



# CONFLICT & EMERGENCIES



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In 2020, around 65% of those suffering food insecurity were living in countries where conflict was the main driver



In 2021, almost 40 million people were facing emergency conditions across 36 countries



In 2021, 570,000 people were facing catastrophe (starvation and death) in just four countries: Ethiopia, South Sudan, Madagascar and Yemen



70% of the total number of people in crisis or worse in 2021 were in Afghanistan, the DRC, Ethiopia, Haiti, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen



In November 2021, the UN warned that the number of people teetering on the edge of famine in 43 countries had risen to 45 million.



# WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Armed conflict is the biggest single cause of hunger in the world today.

There are major armed conflicts now in parts of Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen. These are also the countries where the United Nations (UN) says many people could starve to death.

This is no coincidence. There is a direct correlation between the two. War and conflict result in life-threatening hunger and in the worst-case scenarios, starvation.

Those who survive conflict will have their lives blighted. Many will have their future health, wealth and wellbeing compromised. As a result, they are more likely to raise their children in poverty and hunger.

War perpetuates hunger. As do humanitarian crises and emergencies. Droughts and famines, cyclones and floods – often related to climate change – as well as earthquakes and tsunamis, can all crank up the cycle of hunger.

And to top it all, there are plenty of cases where humanitarian disasters and conflicts happen in the same place at the same time. The combination has a massive effect on levels of hunger.

You see, when your home is in danger you need to get away. You need to find somewhere safe for you and your family.

So it means leaving your belongings and livelihood behind. Without a job or crops and livestock, you can no longer support yourself.

Conflict and violence can also stop people getting to food supplies while climate change and natural disasters can reduce the food supply. Reducing the supply means prices go up. Higher prices can push those with little or no disposable income over the edge resulting in life-threatening hunger or malnutrition.

But if you flee your home, arriving somewhere safe is only the beginning. You are starting out again with nothing. No home, no land, no job, no money.

In just the first six months of 2021, around 84 million people – equivalent to the entire population of Germany – were forced to flee their homes because of conflict.

And the UN reckons 80 per cent of its humanitarian funding is needed to help people affected by conflict.

The number of children in conflict countries needing treatment for life-threatening hunger and malnutrition has risen to 4.5 million in only a few years.

More than half a million children in conflict zones could die from extreme hunger if we don't help now. But malnutrition

is not only a direct threat to life, it also weakens children's immune systems and leaves them vulnerable to killer diseases – including cholera and pneumonia.

Where children survive, the effects of malnutrition can be life-long. It hinders physical and mental development. In turn this can limit children's ability to get good jobs, creating a cycle of hunger. It is no surprise then that most of the world's stunted children under the age of five – 120 million in total – live in conflict countries.

Add disasters into the mix and the story just gets worse. The situation in the Horn of Africa – Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya – for example, is catastrophic. In the summer of 2022, the region was in the grip of a severe and prolonged drought. For four years the rains failed causing one of the worst droughts in decades. It resulted in crop failures and the death of livestock. It is also a region where conflict is endemic.

And it's not just East Africa which is affected. So too the Sahel region of Africa including, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. It is also dealing with a lack of rain which has created a hunger crisis. Insecurity in the region is also part of daily life for many.

Climate change is making the problem worse. A growing global population, means many are living in an unpredictable world of drought, food shortages, storms, floods, coastal surges and sea-level rise. Quite simply, conflicts and emergencies cause life-threatening hunger.



# WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

Intentionally starving civilians, destroying hospitals, houses and roads and stopping people getting aid are war crimes. In 2018 our advocacy efforts contributed to the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2417, which recognises the links between conflict and hunger and condemns starvation as a weapon of war. We are now advocating to ensure this is upheld.

Resolution 2417 is an important legal pillar which makes clear that food security is a human right and that governments will be held responsible for their actions when they contravene those rights. However, upholding international law won't solve hunger on its own. A legal right to food isn't enough when people don't have any means to get food in the first place. A lack of income, supply chains being broken by conflict, poor transport infrastructure, or climate-related disasters can all restrict access to food.

So, Action Against Hunger teams and our partners work in the world's most dangerous places to reach people in need.

## How we tackle hunger in countries affected by conflict and emergencies

When action is needed to save lives, we are there, on the ground, working to get the right food and support to babies, children, mothers and families. We are responding to dozens of emergencies around the world, including:

- supporting people affected by hunger in Ukraine as a result of the war, providing hot meals and emergency food packages
- working with refugees who have fled Ukraine to surrounding countries including Moldova, Poland and Romania, distributing food kits and providing mental health support to those traumatised by what they've experienced and seen

- providing emergency support in Afghanistan when earthquakes and drought, economic collapse and conflict have pushed millions of people to the brink of famine, setting up and running mobile health and nutrition teams. Reaching those in the most remote places and providing treatment for those with malnutrition
- helping war-torn communities in Yemen – the world's worst humanitarian crisis - providing treatment for malnutrition, ensuring safe access to water and treatment for cholera
- responding to the Rohingya refugee emergency in Bangladesh, distributing food parcels and setting up Covid-19 isolation and treatment centres.

So when disasters strike, we bring our decades of life-saving experience to bear. This means, food, water, shelter, toilets and cooking and cleaning kits for families. We are there, heading off hunger and disaster. And delivering life-saving health and nutrition services to children, as well as pregnant and breastfeeding women.

We work rapidly to get aid on the ground and we join up with other emergency teams and local governments to pool our skills and multiply our power. When the immediate crisis is over, we carry on, rebuilding and working to get crops and the economies growing again.

## Preventing emergencies

But we don't just arrive in countries after a disaster has struck. We're there before, building resilience and monitoring the situation so we can act quickly when a disaster occurs.

That's why we created the Pastoral Early Warning System (PEWS), an innovative system of real-time alerts that help herders find better grazing land. Taking satellite imagery of crops and water,



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we combine them with mobile surveys of people on the ground who feed in local market prices, trends in animal diseases, and reports of bushfires. We then analyse the data and send alerts to herders via radio, text, and community bulletins. This means they know what areas to avoid – and where to go to feed their livestock.

When we can predict disasters, we can prepare for them. Preparation means we can head off, or at least reduce, the impact of some disasters. We focus on areas where we know crises are possible and where people are already susceptible to life-threatening hunger. We bolster local economies, improve infrastructure and plan for long-term financial security.

## Working in partnership

Working with others is vital. That's why when a major crisis hits we immediately link with colleagues from other UK charities to bring relief, through our membership of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC).

A powerful combination of charities specialising in humanitarian aid, together we raise funds which are shared out among the 15 members of the DEC network. And we work together to save lives.

Communication in a rapidly unfolding disaster, where roads, telephone lines and mobile networks are destroyed, is a real problem. How do emergency teams know who needs what help - and where? How do we get information from remote, mountain villages cut off by earthquakes, floods or landslides?

To address such issues, we have joined the Start Fund, a network of more than 40 aid agencies which helps coordinate the efforts of agencies on the ground, sharing information, helping us all to respond early and quickly to emergencies together. Our team work saves lives. The Start Fund also provides rapid financing that allows us to respond to the many humanitarian crises around the world that don't hit the headlines.



# AHLAM'S STORY

Action Against Hunger's teams are working in Yemen delivering life-saving health and nutrition programmes.

Years of conflict and fighting have left Yemen's health care system fragile. Most Yemenis also lack access to a healthy, nutritious diet.

The escalating armed conflict remains one of the main root causes of life-threatening hunger in Yemen today. High rates of transmissible diseases, lack of diversity in food and recurring natural disasters have all exacerbated the situation. A lot of infrastructure has been destroyed by bombs – only 49% of Yemenis have access to safe water. The Covid-19 pandemic made the situation worse.

War in Yemen has pushed communities already on the brink further into poverty. With a shattered economy, families struggle to find food and to get the healthcare they need. It has forced millions of people to leave their homes, like 39-year-old Ahlam and her family.

"My children were living in fear - their little bodies were shaking, as the bombing was so near," explains Ahlam. With no money, Ahlam and her husband had no choice but to leave their nine children at home alone while they went to work. "Every day I imagined the worst things that could happen to them."

But they still couldn't earn enough to feed their family. And soon, their son three-year-old Ramiz, became sick.

"I had no money to take him to the hospital and I was malnourished myself. When Action Against Hunger came to my house he was admitted with severe malnutrition. They gave him therapeutic food. He started to feel better and he was able to take his first steps and play with his siblings. I feel so happy that my child is getting better.

"They also gave me counselling sessions and taught me a lot about breastfeeding."

**Contact us for more information, we would love to hear from you.**

For individuals, trusts or foundations - [Philanthropy@actionagainsthunger.org.uk](mailto:Philanthropy@actionagainsthunger.org.uk)

or - if you are corporate - [Partnerships@actionagainsthunger.org.uk](mailto:Partnerships@actionagainsthunger.org.uk)

Together, let's take action against hunger.