

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES



Fact sheet Hunger & conflict

“Wars and conflicts are driving hunger in a way we’ve never seen before.”

David Beasley, WFP Executive Director, addressing the UN Security Council, March 2018

The United Nations Security Council — the highest global body for maintaining international peace and security — passed an historic resolution in May 2018 acknowledging the link between hunger and conflict. Resolution [#2417 \(2018\)](#) recognizes that we will never eliminate hunger without peace in the world.

Food insecurity inevitably worsens when fighting drives large numbers of people from their homes, their land and their jobs. The resolution expresses particular concern for the millions of people who are threatened by

famine in countries caught in armed conflict. It condemns the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare.

At the same time, it is clear that hunger can exacerbate conflict. Food shortages deepen existing fault-lines, fuelling grievances. This is particularly the case where poverty and inequality are already present. Feelings of desperation or resentment can be exploited by armed groups with an interest in stoking unrest and violence.

Despite real gains in defeating hunger over recent decades, food insecurity is again on the rise — there are now 821 million hungry people in the world. There is growing evidence that the increase in hunger of recent years is primarily due to the impact of armed conflict in countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

In South Sudan, relentless conflict and insecurity throughout the annual lean season pushed 6.1 million people -nearly 60 percent of the population - into extreme hunger though the situation could improve if a sustainable peace takes hold, three United Nations agencies said.

The report says large-scale humanitarian assistance was the only factor that prevented an even more devastating outcome. *Joint WFP-FAO-UNICEF news release, 28 September 2018*

WFP is committed to Zero Hunger by the year 2030, as set out in the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). But there are impediments to this goal being achieved and the greatest of these is man-made conflict.

CONFLICT AND HUNGER - FACTS & FIGURES

Of the more than **800 million hungry** (i.e. chronically food insecure) people in the world, about 490 million live in countries affected by conflict. That's 60 percent of the world's hungry people.

Six out of 10 people facing acute food insecurity are in countries plagued by conflict or insecurity (in other words, more than half of the 124 million acutely hungry people living in 51 countries are in parts of the world where there is fighting or violence).

Three-quarters of stunted children - some 122 out of 155 million children - live in countries affected by conflict.

Ten out of 13 of the world's main food crises are driven by conflict - and, as a consequence, nearly all of WFP's biggest emergency operations are in conflict zones.



A recent **11 percent global increase** in the number of people experiencing acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above*) can largely be attributed to conflict and insecurity in countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Nigeria (north-east), South Sudan and Yemen.

While most countries have achieved significant gains in the **last 25 years** in reducing hunger and undernutrition, progress in doing so in nearly all countries affected by conflict has stagnated or deteriorated.

* [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#)

Yemen is set to continue being the world's **largest food crisis**. The situation in the war-torn country is expected to deteriorate because of economic collapse, outbreaks of disease, and restricted humanitarian and commercial transport access due to lack of security,



In conflict-affected countries, where agriculture and trade are disrupted, a simple plate of food can cost **more than a day's wages**. In South Sudan, for example, it could be the equivalent of a New Yorker having to pay US\$348 for a modest lunch such as a plate of bean stew.

More than 80 percent of resources requested by UN humanitarian appeals in recent years have been for humanitarian action in conflict situations.

Around 60 percent of all conflicts recur. WFP works with governments to strengthen systems of stability, and supports people as they reconstruct their communities. This is the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

WFP has found that countries with the highest level of food insecurity, coupled with armed conflict, have the **highest outward migration** of refugees. Additionally, when coupled with poverty, food insecurity increases the likelihood and intensity of armed conflicts, something that has clear implications for refugee outflows.

By promoting peace and ending violent conflict, the world could save **billions of dollars** in humanitarian food assistance costs every year.

Sources: Global Report on Food Crises 2018; The State of Food Security in the World 2017 and 2018; Counting the Beans: the True Cost of a Plate of Food around the World, WFP, 2018; The World of Food Assistance, WFP, 2018; Conflict Recurrence, Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2016; At the Root of Exodus: food security, conflict and international migration, WFP, 2017.