



HUNGER AND CONFLICT

**HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES
IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS**

Palestinian family next to their demolished house.
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1. CONFLICTS AFFECT FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS SUBSISTENCE

Armed conflict and violence are at the root of food insecurity and nutrition crises and remain their main causal factor. In 2022, more than 85% of people in situations of acute (or worse) food insecurity crisis levels (IPC/CH Phase 3 and above) were living in conflict-affected countries.

In fact, between 2018 and 2021, there was an 80 per cent increase in the number of food insecure and malnourished people in conflict-affected countries.

This figure decreased slightly in 2022, but the number of hungry people increased due to economic shocks such as food price inflation and currency depreciation. However, while economic shocks became the main causal factor in relation to the number of countries affected, conflicts remained the main causal factor in relation to the number of people at high levels of acute food insecurity in 2022.

Data on how and to what extent different situations of armed conflict and related violence affect food security remain scarce. More evidence is also needed to understand how conflict and hunger are interrelated. While it is true that the specific ways in which conflict and violence affect hunger and malnutrition vary, there is a need for more evidence to understand how conflict and hunger are interrelated. Depending on the context, situations of hostility are often observed in the following situations specific practices that lead to food insecurity and acute malnutrition. From data collected from primary and secondary sources, this report details the violent actions that, in practice, involve attacks against food security, including violent actions against land and food security. productive assets such as crops, livestock and agricultural tools, infrastructure and basic social services, as well as mine contamination, forced displacement and restrictions on humanitarian access.

Violent attacks on food security include, but are not limited to: systematic burning and bulldozing and large-scale destruction of homes and property; the looting and destruction of crops; and the food and livestock; and targeted attacks on humanitarian aid workers. These attacks on food security affect entire communities and often have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable populations, such as women and children.



HOW CONFLICT AFFECTS FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS:

- **OBSTRUCTION OF ACCESS TO CROPS AND PASTURES**
- **LOOTING OR THEFT OF PRODUCTIVE ASSETS AND HARVESTS**
- **OBSTRUCTION ACCESS TO HUMANITARIAN AID AND TO THE BASIC MEANS OF SURVIVAL**
- **POLLUTION FROM MINE USE**
- **DESTRUCTION OF BASIC SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURES**
- **FORCED DISPLACEMENT**

NUMBER OF PERSONS IN IPC/CH STAGE 3 ABOVE OR EQUIVALENT BY PRIMARY FACTOR, 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Conflict/ insecurity	73.9M 21 countries	77.9M 22 countries	99.1M 23 countries	139.1M 24 countries	117.1M 19 countries
Shocks economic	10.2M 6 countries	24.0M 8 countries	40.5M 17 countries	30.2M 21 countries	83.9M 27 countries
Weather extremes	28.8M 26 countries	33.8M 25 countries	15.7M 15 countries	23.5M 8 countries	56.8M 12 countries

Note: Economic shocks include the indirect impact of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021 and the effects of the war in Ukraine in 2022. Source: FSIN, GRFC 2019-2023.



"In our clinics we see malnourished children, especially among the youngest, up to two years old. What we detect is how it affects their development: they do not grow within the average size they should have for their age and, internally, vital organs such as the heart, kidney or lungs are weakened; they are immunosuppressed and suffer worse from infections. In addition, they are children who have not received any vaccinations in the last seven months and who are living in very precarious conditions. They don't have access to decent sanitary housing. We receive them sick, especially with coughs and possible pneumonia, and when we treat them in the clinics, we identify that they are suffering from malnutrition.

Explains one of Action Against Hunger's emergency team members who has just returned from Gaza.

Little Issaldean looks out of the window of his tin house in the village of Ayn Arab. During the war, he moved with his 11 siblings and his parents to the Bekaa Valley. On the way, a bomb exploded 20 metres away, but fortunately they were lucky. No one was injured.

© Susana Vera for Action Against Hunger



A health worker measures the arm circumference of a Sudanese child in the clinic of a refugee transit centre in Renk, 13 February 2024. More than 550 000 people have already fled the war in Sudan to South Sudan since the conflict broke out in April 2023, according to the United Nations. South Sudan, which itself has only recently emerged from decades of war, was facing a dire humanitarian situation before the war broke out in Sudan and there are fears that it does not have the resources to accommodate the refugees. displaced persons.

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2. HOW TO ORGANISE A RESPONSE EMERGENCIES

Action Against Hunger's emergency team works to meet the basic needs of the emergency-affected population and alleviate suffering quickly and effectively. During a crisis, the main activities of the emergency team are focused on:



- **COORDINATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS**
- **RAPID NEEDS ANALYSIS**
- **RESPONSE DESIGN**
- **IDENTIFICATION OF LOCAL ACTORS**
- **RISK ANALYSIS**
- **MARKET ANALYSIS**
- **FUND MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCE MOBILISATION**
- **IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES**
- **OPEN BASE / TRANSFER TO NEW TEAM**
- **RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF STAFF**
- **PROGRESS REPORTS**

The challenges faced by an emergency response team in a context of violence or conflict are:

- **Security:** these are highly unstable environments, with multiple possible incidents such as shootings, an angry civilian population, or restrictions on access to unsafe or remote locations.
- **Recruitment, welfare and retention of staff:** in some contexts of violence and depending on the In addition to the psychosocial wellbeing of the organisation's own staff, there is a great need for staff to implement emergency responses.
- **Liquidity:** Humanitarian organisations sometimes find themselves in a situation where they are face the impossibility of bringing in cash, the monopoly of suppliers or high transfer fees.
- **Instability:** due to the context, emergency teams sometimes have to reorganise in case of military interventions or evacuation orders.
- **Procurement or aid delivery process:** these are very complex processes, involving multiple departments in the organisation and coordination from different countries.
- **Transport flow, costs and price variation:** Difficulty of logistical access and price variation due to the context are other major challenges in responding to such an emergency.



The Action Against Hunger emergency team at work in Turkey after the 2023 earthquakes.



3. HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS: SUDAN AND GAZA

Action Against Hunger operates in 50 countries, 28 of which are in conflict. The African Sahel, where Action Against Hunger is present in most of its countries, concentrates the contexts where conflict and hunger create vicious circles. The main challenge in these contexts is the need to understand the causes and consequences of conflict and hunger crises. Operating in conflict zones involves other challenges related to the difficulty of accessing the population, obtaining visas for expatriates to work in the field, or having the cash to purchase humanitarian supplies and pay local staff. It is essential to maintain a relationship of neutrality with the parties involved in the conflict to carry out the humanitarian response. Action Against Hunger's commitment to impartiality and independence is unwavering, without supporting either side.

It is not always easy for teams in non-governmental organisations maintain impartiality in the face of abuse, injustice and inequality. Maintaining neutrality in any situation is the best guarantee of being able to continue to help people in need.

Sudan is one of the complex contexts with a number of humanitarian challenges today. Almost 18 million of its population (1 in 3) is acutely food insecure, mainly due to a conflict that has generated the world's largest crisis of displaced people: 8 million as of April 2023. Action Against Hunger operates in Sudan, together with local partners, distributing agricultural inputs, treating and preventing malnutrition in 44 health centres, and providing water, sanitation and hygiene programmes. Although we have helped almost half a million people in the last year, the situation remains extremely difficult.

The conflict in Sudan is also a gendered conflict. Women and girls face increased risk of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, as they experience violence or harassment when trying to access markets, camps, livelihood opportunities and humanitarian distribution sites. The growing crisis of hunger and displacement is causing women to resort to survival sex for food and increasing rates of early and forced marriages.

Sudan is only one reflection of how the environment in which organisations operate

The proliferation of conflicts around the world has made humanitarian operations increasingly complex; 110 conflicts were active in 2023 alone. In this context, risk assessment has become essential to Action Against Disasters operations. Hunger. This assessment covers staff security and also risks linked to financial capacity. In such difficult environments, the effective implementation of the organisations' work requires additional resources.

Another of the current conflict contexts is Gaza, where Acción contra el Hambre is one of the few Spanish humanitarian organisations with a team of humanitarian workers. emergency response team comprised of personnel expatriate. In this small territory, almost two million people face the challenge of extreme conditions for their survival.

To reduce the risk of morbidity and mortality among newborns and to support mothers, Action Against Hunger has launched a nutrition programme in which it distributes lipid-based nutritional supplements aimed at reducing the incidence of acute malnutrition in children over the age of six months during periods of high risk, with the intention of supporting over 13,000 vulnerable people.

"Before 7 October, we didn't have nutrition and health programmes, because it wasn't necessary, but given the circumstances, we saw that we had to do everything we could as soon as possible. In the clinics we work with, we do an anthropometric screening, measuring their arm circumference to determine if are at risk of malnutrition. We distribute an extra supplement of 270 calories, about 50 grams, which they take daily for 15 days. After two weeks, they receive the ration for the next 15 days. We also give the mothers training on breastfeeding or care before they return to their tents or shelters."

Explains the nutrition expert from Action Against Hunger's emergency pool.

Action Against Hunger's ability to develop a humanitarian response in contexts as complex as Gaza is due to more than 20 years of experience working in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. During this time, we have established a network of local partners that allows us to activate a food supply chain and have local staff to deliver humanitarian aid.

The looming risk of famine for half of Gaza's population could be averted if the deteriorating food security, health and nutrition situation were halted with the entry of humanitarian aid through all land crossings and the provision of basic services are in place. However, without a permanent ceasefire, famine remains imminent.



SINCE THE CONFLICT BEGAN, ACTION AGAINST HUNGER HAS PROVIDED ASSISTANCE TO MORE THAN 800,000 PEOPLE IN GAZA, DISTRIBUTING FOOD, WATER, HYGIENE KITS AND IN WASTE MANAGEMENT AND CLEANING SERVICES.





4. UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2417

In May 2018, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2417, which recognises the link between armed conflict and food insecurity. The number of people facing food insecurity in conflict areas has increased significantly in recent years: in 2023, the number of people experiencing food insecurity in conflict areas has increased significantly in recent years: in 2023, the number of people experiencing food insecurity in conflict areas has increased significantly.

The risk of severe food insecurity in conflict areas has increased significantly. The number of acute food crises at crisis level or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or higher, or equivalent) reached almost 282 million in 59 countries/

territories, an increase of 9% from the 258 million people in 58 countries/territories facing similar conditions in 2022. In 20 countries/territories, conflict and insecurity was the main factor.

This resolution represented the first effort by the Security Council to address hunger in the context of its "protection of civilians" agenda, and created an important framework to prevent and respond to food-induced hunger.

conflicts. It is a landmark resolution that moved the debate on conflict and hunger from being solely a humanitarian issue into the political realm of peace and security, where it has fostered several other positive changes at the international level. These include the landmark 2019 amendment to the Rome Statute, which included the war crime of starvation in non-international armed conflicts; and the adoption of resolution 2573 in 2021, which condemns attacks on critical infrastructure and objects indispensable for survival, and seeks to highlight some of the protections around humanitarian access.

Resolution 2417 calls on all parties involved in armed conflicts to respect their obligations under international law and condemns the use of force in armed conflicts.

starvation as a weapon of war, as well as the obstruction of humanitarian aid and the denial and destruction of resources essential to the survival of civilians. The resolution also mandates the Secretary-General to report without delay on the emerging risks of conflict-induced famine and widespread food insecurity, and to provide updated information on

the implementation of Resolution 2417 in its annual report on the protection of civilians to the Security Council. In addition, it encourages all states to engage with the parties in It also calls on states to conduct independent, full, prompt, impartial and effective investigations within the framework of IHL. It also calls on states to conduct independent, full, thorough, prompt, impartial and effective investigations, within the framework of their obligations under IHL. of its jurisdiction, on violations of international humanitarian law related to the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare.



Displaced persons camp in Mali, where victims of the decade-long conflict in the country are arriving. African country. The largest of these camps, about 14 kilometres from the centre of Bamako, stands on a rubbish dump.

PHASE 1 MINIMUM

Households are able to meet their essential food and non-food needs without resorting to atypical and unsustainable strategies to obtain food and income.

STAGE 2 STRESS

Households have adequate staple food consumption, but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without resorting to stressful strategies.

STAGE 3 CRISIS

Households have problems in food consumption, with high or above-average acute malnutrition. Or they have an accelerated decline in resources to obtain food. Livelihoods or need to resort to coping strategies.

PHASE 4 EMERGENCY

Households have large deficiencies in food consumption, which leads to a lack of to very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality. They either face extreme loss of livelihoods or need to resort to emergency coping strategies.

PHASE 5 DISASTER/F AMINE

Households suffer from extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs. There is evidence of starvation, death and extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition.

ACTION NEEDED TO REDUCE DISASTER RISK AND PROTECT LIVELIHOODS

URGENT ACTION IS NEEDED



5. CONCLUSIONS

INCREASING INSECURITY

In 2023, nearly 282 million people in 59 countries will experience high levels of acute food insecurity, which will be the most severe food insecurity in the world, which represents a significant increase over previous years. This is evidence of the severity and expansion of the global food crisis.

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN CONTEXTS OF CONFLICT OR VIOLENCE

This is the main objective. Starvation tactics are ongoing in conflicts where parties are emboldened by impunity, lack of clarity and the absence of public outrage. Organisations such as Action Against Hunger work to reduce the frequency and intensity of conflict-induced hunger, a trend that is becoming normalised by widespread inaction.

FOOD

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW (IHD)

Armed conflict frequently involves violations of IHL, where parties to the conflict obstruct humanitarian aid and destroy essential resources. Resolution 2417 of the UN Security Council condemns these practices and urges states to conduct independent investigations into such violations.

IMPACT OF ECONOMIC AND CLIMATIC FACTORS

Other factors such as extreme weather events, economic crises and food price inflation aggravate insecurity. In 2022, food prices increased by 10% in 38 countries already affected by food crises.

HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES

Humanitarian organisations face major challenges when operating in conflict zones, including difficulties in accessing the population, obtaining visas for expatriate workers and the availability of financial resources. Neutrality and impartiality are essential to continue providing assistance in these contexts.

NEED FOR COORDINATED RESPONSES

The scale and complexity of food crises in conflict contexts require coordinated and sustained humanitarian responses. Organisations must work with local and global partners to ensure efficient distribution of food and other essential resources.

RESOLUTION 2417 AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Resolution 2417 has represented an important step in recognising the link between armed conflict and food insecurity. It has fostered positive changes in the international peace and security agenda, including the inclusion of the crime of food insecurity in the international agenda. The Rome Statute and the adoption of additional resolutions to protect critical infrastructure and humanitarian access.



View of the Rhoo site,
in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

MORE INFORMATION



**PREVENTING HUNGER IN CONFLICT
DIALOGUE SERIES**

GLOBAL SYNTHESIS REPORT

**PREVENTING
HUNGER IN CONFLICT
DIALOGUE SERIES**



**EMERGENCY ACTION
RESPONSE TO HUNGER IN
THE OPT**



**NO MATTER WHO THE
PARTIES ARE
IN CONFLICT.
HUNGER ALWAYS WINS**



**CONFLICT CAUSES
HUNGER**

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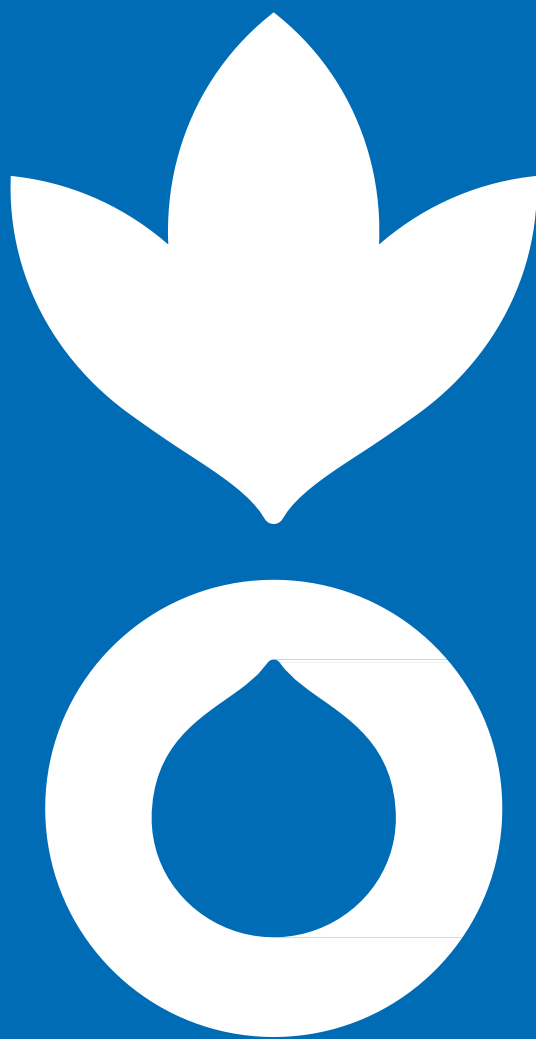
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