

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 humankind will never eliminate hunger without establishing 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 on the rise in an alarming number of countries, particularly in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It is estimated there are some 821 million hungry people in the world.

WFP and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) are engaged on a multi-year research project to assess what WFP is doing to contribute to prospects for peace - and how it might do more. To date, WFP and SIPRI experts have visited four countries: El Salvador, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan and Mali. Preliminary

findings, announced in June 2019, point to contributions by WFP in reducing conflict over contested natural resources, building relationships within divided communities and strengthening livelihoods in a way that bolsters peace.

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 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. *SOFI 2018* *

Some 74 million people - two thirds of the 113 million people facing acute hunger in the world - are located in 21 countries affected by conflict and insecurity. *Global Report on Food Crises 2019* **

Nearly 80 percent 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.

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. This is a factor with 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.

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.

* The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World estimates the scale of chronic food insecurity worldwide.

** The Global Report on Food Crises focuses specifically on the most severe manifestations of acute food insecurity in the most pressing food crises. Acute hunger = IPC Phase 3 and above. [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#)



The **three worst food crises** in 2018 in order of severity were all countries affected by conflict: Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan.

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

Nearly **a quarter of a million people** have been killed directly by fighting in Yemen and indirectly through lack of access to food, health services and infrastructure.

About **2 billion people** live in countries where development outcomes are affected by fragility, conflict and high levels of violence. About half of the world's poor live in fragile or conflict-affected states.

Sources: [Global Report on Food Crises 2019](#) ; [The State of Food Security in the World 2017](#) and [2018](#) ; [Assessing the Impact of War on Development in Yemen, UNDP, 2019](#) ; [Counting the Beans: the True Cost of a Plate of Food around the World, WFP, 2018](#) ; [World Food Assistance, WFP, 2018](#) ; [Fragility, Conflict & Violence](#) , the World Bank 2019 ; [At the Root of Exodus: food security, conflict and international migration, WFP, 2017](#).