

‘The Road to UNGA: Preventing Famine and Fighting Food Insecurity’

Outcome Document

12 September 2022

The global food crisis is now

We are in a global food crisis. The update to the [2022 Global Report on Food Crises](#) shows that well over 200 million people are suffering from acute food insecurity and require urgent action, more than at any time since the report's inception in 2017. Many of the drivers are not new. Conflict and insecurity, increasingly extreme weather events driven by climate change, and rising global commodity prices compound existing challenges faced by vulnerable people. Add to this a continuing global COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, and the impacts on global food value chains are catastrophic. This is certainly not a business-as-usual scenario. We must work together to tackle urgent needs and to transform local and global food systems in order to save lives and livelihoods.

Since 2017, the Global Report on Food Crises has reported increasing figures of acute food insecurity, year on year. Whilst the international community has responded to mitigate these crises, humanitarian responses, designed to address immediate needs, are clearly not sufficient. Tackling protracted food insecurity requires addressing underlying longer-term drivers across the areas of humanitarian, development and peace. Policies and interventions must move beyond attempting to manage food and nutrition crises, and become more proactive in preventing them.

The evidence – An alarming situation in 2022

The figures for 2022 show further spikes in the numbers of acutely food insecure people from 2021, noting that since the inception of the report in 2017, this number has basically doubled. These food crises are increasingly protracted, meaning that resilience at the global, regional, national, household and individual levels continues to be eroded. This is compounded by long-term unsustainable trends affecting aquatic and agri-food systems, and means that states face increasing difficulties in meeting the basic needs of their populations and cannot recover from one shock before another strikes.

The Global Report on Food Crisis 2022 Mid-year Update and additional available data¹ highlight that:

- **Almost 1 million people are expected to face starvation and death in 2022 if no action is taken².** The latest IPC report for Somalia confirms that up to 300,000 people are projected in Famine (IPC Phase 5) before the end of the year, if no action is taken. That brings to 970,000 the number of people facing starvation and death in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.
- **More people are in a situation of emergency and are acutely malnourished because of a lack of food than ever before in the history of the Global Report on Food Crises.** Last year some 40 million people were deemed

¹ No 2022 data were available for Bangladesh, Liberia, Libya, Palestine, Rwanda, the Syrian Arab Republic and Syrian refugee populations in Egypt and Lebanon. In addition, the 2021 data is used to provide a breakdown of the acutely food insecure population by IPC Phases for Ethiopia, Liberia and Zimbabwe, as such breakdown was not available in 2022.

² IPC/CH Phase 5. Catastrophe. Households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution, and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. This number includes 401 000 people in Ethiopia (projection July–September 2021) (to note: disaggregated data for Ethiopia were not available for 2022), 161 000 in Yemen (projection June–December 2022), 87 000 in South Sudan (projection April–July 2022), 301 000 in Somalia (projection October – December 2022) (to note: this is based on the IPC analysis published on 12 September 2022) and 20 000 in Afghanistan (March–May 2022).

to be in this terrible situation, with numbers expected to reach 45 million this year, according to available information.³

- Up to **222 million people are forecast to face high levels of acute food insecurity**⁴ in the countries of the Global Report on Food Crises 2022 – the highest number recorded in the seven-year history of the report.
- The increases in the acutely food-insecure population are again mainly the product of a combination of **conflict, successive and sustained economic shocks**, and **weather extremes** that adversely impact food security at the national, regional and global level. Global drivers of increasing food prices, starting in March 2020 (start of the **COVID-19** pandemic) and peaking in March 2022 (start of the **war in Ukraine**), have only compounded deteriorating trends in countries/territories in food crisis.
- Seven countries have witnessed increases of **over 1 million additional people acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance** from 2021 to 2022: Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.
- At the same time, other countries, such as the **Democratic Republic of the Congo, have been facing protracted food emergencies for years** and have had millions of people facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) for at least five years in a row. These countries require equal attention and resilience-building assistance to mitigate the risks of humanitarian catastrophes.

A ‘Paradigm Shift’ – Forging a new path

At the High-level event “Preventing Famine and Fighting Food Insecurity”, held on 12 September 2022, a **globally diverse** group of participants, including those representing local communities, operational specialists, policy makers, senior government officials, UN leaders and representatives of international financial institutions came together to present and discuss solutions and areas of action that require consideration by world leaders gathered at the 2022 United Nations General Assembly meeting. In short, they discussed forging a new path to preventing famine and fighting food insecurity.

Calling for a paradigm shift, participants reinforced the primary message to urgently scale up humanitarian assistance to those communities where death is already a reality. Yet there was also an acknowledgement that approaches in response require reconsideration with a greater focus on prevention as well as the integration of sectoral responses, in particular health and nutrition together with water and sanitation, as well as the integration of modalities of cash and in-kind, recognising that fighting hunger is facilitated by these connections. These key messages emerged alongside the plea for operational actors to reach beyond capitals and national centres to be as close as possible to those affected and with strengthened support to those at the forefront of crises. Even as participants agreed that lessons of the past had been learnt, they had not necessarily been applied. Context specific responses guided by the voice of the affected must steer the design of action, which unfortunately we see does not happen today, as it should.

Even as efforts to bring families back from the brink of starvation are essential, so are the actions needed to stop them from returning. Resilience building and restoration of livelihoods are equally important for these same communities, as is the need for new programmes that support climate adaptation.

³ IPC/CH Phase 4. Emergency. Households either have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality or are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation. These numbers include 2021 IPC/CH data for IPC/CH Phase 4 in Ethiopia, Liberia and Zimbabwe.

⁴ IPC/CH Phase 3 or above. Crisis. Households either have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition or are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies. The Mid-year Update of the GRFC 2022 reported up to 205 million people in IPC/CH Phase 3 or above or equivalent; this number also include 17 million people facing high levels of acute food insecurity in the 8 countries for which the latest data was produced in 2021 – i.e. Bangladesh, Liberia, Libya, Palestine, Rwanda, the Syrian Arab Republic and Syrian refugee populations in Egypt and Lebanon.

Tackling the root causes of food insecurity through better aligned short-, medium- and longer-term plans should be our goal. These plans must cut across expertise and organisations and bring together humanitarian, development and peace actors. Coherence is key. Importantly such plans must be guided by evidence. Building the evidence needed to deliver programmes that reduce need has made significant progress in recent years, with the use of technology and is now informing early warning efforts with great detail and precision. Early warning informs early action and anticipatory action. This approach can help people withstand and recover more easily from the impact of sudden shocks, saving scarce resources in the longer term. For example, providing assistance before people have to sell livestock, or leave, is critical, yet few donors support this type approach.

This brings us to the one issue echoed by all participants – resourcing. While member states have been generous, this generosity remains with a small group. This is unsustainable. Burden sharing is required not only to support the critical increase of emergency assistance and basic social services, but also to balance the financing in a manner that allows us to reduce needs even as we work to ‘meet’ need. Currently resourcing does not follow the evidence. For example, we see that rural communities are often the worst hit in a crises, yet just 8 percent of resources is channeled here in support of agricultural livelihoods. Similarly, the benefits of ‘quality’ funding, namely long-term, flexible funding, are well known, yet comprise of a very small percentage of overall funds, which in turn also lie with a small group of donors. Quality funding allows us to support early action and anticipatory action and to follow the needs of populations allowing responders to plan, prioritize and most importantly, to adapt. It increases overall efficiency and return on investment while also helping to overcome administrative barriers that can hinder collaboration. As such it supports UN reform, breaking down silos and allowing actors to pursue collective, mutually reinforcing outcomes. As quality of resourcing must increase so must the reporting and transparency needed to understand where resources go.

While solutions must focus on country level impact there is unique work at the regional and global level that must complement country level planning. One particular gap area is that of policy development which is critical for longer term sustainable solutions. This is especially relevant when it comes to facilitating trade, both inter and intra trade at country level as well as at the regional and global level. Global initiatives that seek to address some of the above issues are an important and positive signal, yet there is a lack of coordination amongst initiatives that in turn weakens our ability to deliver on global commitments.

Finally, as the evidence shows, the greatest numbers of the most severe food insecurity are related to conflict. Access to populations and the pursuit of peace must become central to the conversation. While conflict resolution efforts must increase, so must the negotiation of access so that people are able to obtain what they need. Likewise, outcomes of HDP programmes must include local level social coherence and resolving of disputes. As was clearly articulated ‘national security is not possible without food security.’ The pursuance of peace at all levels must be integrated into all work and plans as the ultimate solution to preventing famine and fighting food crises.

About this statement, the Global Network Against Food Crisis and the High-Level Taskforce on Famine Prevention

This statement is a summary of discussions from the event and serves to inform deliberations at the UNGA, specifically the Secretary-General’s roundtable on food security. It seeks to succinctly highlight areas that require attention in order to provoke commitments and mobilize political action.

Founded at the first World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, the Global Network Against Food Crises is an alliance of humanitarian and development actors committed to promoting sustainable solutions to food crises through shared analysis, strengthened coordination and collective efforts at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

The Global Network supports efforts to expand and consolidate data analysis and collection of evidence on evolving food insecurity, including the coverage of the global standard of food security analyses, the 'Integrated Phase Classification system' to more food-crisis-prone countries. Building on consensus-based evidence base the Global Network strives to facilitate and inform Strategic Dialogues across humanitarian, development and peace communities at global, regional and country level. Regional dialogues under regional leadership (Sahel, early 2022, Horn of African Strategic Dialogue, end 2022) seek to translate global and Food System Summit commitments into country investments, in particular the addressing of gaps. Complemented by global level strategic dialogues on 'Famine Prevention,' earlier this year in New York and the forthcoming dialogue in Washington DC to consider the economic spillover from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, these dialogues serve to galvanize the requisite political commitment needed to make real and lasting change.

Established by the UN Secretary-General in 2021, the High-Level Task Force on Famine Prevention seeks to raise global awareness and generate high-level commitment to address rising levels of acute hunger. It works to coordinate attention on famine prevention and mobilize support to affected countries, specifically advocating for famine prevention resources and improved access to people in need.

The **Global Report on Food Crises** is a global public good on food security and nutrition analysis. Since 2017, the Global Report on Food Crises has been providing a comprehensive global picture of the scale and magnitude of food crises with 16 partners facilitated by the Food Security Information Network.