



# Climate-related Disasters and Food Insecurity in 2017: Preparedness and Response

**Disasters drive global food insecurity and hunger**, particularly when they compound existing economic vulnerability. They destroy agricultural assets and infrastructure, causing serious damage to the livelihoods and food security of millions of vulnerable people.

**More than 80 percent** of the world's food insecure people live in countries prone to natural hazards in degraded environments. When climate shocks strike, the situation of already vulnerable people can quickly deteriorate into a food and nutrition crisis. This can intensify conflicts over scarce resources, leading to new humanitarian crises, migration and displacement.

**Climate-related disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity.** They have almost doubled in the last decade (335 events on average annually) compared to the previous decade 1985-1994. In 2017 alone:

- **Hurricane Irma and Maria** have caused significant damage along their path in the Caribbean region and U.S., especially to houses, schools, hospitals, supermarkets, roads, bridges, power grids and telecommunications, ports and airports, and resulted in urgent food needs for vulnerable populations. Heavy rains and sea surge caused flooding in many areas including the coast of Cuba. In Haiti, more than 10,000 people were evacuated to 59 temporary shelters. The hurricanes **reduced food availability and access, and deteriorated the food security and nutrition** of people who were already vulnerable across Latin America and in the Caribbean.
- **The drought in the Horn of Africa** is driving a humanitarian crisis of alarming proportions. Consecutive droughts and one of the worst El Niños in 50 years has pushed **more than 11**

**million people** into severe food insecurity in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. More than 3 million people across Somalia face dangerous levels of hunger, while the number of those on the brink of famine has doubled to 800,000 since February 2017. Between 2016 and 2017, three consecutive droughts afflicted the country and with the risk of a La Niña in 2017-2018, there is significant concern for a fourth and perhaps even a fifth consecutive drought.

- **Flooding in Nepal and Bangladesh** has severely impacted people's food security. Bangladesh has had **more than 8 million people** affected by the country's worst flooding in 40 years. A total of 700,000 homes were destroyed or partially destroyed, and 580,000 hectares of cropland submerged. In Nepal, more than **1.7 million people** have been affected, with nearly half a million people displaced from their homes and in desperate need of assistance.



In Dominica, hurricane Maria destroyed or partially destroyed more than 4,000 houses, leaving more than 19,000 people displaced without access to basic food and water.



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## WFP Response

**WFP helps the most vulnerable people strengthen their capacities to absorb and adapt in the face of shocks and long-term stressors.** In order to respond to emergencies quickly, efficiently and effectively, WFP uses ground-breaking technology to help forecast emergencies and direct assistance to where it is most needed. Thanks to its emergency response expertise, WFP coordinates humanitarian partners by leading the Logistics and Telecommunications clusters, and co-leading the Food Security cluster.

In 2017, **WFP has helped more than 9 million food insecure people** affected by climate-related disasters in:

- **The Caribbean:** WFP is continuing to provide food assistance, logistics, air service and telecommunications support to island states worst-affected by hurricanes Irma and Maria. WFP has coordinated the delivery of hundreds of tons of food and non-food items to respond to the emergencies and set up emergency telecommunications clusters connections in key locations, where telecommunications were badly damaged. WFP has offered support to the government of **Cuba** with a contingency stock of **1,600 metric tons of food assisting 629,000 people**. Immediately after Hurricane Irma, WFP started to distribute high-energy biscuits to thousands of displaced people in **Haiti** as well as in **Caicos, Dominica, Sint Marteen and Turks**. In Domicca, WFP and partners are planning to transfer cash into the national social protection programme to allow the government to target the most vulnerable and most disaster-affected.
- **The Horn of Africa:** WFP has reached **2.2 million people** in the worst drought-affected areas of Somalia with a mix of in-kind food, vouchers and nutrition assistance. In **Ethiopia**, WFP is targeting **4.9 million people** with emergency food and cash assistance plus nutrition support for the most vulnerable.
- **South Asia:** WFP distributed emergency food supplies to more than **200,000 people** in northwest **Bangladesh** and has programmed cash-based transfers to reach 48,000 people. In **Nepal**, WFP distribution of food, cash and nutrition assistance has reached **198,080 people** from six severely flood-affected districts.



Climate-related disasters and shocks pose a particular threat to food security and nutrition. More than 11 million people in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia are food insecure.



One of the most direct humanitarian impacts of climate change will be more frequent and intense sudden onset of climate-related disasters exposing both governments and communities to increasing losses and damages.

## Investing in Preparedness to reduce Disaster Risks and Build Resilience

WFP's support to countries affected by climate-related disasters and extreme events builds on its **50 years of experience** in emergency preparedness and response, post-disaster recovery, safety net and asset building programmes, disaster risk reduction, early warning systems and food security analysis.

The growing importance of climate disasters on vulnerable and food insecure communities and governments is highlighted in [WFP's new Climate Change Policy](#). On average, WFP commits **\$2.3 billion annually** (around one third of WFP's yearly budget) to emergency operations in response to climate-related disasters. In a resource-constrained environment, these immediate humanitarian relief efforts stand in contrast to the **less than 10 percent** of WFP's annual budget which are dedicated to programmes for disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation and resilience building.

WFP continues to develop, test and deploy [forecast-based financing](#) in support of early warnings, and early actions to scale-up preparedness in the critical window between a meteorological forecast and an extreme weather event, with the principle aim of reducing food insecurity, saving lives and livelihoods.

**Integrated climate risk management approaches** that incorporate micro-insurance, microcredit, savings, livelihoods diversification and community disaster risk reduction have also been a key part of the [R4 Rural Resilience Initiative \(R4\)](#), a strategic partnership between WFP and Oxfam America which is reaching **over 43,000 households in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Senegal and Zambia** with insurance payouts. In the last 3 years, **over 8,500 people in Malawi** have also benefited from [better climate and weather information](#) to help them manage climate risks.

WFP's strong [food security analysis capacity](#) also helps governments, communities, and partners better understand the links between food security, nutrition and climate risks, and to develop better national policies and programmes.