



“What can we do?”:

The role of UN Country Teams in tackling conflict and hunger

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) country teams and UN special political and peacekeeping missions have an essential role in implementing UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2417. Despite this, their engagement at the country level has been limited. This is partly due to a lack of awareness of, and emphasis on, the conflict and hunger agenda among UN agencies at HQ level, which have not sufficiently supported or encouraged country-level action aligned with UNSCR 2417.

In countries where a Special Political Mission (SPM) or a peacekeeping mission is deployed, the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG) are well-positioned to advance the UNSCR 2417 agenda. This is particularly important, as most peacekeeping operations include mandates for the protection of civilians. The Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), as the highest-ranking UN representative in these contexts, regularly interacts with government counterparts.

UN actors at the country level can also leverage early warning mechanisms by alerting donors and headquarters leadership to situations where conflict-induced hunger is increasing, due to IHL violations or other causes. UN leadership in-country should have the authority to call for early-warning ‘white notes’ and advocate privately for greater engagement by the UN Security Council in specific contexts. Given the political sensitivity of conflict-induced hunger, public advocacy in support of UNSCR 2417 could jeopardize humanitarian operations, making it essential for UN leaders to carefully manage these risks.

The recommendations below outline actions that UN country teams can take to enhance awareness, action, and accountability when conflict-induced hunger occurs.

What can the UN country teams do to advance the implementation of UNSCR 2417?

1. Increase political engagement and country leadership

To effectively support the implementation of UNSCR 2417, the SRSG, the Resident Coordinator or Humanitarian Coordinator, should:

- *Integrate UNSCR 2417 in diplomacy and advocacy efforts.* Incorporate UNSCR 2417 in their engagement with government counterparts, using it as a tool for humanitarian diplomacy. This will enhance advocacy for better humanitarian access and the protection of civilians
- *Ensure familiarity with UNSCR 2417 among UN leadership:* Ensure that UN heads of agencies and mission leadership are well-versed in UNSCR 2417 and its focus on conflict-induced hunger. This knowledge is crucial for effective coordination and response
- *Incorporate UNSCR 2417 in country strategies and operational planning.* Further, ensure both military and civilian staff are knowledgeable about its provisions, particularly concerning the intersection of conflict and hunger
- *Leverage UNSCR 2417 for early warning and prevention.* To support UNSCR 2417’s preventive

function, the SRSG should privately alert UN Headquarters when there are increasing risks of conflict-induced hunger, facilitating timely interventions

- *Integrate conflict and hunger analysis in humanitarian response plans (HRPs):* Additionally, relevant clusters, such as protection, logistics, and food security, should collaborate to address conflict-induced hunger. This issue must also be prioritized in discussions with government stakeholders
- *Facilitate joint analysis between clusters and mission components.* In order to enhance coordination and response to conflict-induced hunger
- *Enhance coordination in access and civil-military mechanisms.* Conflict and hunger should be integrated into access working groups and civil-military coordination mechanisms, ensuring a unified approach to addressing hunger in conflict zones.

2. Strengthen Early warning systems, monitoring and accountability

As the penholder for the UNSCR 2417 agenda, OCHA should take a more proactive role in consistently championing it. As part of its leadership role, OCHA should:

- *Enhance early warning systems for conflict-induced hunger:* Support UNSCR 2417's early warning function by identifying contexts at risk of increasing conflict-induced hunger. Proactively developing white notes, instead of waiting for UNSC member requests, will help ensure timely interventions
- *Appoint a dedicated UNSCR 2417 focal point within OCHA:* To ensure consistency and focus, this person should be responsible for coordinating and advancing the implementation of UNSCR 2417
- *Collaborate with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA):* OCHA should consult with the DPPA to develop stronger political recommendations within white notes, reinforcing them with concrete facts and actionable steps to better support UNSCR 2417's objectives
- *Encourage proactive white note production by UN Country Teams (UNCTs):* They should take the initiative to produce white notes on conflict-induced hunger without waiting for directives from UN headquarters or member states, in collaboration with FAO and WFP, and present them to the UN Security Council (UNSC), even without a formal request. These white notes should contain concrete recommendations and serve as early warning alerts for relevant UN bodies
- *Ensure regular discussion of UNSCR 2417 in Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs):* Humanitarian Country Teams should routinely discuss UNSCR 2417, especially when conflict-induced hunger cases emerge. The HCT and RC should then engage with governments, local authorities, and other conflict parties to address these issues
- *Engage with the DPPA's Early Warning Team:* OCHA should consider increased engagement with the DPPA's Early Warning Team to strengthen the integration of political and humanitarian efforts in preventing and addressing conflict-induced hunger.

3. Enhance cluster coordination

The UN cluster system plays a key role in advancing 2417. Some of the actions that clusters could take to enhance their impact include:

- *Enhance coordination between key clusters.* Strengthen collaboration between the food security, protection, and logistics clusters to facilitate joint analysis and the development of integrated program strategies. This enhanced coordination should be used to alert UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) about emerging UNSCR 2417-related risks,

particularly regarding conflict-induced hunger

- *Leverage the protection cluster for early warning.* The protection cluster should play a key role in raising alerts to the UN when there are risks or signs of conflict-induced hunger. This would help ensure early identification and a timely response to escalating humanitarian crises
- *Engage in private advocacy* with UN agency leadership to raise alerts in contexts where conflict-induced hunger is either at risk of increasing or increasing.

4. Leverage the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's global coordination platform

- *Strengthen the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC)'s leadership.* The Emergency Directors Group should include monitoring and reporting visits on UNSCR 2417 compliance as part of their missions. The findings from these visits should be used in private advocacy to mobilize timely action
- *Formalize OCHA's leadership on this agenda within the IASC.* This should include the political dimensions of this issue. This includes providing guidance and sensitization to UN Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) and OCHA field teams.

Conclusion

At the national level, UN Country teams can leverage their influence and leadership to integrate the conflict and hunger agenda, and UNSCR 2417, into several mechanisms and conversations. By referencing UNSCR 2417 consistently, providing guidance on how to operationalise the resolution, and coordinating the conversation in different fora, they can ensure that issues of conflict-driven hunger are proactively tackled.