



A seismic hunger crisis is enveloping the world amidst a time of unprecedented needs. **Climate shocks, conflict, COVID-19 and the spiralling costs** of food and fuel, compounded by the conflict in Ukraine and its knock-on effects for countries dependent on that region's supply of wheat and other food, could drive **48.9 million people on the edge of famine.**



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES



UNPRECEDENTED NEEDS THREATEN A HUNGER CATASTROPHE

While overall needs for humanitarian assistance are higher than ever, there remains a chronic shortfall of funding: the World Food Programme (WFP) is **forecast to raise less than half of the 21.5 billion it would take the agency to both save lives and build resilience for 147 million people in 2022.**

This crisis has been caused by a deadly combination of four factors:

Conflict remains the strongest driver, with 60 percent of the world's hungry people living in areas afflicted by war and violence. The world cannot afford another conflict as is happening today in Ukraine.

The war is a catastrophe, compounding what is already a year of destructive hunger. **Events in Ukraine provide further proof of how conflict feeds hunger, forcing people out of their homes and wiping out their sources of income.** Ukraine and Russia account for a third of the global wheat supply, and over half of WFP's supply of the grain. The crisis in the breadbasket of Europe is driving up the price of wheat as well as maize, sunflower oil and crude oil – with dramatic fallout for food security worldwide. Poorer countries will suffer the most. From Yemen to Syria, from Lebanon to Sudan, from South Sudan to Ethiopia, the ripple effects



At the border between Poland and Ukraine families wait for hours in the cold to reach safety in Poland.
WFP/Marco Frattini

The world cannot afford another conflict as is happening today in Ukraine

created by the bullets and bombs landing in Ukraine will be felt far and wide.

Climate shocks are destroying lives, crops and livelihoods, undermining people's ability to feed themselves, while the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are driving hunger to unprecedented levels.

At the same time, the **costs** of reaching people in need is rising: the price WFP is paying for food is up 30 percent compared to 2019, equal to an additional US\$42 million a month. The conflict in Ukraine has driven up food and fuel prices even further, adding another US\$29 million to WFP's monthly costs. Today, WFP is paying an estimated US\$71 million more for its operations per month. This means less money to pay for more goods and services that are required, stretching the humanitarian dollar to breaking point.

World is at a critical crossroads

The needs of the world's **811 million hungry people** were already forecast to peak in 2022 before the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict. This means that levels of humanitarian and development assistance from both traditional and new donors must be stepped up. In just two years, the number of severely food-insecure people has doubled from **135 million before the COVID-19 pandemic to 276 million today**, while WFP's funding appears to be levelling off.

The world is at a crossroads: either rise to the challenge of meeting immediate needs while at the same time supporting programmes that build long-term resilience at scale, or face even bigger problems down the line. Without the urgent resources needed to address these unprecedented levels of hunger, **the world will pay an even higher price** in terms of supporting displaced people, rebuilding societies and recovering from what has been lost, as the results of years of support for development are reversed.

In this year of projected catastrophic hunger, WFP's work **saving lives in emergencies** needs to grow. However, this needs to happen in tandem with an increased focus on **changing lives through**

building resilience, so that more people on the brink of hunger are not pushed over the edge.

Helping people and communities to grow their resilience, so that they can feed themselves, is a huge ask for donors already burdened with growing domestic needs from the same stresses. But **the price of not helping people to stay in their homes or neighbouring countries is clear**: rising migration, for example to the US and EU, where the cost of assisting new arrivals is much greater. In addition, people who have nothing left can be radicalized, leading to increased destabilization and conflict in key countries.

Inaction will be measured in lost lives

The gulf between funding needs and available resources already exceeds 60 percent over the next six months. Without additional resources, WFP will be forced to take food from hungry people to feed those who are starving. Already in Yemen, where WFP currently aims to reach 12.9 million people, it has been **forced to cut rations in order to feed the people in greatest need**. Elsewhere, it has had

The consequences of doing nothing will be measured in lost lives and livelihoods

to scale back assistance to refugees and vulnerable populations in some countries by distributing half rations, or providing a meal every other day. When WFP ran out of funds to feed Syrian refugees in 2015, they had no choice but to leave the camps and seek help elsewhere, causing one of the greatest refugee crises in recent European history.

The consequences of doing nothing will be measured in lost lives and livelihoods. In Afghanistan, 19.7 million people are food-insecure now amidst rising instability and a collapsing economy. More than a million children are at risk of dying due to malnutrition. Yet WFP is facing a funding gap of US\$1.4 billion from May. Elsewhere, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the world's worst hunger crisis in terms of absolute numbers. WFP aims to reach 8.6 million people, but funding



Half-moons in Burkina Faso. These semi-circular structures collect rainwater for growing crops in moisture deficit and degraded area. *WFP/Evelyn Fey*

shortages mean that none of these people will get a full ration of food to meet their daily needs.

In Nigeria, a chronic lack of funding means WFP has been forced to cut rations and limit the number of people it can assist – more than half a million people who previously received WFP food are now without this vital assistance. In South Sudan, 8.3 million people – or 70 percent of the population – face extreme hunger as the 2022 lean season peaks.

Alongside humanitarian action, the world also needs deeper political engagement to achieve zero hunger. **Only political will can end conflict in places like Ukraine, Yemen, Ethiopia and South Sudan.** Political commitment is also needed to maintain global temperatures within the target set by the Paris Agreement (1.5 Celsius). Otherwise, we cannot hope to limit the impact of climate shocks.

Good governance is a golden thread that holds society together, allowing human capital to grow, economies to develop and people to thrive. However, conflict and instability put countries into a reverse gear, where developmental gains are destroyed and livelihoods shattered. **WFP's work in changing lives** can build self-reliance, stabilize communities and help them better to survive sudden shocks, and ultimately **reduce long-term costs.**

The true value of resilience

In just three years to 2021, WFP and local communities turned 272,000 acres of barren fields in the Sahel region of five countries into productive farmland, changing the lives of over 2.5 million people and showing how investing in resilience can pay dividends through peace and stability. In Bangladesh in 2020, WFP supported 145,000 people with cash assistance, four days ahead of severe flooding forecast along the Jamuna river. The money was used to buy food and medicine, protect critical assets, and transport livestock and families to safe places. **Early-warning meant WFP could empower**

Conflict and instability put countries into a reverse gear, where developmental gains are destroyed and livelihoods shattered

households to prepare for the impact of floods and prevent losses and damage. This cut the emergency-response cost by more than a half.

In Chad, WFP works in the arid Sahel Belt to create tree nurseries, which produce around 1 million seedlings a year. These trees help reclaim degraded land, recharge groundwater tables and capture thousands of tons of carbon dioxide. They also enable the production of nutritious food. In Malawi, WFP supported a crop insurance programme that provides a safety net to vulnerable farming households. In 2021, cash payouts after crop failures provided 65,000 farmers with the means to feed their families and avoid negative coping strategies such as selling livestock to pay for food. This was one of the largest microinsurance payouts in Africa, amounting to US\$2.45 million.

WFP has a plan for 2022 but needs a step-change in support to help deliver millions from disaster. Resources for resilience and development are often the first things to be cut when resources are tight. But with over 80 percent of the world's population living in areas prone to natural shocks, investing in resilience-building is an insurance policy against future vulnerability. The consequences of failing to bridge the huge funding shortfall will only mean sharp reductions in the number of people who are provided with assistance, cuts to the rations of those who we can continue to feed, and abandonment of development programmes.

World Food Programme

Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70,
00148 Rome, Italy - T +39 06 65131

wfp.org

Cover photo: A man carries WFP food assistance at a distribution site in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Wheat flour is fortified with essential vitamins and minerals to address micronutrient deficiencies. WFP/Alessio Romenzi