefire. This put a halt to all military operations inside and outside the country. It also allowed for fuel ships to enter a Houthi-controlled port and for some commercial flights into Yemen's capital, Sanaa to resume. On 2 June, the truce was renewed for another two months. However, this fragile and temporary ceasefire followed a resumption of the conflict, with civilians continuing to bear the brunt of the fighting. January 2022



Alexis Huguet for Action Against Hunger

saw the highest civilian casualties since 2018, with almost one civilian killed or injured every hour. All parties to the conflict have been responsible for attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, water reservoirs and oil facilities, in violation of International Humanitarian Law.⁴⁸ The conflict has led to the destruction of lives and livelihoods, and continues to drive widespread displacement.

Hunger and malnutrition rates continue to worsen, with 17.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance as of March 2022. This is expected to increase to 19 million in June 2022.⁴⁹ Famine conditions have been projected to affect over 160,000 people this year.⁵⁰ Over 2 million young children and around 1.3 million pregnant and lactating women are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition over the course of 2022. The instability of humanitarian assistance has also further exacerbated food insecurity and malnutrition in the country, particularly in the north and south of Yemen.⁵¹ Evidence indicates that breaches of international humanitarian law and restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid to affected communities have impeded the humanitarian response.⁵²

In a report from November 2021, the United Nations Development Programme projected that if the conflict in Yemen continues through 2030, it will have taken 1.3 million lives by that year.⁵³ The report also shows that a growing proportion of those deaths - 75% by 2030 - will not occur due to fighting, but due to indirect impacts that the crisis is waging on livelihoods, food prices, and the deterioration of basic services such as health and education.

Yemen is in urgent need of more humanitarian assistance but money and goods alone won't solve the crisis; the people need durable solutions that can reverse the conditions driving this crisis and for all parties to uphold the law that protects civilians in conflict.

CONCLUSION

With conflict on the rise across the world, so is hunger and malnutrition. The current conflict in Ukraine, means food prices have surged, making an already critical situation in vulnerable countries, worse. In some conflict contexts, hunger and starvation are also deliberately used as a weapon of war by conflict parties, with crops and livestock destroyed, access to markets cut off, and people compelled to flee their homes. Climate and environmental change and impacts like severe drought, are further aggravating the global food security crisis.

There is an urgent need to break the cycle between conflict and hunger. In recent years many political commitments, such as the G7 Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises Compact, have appeared, setting out an intention to scale up anticipatory action to prevent humanitarian crises escalating into catastrophes.

We have also seen strong commitments to uphold relevant international humanitarian law, such as with the passing on UNSC Resolution 2417 on conflict and hunger. These commitments have not yet fully translated into the tangible investment and political action needed to turn the tide on worsening trends in global hunger. Now is the time to ensure that commitments made on the global stage are fully reflected in domestic and foreign policy and action, budgets and ODA allocations, to reduce the risk of reported crises becoming famines.

Endnotes

1. Global Network Against Food Crises, Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC), 2022, available at: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/global-report-food-crises-2022>.
2. FAO, The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI), 2020, available at: <https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CA9692EN>.
3. ACLED, Conflict database dashboard, 2022, available at: <https://acleddata.com/dashboard/#/dashboard>.
4. FAO/WFP, Hunger Hotspots, FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, June to September 2022 Outlook, June 2022, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/hunger-hotspots-fao-wfp-early-warnings-acute-food-insecurity-june-september-2022-outlook>.
5. FAO/WFP, Hunger Hotspots, FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, June to September 2022 Outlook.
6. UN News, 'UNHCR: A record 100 million people forcibly displaced worldwide', 23 May 2022, available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1118772>.
7. Action Against Hunger, 'Why the conflict in Ukraine is leading to a hunger crisis' 20 May 2022, available at: <https://www.actionagainsthunger.org.uk/our-impact/stories/east-africa-hunger-crisis>.
8. UN, Geneva Press Briefing: UNICEF, ILO, FAO, WMO, 6 May 2022, available at: <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1z/k1zxp2ne4>.
9. FAO, FAO Food Price Index, April 2022, available at: <https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/>.
10. FAO, Information Note, The Importance of Ukraine and the Russian Federation for global agricultural markets and the risks associated with the current conflict, p. 2, available at: <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9236en/cb9236en.pdf>.
11. African Development Bank, 'African Development Bank Board approves \$1.5 billion facility to avert food crisis', 20 May 2022, available at: <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/african-development-bank-board-approves-15-billion-facility-avert-food-crisis-51716>.
12. See FAO/WFP, Hunger Hotspots, FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, June to September 2022 Outlook, and FAO/WFP, Hunger Hotspots, FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, February to May 2022 Outlook.
13. Politico, 'Get ready for 'hell,' UN food chief warns amid Ukraine shockwaves', 22 March 2022, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/world-food-programme-eu-fund-us-food-aid-ukraine-russia/>.
14. WFP, Food Security Implications of the Ukraine conflict, March 2022, p. 59, available at: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/food-security-implications-ukraine-conflict>.
15. GRFC 2022, p. 41.
16. FEWS NET, East Africa Food Security Outlook, March 2022, available at: <https://fews.net/east-africa/food-security-outlook/march-2022>.
17. UNHCR, Response to Internal Displacement in Ethiopia Fact Sheet – January to March 2022, 19 May 2022, available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/92844>.
18. GRFC 2022, p. 120.
19. OCHA, Global Humanitarian Review 2022, December 2021, available at: <https://gho.unocha.org/>.
20. FAO/WFP, Hunger Hotspots, FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, February to May 2022 Outlook, p. 13.
21. FAO/WFP, Hunger Hotspots, FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, June to September 2022 Outlook.
22. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), Somalia faces increased Risk of Famine as acute food insecurity, malnutrition and mortality worsen, 4 June 2022, available at: <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155662/?iso3=SOM>.
23. Ibid.
24. FSNAU-FEWS NET, Somalia Food Security Outlook, November 2021, available at <https://fsnau.org/node/1905>.
25. UNHCR, 'Somalia Internal Displacement', available at: <https://unhcr.github.io/dataviz-somalia-prmn/#reason=&month=2022-01-01%2C2022-02-28&need=&preion=&pdistrictmap=&cregion=&cdistrictmap=&year=2022>
26. FEWS NET, 'Somalia - Soaring food prices and delayed rains increase humanitarian needs amid a Risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5)', March 2022, available at: <https://fews.net/east-africa/somalia>.
27. UNHCR, 'Somalia Internal Displacement'.
28. FEWS NET, 'Soaring food prices and delayed rains increase humanitarian needs amid a Risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5)', March 2022, available at: <https://fews.net/east-africa/somalia>. See also FAO, 'Joint FAO-OCHA-UNICEF-WFP Statement on the Drought Emergency in Somalia', 12 April 2022, available at: <https://www.fao.org/emergencies/fao-in-action/stories/stories-detail/en/c/1504997/>.
29. FAO/WFP, Hunger Hotspots, FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, June to September 2022 Outlook, p. 28.
30. The Cadre Harmonisé (CH) is a tool used to analyse the vulnerability of populations to food and nutrition insecurity. Based on various information sources and a common methodology, the analysis identifies the number and areas of food insecure people. Action Against Hunger always contributes to the CH. Phase 3 amounts to a Crisis level: households have food deficits that are reflected in high or above average of acute malnutrition or are marginally able to cover their minimum food needs by exhausting livelihood assets or using crisis coping strategies. See <https://www.food-security.net/en/visualise/>.
31. OCHA, Financial Tracking Service, 2022 Humanitarian aid contributions, available at: <https://fts.unocha.org/>.
32. GRFC 2022, p. 48.

33. Action Against Hunger, Averting the Unfolding Historic Food Crisis in the Sahel, April 2022, available at: https://www.actionagainsthunger.org/sites/default/files/publications/Averting_the_unfolding_historic_food_crisis_in_the_Sahel_-_EN.pdf.
34. BBC, 'Burkina Faso attack: At least 160 killed in village raid', 6 June 2021, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57368536>.
35. Norwegian Refugee Council, 'Burkina Faso: Second biggest spike in displacement since crisis began', 11 March 2022, available at: <https://www.nrc.no/news/2022/march/burkina-faso-second-biggest-spike-in-displacement-since-crisis-began/>.
36. FAO/WFP, Hunger Hotspots, FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, June to September 2022 Outlook.
37. Food Security Cluster, 'Burkina Faso : Les Clusters dénoncent un manque alarmant de financements aggravant une crise d'une ampleur sans précédent', 8 June 2022, available at: <https://fscluster.org/burkina-faso/document/burkina-faso-les-clusters-denoncent-un->.
38. Ibid.
39. GFRC 2022, p. 50.
40. Cadre Harmonisé d'identification des zones à risque et des populations en insécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle, Résultats de l'analyse de l'insécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle aiguë courante en mars-mai 2022 et projetée en juin-août 2022, March 2022, available at : https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/ch/Booklet_CH_Mars2022.pdf.
41. Cadre Harmonisé analysis of the food and nutrition situation could not be undertaken this year, so figures may be underestimated.
42. Forum des ONG Internationales au Mali (FONGIM) report, March 2022.
43. Action Against Hunger, Breaking the Spiral of the Food and Nutrition Crisis in Mali, April 2022, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Break%20Spiralling%20Food%20and%20Nutrition%20Crisis%20in%20Mali-April%202022.pdf>.
44. Cadre Harmonisé d'identification des zones à risque et des populations en insécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle, Résultats de l'analyse de l'insécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle aiguë courante en mars-mai 2022 et projetée en juin-août 2022, March 2022.
45. FEWS NET, 'Nigeria - Food Security Outlook', 2022, available at: <https://fews.net/west-africa/nigeria/food-security-outlook/february-2022>.
46. GRFC 2022, p. 48.
47. CH Nigeria, December 2021.
48. FAO/WFP, Hunger Hotspots, FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, February to May 2022 Outlook, p. 23.
49. FEWS NET, 'Nigeria, The rainy season begins normally, although planting is atypically low due to conflict in some areas', May 2022, available at: <https://fews.net/west-africa/nigeria>.
50. Ibid.
51. A Rapid Nutrition SMART survey in the emergency affected LGAs of Sokoto, Katsina, and Zamfara State, Nigeria in December 2021 by USAID, UNICEF, NBS, et al
52. IPC, Democratic Republic of Congo: Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Situation September 2021 - August 2022, December 2021, available at: <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155280/?iso3=COD46> FAO/WFP, Hunger Hotspots, FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, February to May 2022 Outlook, p. 23.
53. IPC DRC, December 2021.
54. IPC DRC, December 2021.
55. FEWS NET, Democratic Republic of Congo – Food Security Outlook Update, April 2022, available at: <https://fews.net/southern-africa/drc>.
56. Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index, 2021, available at: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/cod>.
57. IPC Afghanistan, <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155210/>.
58. IPC Afghanistan, May 2022, <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155595/?iso3=AFG>.
59. International Rescue Committee, 13 January 2022, <https://www.rescue-uk.org/article/crisis-afghanistan-unprecedented-hunger-after-conflict>.
60. See the Civilian Impact Monitoring Project, <https://civilianimpactmonitoring.org/reports>; and <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1114832>.
61. IPC, Yemen: Acute Food Insecurity Situation January - May 2022 and Projection for June – December 2022, available at: <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155479/?iso3=YEM>.
62. IPC Yemen, March 2022.
63. FAO/WFP, Hunger Hotspots, FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, February to May 2022 Outlook.
64. See for example, UN General Assembly, Implementation of technical assistance provided to the National Commission of Inquiry to investigate allegations of violations and abuses committed by all parties to the conflict in Yemen, 2 September 2020, A/HRC/45/57, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/implementation-technical-assistance-provided-national-commission-0>; Amnesty International, 'Yemen 2021', 2022, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/yemen/report-yemen/>.
65. UNDP, Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen: Pathways for Recovery, November 2021, available at: <https://www.ye.undp.org/content/yemen/en/home/library/assessing-the-impact-of-war-in-yemen--pathways-for-recovery.html>.



About Action Against Hunger: we are an international charity committed to saving the lives of malnourished children and supporting their families to beat hunger. For more than 40 years, Action Against Hunger has played a leading role in a global movement that aims to end life-threatening hunger for good.

Our teams work to provide people in crises with access to essential food, water and sanitation, healthcare and social protection support. We empower people to provide for themselves, see their children grow up strong, and help their communities prosper.

Author:

Elise Flecher, Action Against Hunger, with thanks for their contributions to Action Against Hunger global network colleagues

Contact:

Elise Flecher, Policy and Advocacy Adviser, Action Against Hunger UK
e.flecher@actionagainsthunger.org.uk

This report has been produced with the generous support of donors, including the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and the Basque Agency for Development Cooperation. The contents and views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or position of donors.

