



# Hunger fallout: How the G7 can prevent the war in Ukraine from escalating the global hunger crisis

## Executive summary

**The devastating impact of the war in Ukraine is being felt by crisis-affected communities around the world. People living in low-income, food import-dependent countries already impacted by conflict, COVID-19 and climate change are now suffering from the ripple effects of food supply chain disruptions, skyrocketing food prices and rising inflation.**

**Drawing on the IRC's work in food insecure contexts, this report outlines how the ripple effects of the war in Ukraine are compounding a pre-existing hunger crisis, and how the G7 and wider international community can prevent the war from pushing other vulnerable communities closer to famine.**

### A hunger fallout

In March 2022, G7 Agriculture Ministers expressed concern over the implications of the war in Ukraine for food security worldwide. Ukraine and Russia are major global suppliers of energy, food and fertilisers to some of the world's most food insecure regions (see Table 1). Disruption to Ukrainian supply chains, coupled with export restrictions, have caused prices of essential commodities to rise sharply. With limited fiscal capacity and reserves, these crisis-affected regions are unable to mitigate the inflationary impact on their populations.

The result is a devastating hunger fallout: up to 47 million more people are projected to experience acute hunger in 2022 unless urgent action is taken, up from 276 million people pre-conflict.

### Protracted crises at risk of deterioration

As the international community rushes to respond to the war in Ukraine, protracted crises in other parts of the world risk being overlooked. Already underfunded humanitarian appeals are predicted to go unfulfilled in 2022 as vital humanitarian and development assistance budgets are slashed, and there are indications of a trend toward the reallocation of aid funding to the Ukraine response, which risks becoming more acute.

Spotlights on four pre-existing crises – Afghanistan, Yemen, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel – illustrate the immediate and long-term impacts of increases in food prices and supply interruptions resulting from the war in Ukraine. Further shortfalls in humanitarian funding and political attention will significantly worsen hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity in these regions, particularly for women, children and other vulnerable groups.

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Image: © IRC/Badghis, Afghanistan. A farming family from Abkamari left their home when a severe drought left them little alternative. They received cash from the IRC to cover food, medical expenses and partly pay back debt accumulated over the past years.

**Table 1: Dependence on food imports among food insecure populations**

	Number of acutely food insecure people <sup>1</sup>	Number of children under 5 suffering from acute malnutrition	Total percentage of food imported	Percentage of wheat imported from Ukraine or Russia
<b>Afghanistan</b>	19.7 million	3.2 million	20 percent (wheat)	0.76 percent
<b>Yemen</b>	19 million	2.2 million	90 percent (all cereals)	46.3 percent
<b>Somalia</b>	6 million	1.4 million	90 percent (all cereals)	92 percent
<b>Sahel (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger Nigeria)</b>	34.1 million	Over 7 million	8-28 percent (wheat, rice and coarse grains)	30-50 percent

<sup>1</sup>: Crisis level – IPC 3 or worse. Sources: Afghanistan IPC Classification March – May 2022, and 2022 Global Report on Food Crises: Yemen forecast data for June – December 2022; Somalia: forecast data for April- June 2022 and Sahel: forecast data June-August 2022 (sum of data for six countries). Forecasts don't yet take fully into account the impact of the war in Ukraine.

## Action to end the hunger crisis

The invasion of Ukraine is drawing much-needed attention to weaknesses in our global humanitarian, political systems and food systems. Unless these systems are reformed, political inertia and inaction in the face of food insecurity and violations of the rules-based international system will continue to cause millions to go hungry and force them to adopt negative coping strategies.

To prevent the war in Ukraine from escalating the global hunger crisis, the IRC is making four urgent calls to the G7 and international community:

1. Don't forget other crises: protect and increase funding to prevent acute hunger and famine
2. Scale up proven interventions to mitigate the hunger fallout from the war in Ukraine
3. Fix the broken food system
4. Strengthen humanitarian diplomacy and end impunity

Through swift and coordinated action, the G7 can save lives, build the resilience of crisis-affected communities and preempt future shocks. Priority actions must include combining humanitarian aid – focused on cash transfers and gender- and climate-sensitive interventions addressing malnutrition and food security – with anticipatory approaches and diplomatic efforts to ensure humanitarian access and the upholding of international humanitarian law.

As the G7 ministers and leaders meet in 2022, they have an opportunity and a responsibility to address the global hunger crisis and prevent the war in Ukraine from pushing crisis-affected communities closer to famine. G7 plans for a Global Alliance for Food Security is a promising step, particularly when coupled with commitments to implement existing and new initiatives such as the [Global](#)

Network Against Food Crises and the UN Secretary General appointed [Global Crisis Response Group on Food Energy and Finance](#). The solidarity that G7 members have demonstrated in response to the invasion of Ukraine must now be matched with urgent action to address the hunger fallout in other parts of the world.

## Fast facts

### Food insecurity

- [811 million](#) people are hungry.
- Before the war started, [276 million](#) people in 81 countries were acutely food insecure.
- [44 million](#) people are suffering from emergency levels of acute food insecurity globally – a classification indicating they are highly vulnerable to famine – a rise from 34 million in 2021.
- Over half a million (570 000) people were in Catastrophe facing starvation and death in 2021 in four countries (Ethiopia, South Sudan, Yemen, Madagascar).

### Ukraine impacts

- The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates an additional [47 million](#) people could become acutely food insecure due to the war impacts.
- As of May 5, 2022, the [Agricultural Price Index](#) is up 41 percent compared to January 2021. Maize and wheat prices are 54 percent and 60 percent higher, respectively.
- Fertiliser prices surged in March, up [nearly 20 percent](#) since January 2022 and almost three times higher compared to a year ago.

## The ripple effects of the war in Ukraine

**Russia's invasion of Ukraine and attacks on civilians have shocked the world. In the space of 11 weeks, the war in Ukraine forced 6.2 million people to flee the country and displaced a further 7.7 million inside Ukraine – a total of almost one-third of the total population. The conflict has decimated civilian infrastructure with the destruction of business centres, hospitals, schools, residential buildings, water stations and electricity systems. The International Criminal Court has opened an investigation into possible war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Investigations by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe found “...clear patterns of [international humanitarian law] violations by the Russian forces in their conduct of hostilities”. Most concerning is that while what is happening in Ukraine is abhorrent, it isn't unique. Globally, violations of international law have become the brutal new standard of warfare. The war in Ukraine is indicative of the current 'Age of Impunity' where the laws of war are continually broken and perpetrators rarely held to account.**

The devastating humanitarian impact of the war is not limited to Ukraine and the surrounding countries. Global reliance on food and other commodities produced in Ukraine and Russia mean that crisis-affected populations outside of Europe – already reeling from the impacts of conflict, COVID-19 and climate change – are also being forced to grapple with the ripple effects of supply chain disruptions, skyrocketing food prices and rising inflation. With limited fiscal capacity and reserves, these crisis-affected states are the least able to mitigate the inflationary impact on their populations. The result is a devastating hunger fallout. Tens of millions more people are being forced into food insecurity with the risks of malnutrition and famine growing.

According to the World Bank, the war in Ukraine has altered global patterns of trade, production, and consumption in ways that will keep prices at historically high levels through the end of 2024, exacerbating food insecurity and inflation. The UN has recognised the gravity of the situation by launching the [Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance](#) – a 32 member Group to ensure high-level political leadership can implement a coordinated global response to these ongoing crises.

### Rising prices and supply disruptions

Ukraine and Russia are major global suppliers of energy, food and fertilisers. Disruption to Ukrainian supply chains, coupled with export restrictions set by Ukraine and Russia, have caused [prices of commodities to rise sharply](#). Combined, Ukraine and Russia's food exports account for [12 percent](#) of the world's total consumed calories. As Ukraine's grain fields become battlefields and millions of Ukrainians are displaced, the sowing of vital agricultural crops, which feed millions around the world, has already begun to decline. At the same time, ports along the Black Sea such as Odesa, which facilitate the export of 98 percent of all of Ukraine's grain, have been shuttered, interrupting supply to regions of the world that are dependent on imported food. This has an impact on food prices – as of early May 2022, the [Agricultural Price Index](#) is up 41 percent compared to January 2021, with maize and wheat prices 54 percent and 60 percent higher, respectively.

As the war in Ukraine unfolds with catastrophic impacts on global food supply, it is propelling an already vicious cycle of hunger, conflict, deprivation and climate disasters. 2021 saw an unprecedented increase in both the price of food and the cost of transporting food to those who need it, as well as rising levels of hunger. Should the conflict become protracted, the longer-term risks to global food supplies and markets will be severe. Russia and Belarus – both now the subject of global sanctions regimes – are two of the world's top fertiliser exporters, accounting for [33 percent](#) of potassium fertiliser and [15 percent](#) of nitrogenous fertiliser exports. With fertiliser prices already at a record high prior to the conflict, shortages arising from the conflict in Ukraine could lead to [significant price hikes](#) and consequently to poor harvests in some of the world's lowest-income and food insecure regions such as the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.

### Compounding a pre-existing hunger crisis

Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal of zero hunger by 2030 was already compromised by the COVID-19 pandemic – the IRC estimated that progress was at risk of [stalling by at least 5 years](#) – and is now further undermined by food price hikes and supply issues. In March 2022, [G7 Agriculture Ministers expressed deep concern](#) over the implications of the war in Ukraine for food security worldwide. The conflict is driving levels of hunger to new depths across the world's most vulnerable crisis-afflicted contexts, potentially [pushing a further 47 million people into acute hunger in 2022](#). The World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that with [50 percent](#) of its grain supplies coming from Ukraine and Russia, increased food prices could result in further cuts to its vital food security programming which supports more than [115.5 million people](#). The broken food system, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, is also predicted to have a disproportionate impact on women and children. They are most vulnerable to malnutrition and hunger, and food insecurity also exacerbates existing risks of gender-based violence, such as intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and early and forced marriage.

At their 2021 summit, G7 leaders committed to respond to and prevent the increasing risk of famine arising from the triple threat of conflict, climate change and COVID-19 through the implementation of the [famine prevention compact](#) under the UK Presidency's leadership. This builds on previous G7 commitments including the [2015 Schloss Elmau commitment](#) to lift 500 million people out of hunger and malnutrition by 2030. However, commitments made within the compact, including increasing humanitarian assistance, resilience-strengthening support and vital anticipatory financing for famine prevention, have largely been unrealised. The implications of limited action are clear: in just one year, the number of people suffering from [emergency levels of acute food insecurity](#) globally – a classification indicating they are highly vulnerable to famine – has risen from 34 million in 2021 to [44 million](#) in 2022.

### **Insufficient aid levels at risk of reallocation**

Persistent underfunding of humanitarian responses has contributed to the current high levels of hunger and food insecurity experienced today. The Horn of Africa, for example, is currently experiencing the driest recorded conditions in [more than 40 years](#) yet its humanitarian responses remain desperately underfunded. While new pledges for the region of close to [\\$1.4 billion](#) made at the High Level Roundtable on the [Horn of Africa Drought](#) in April 2022 are welcome, the Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia, where over 6 million people are acutely food insecure, remains significantly underfunded. Likewise, the number of people suffering famine-like conditions in Yemen is set to rise [five-fold](#) in 2022 but the humanitarian appeal remains more than [US\\$3 billion](#) underfunded and in Afghanistan, [6.6 million people](#) are facing emergency levels of food insecurity – the highest number in the world – yet the response is only [15 percent](#) funded.

Compounding the impact of already underfunded responses, some G7 and EU countries have [reallocated](#), or are considering [reallocating](#), their Official Development Aid (ODA) budgets to respond to the Ukraine crisis, rather than mobilising new and additional resources. Such measures could severely undermine [existing G7 famine prevention pledges](#) which include [commitments to address critical funding gaps](#) in humanitarian responses, invest in long-term interventions for countries at risk of famine and increase anticipatory action to mitigate the impact of future shocks. Anticipatory financing that is triggered by signs of impending crisis could help build future resilience, however, [research into recent crises](#) shows that just 2.3 percent of the total funding was agreed in advance. In the immediate term, and in the absence of adequate prepositioned funding, by prioritising Ukraine at the expense of other pressing humanitarian crises and long-term development programmes, donor governments risk failing to deliver on their commitments and allowing the unnecessary suffering of millions of people.

### **System failure**

The war in Ukraine, and its knock-on effects on other humanitarian contexts, have highlighted the failure of the international community to anticipate and respond to crises and fulfil basic needs such as food. It has demonstrated how these [system failures](#) are playing out in countries that are being already failed by the humanitarian system, where political inertia and inaction in the face of violations of the rules-based international system are causing millions to go without food and vital essentials and forcing them to forgo their livelihoods. *Diplomatic failure* continues to drive global humanitarian emergencies with peacemaking in retreat. *Legal failure* is reflected in the dismissal of international law and growing crimes against humanity occurring without accountability. *Operational failure* is clearly apparent in response to the ripple effects of the Ukraine crisis, with the system of humanitarian aid overwhelmed and unable to appropriately respond to predictable crises, despite years of evaluations and learning that demonstrate the value of anticipatory financing and action.

The international response to the Ukraine war and its ripple effects is a test of the global readiness or willingness to avert, anticipate and reverse these trends. Massive funding shortfalls for the humanitarian responses in acute crises including Afghanistan, Yemen, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel illustrate the scale of the challenge. This report provides recommendations for the international community, and G7 members in particular, which would allow them to take on much needed diplomatic, humanitarian and development leadership to forestall the worst humanitarian impacts of these global emergencies.

### **Time to act for G7 and wider international community**

As the world's largest economies and aid donors, as well as an influential diplomatic bloc, the G7 has the opportunity to ensure that the response to Ukraine does not divert attention away from high risk, humanitarian crises such as those in Afghanistan, Yemen, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel (highlighted in the next section of this report) and others on the [IRC's Emergency Watchlist](#). In many of these contexts, restrictions on humanitarian access are compounding food insecurity and further endangering civilians who rely on critical food aid and other services for their survival. This denial of humanitarian access, including through political acts designed to cause hunger and starvation, constitute a breach of international humanitarian law.

The international community has demonstrated near-unprecedented unity in its response to the war in Ukraine, with resounding support for a UN resolution to demand humanitarian access and investigations into violations of international humanitarian law in the conflict. However, political inaction to similarly call attention to violations of humanitarian law, including access denial, that are driving humanitarian crises in other parts of the world is

compounding the challenges of ensuring the world's most vulnerable can access the food and services they need, and undermining progress towards previous G7 commitments.

As G7 leaders prepare to gather in Schloss Elmau, they must commit to resolute political and humanitarian action to respond to the drastic rise of food insecurity and hunger worldwide. G7 plans for a [Global Alliance for Food Security](#) is welcome in this regard, particularly where this coordinates with and builds on other initiatives launched by international organisations and international financial




institutions, and mobilises vital funding for food insecure countries. G7 leaders have the opportunity to build on this momentum and commit to roll back the trends of impunity towards violations of international humanitarian law and access restrictions that have come to characterise so many of the world's conflicts.

Now is the moment for the G7 to take action and couple diplomacy with vital financing for proven food security interventions and anticipatory action to overcome the threats of hunger, malnutrition and famine.

## Humanitarian contexts that the G7 must continue to prioritise

**As some of the most food insecure regions, Afghanistan, Yemen, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel are among the parts of the world that will be particularly impacted by increases in food prices and supply interruptions resulting from the war in Ukraine. They are also contexts where any further shortfall in humanitarian funding and diplomatic attention will significantly worsen hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity, particularly for women, children and other vulnerable groups.**

### Afghanistan

	Number of acutely food insecure people: <b>19.7 million</b>
	Number of children under 5 suffering from acute malnutrition: <b>3.2 million</b>
	Total percentage of food imported: <b>20 percent</b> (wheat)
	Percentage of wheat imported from Ukraine or Russia: <b>0.76 percent</b>

### Afghanistan's hunger crisis

Afghanistan is one of the world's worst hunger crises. 19.7 million Afghans suffer acute food insecurity, with nearly 6.6 million suffering emergency levels of hunger, just one phase away from famine conditions. This figure is both a higher number than any other country in the world, and nearly one sixth of the global population suffering this level of severe hunger. All 34 provinces of the country are experiencing acute food insecurity, and [90 percent](#) of Afghan households in all regions report that food is prioritised above all other needs. [Severe drought](#) has devastated agricultural production, a source of vital income for [61 percent](#) of Afghan households, while COVID-19 has decimated employment opportunities, compounding years of conflict induced poverty and displacement. Since August 2021, efforts by the international community to isolate the Taliban have seen the country engulfed by an economic crisis that has compounded existing food insecurity, driving the levels of hunger we see today.

Afghan women have been most severely affected by the hunger crisis. Movement in public spaces for women and

girls is increasingly restricted, cutting them off from essential education and employment opportunities to secure a living for themselves and their families. In a recent survey with [Afghan women](#), 100 percent saw their household financial situation deteriorating and all experienced food shortages with 66 percent stating they often didn't have enough to eat.

### Effects of the war in Ukraine

Since August 2021, this acute hunger crisis has been accelerated by state failure and economic collapse. Now, the war in Ukraine threatens to further increase the price of essential food commodities on which Afghans rely. WFP has [warned](#) that as one of the world's 'hunger hotspots', Afghanistan is likely to be severely affected by already rising wheat prices. Due to the liquidity crisis facing Afghanistan and challenges for importers accessing international banking systems, commercial wheat prices in Afghanistan before the war in Ukraine began were already [40 percent](#) higher than in June 2021. While Afghanistan's wheat tends to come from its regional neighbours, it relies on Russian imports for [73 percent](#) of all seed oil imports – a key component of the [minimum food basket](#). With most Afghans already unable to afford food, further price spikes will be catastrophic.

The unprecedented scale of humanitarian need in Afghanistan since August 2021 led the international community to call for [US\\$ 4.4 billion](#) of funding in the UN's 2022 Afghanistan appeal, the largest single-country humanitarian appeal on record. While humanitarian assistance has so far staved off the risk of famine over the winter, aid cannot replace a functioning state or economy. Moreover, with the risk of further price increases for essential food items in Afghanistan as a result of the war in Ukraine, it is imperative that the international community seeks to increase support for the nearly 6.6 million Afghans one step away from famine conditions.

### Major drivers of food insecurity

Supply disruptions are compounding pre-existing challenges to food imports. Following the Taliban's seizure of power in August 2021, the international community moved to isolate the new de-facto authorities through freezing access to an estimated US\$ 9.5 billion in foreign reserves and halting all development assistance. At the same time, sanctions against some of the individuals now forming the new Taliban-led Government created barriers for humanitarian funding to enter the country. This approach is now contributing to acute humanitarian suffering and an effective grounding of the country's public and private banking systems, leaving banks unable to facilitate international transactions, including for aid delivery and food imports. As a result, the country is now experiencing a colossal liquidity crisis, driving prices beyond the reach of ordinary Afghans.

Despite humanitarian and some commercial exemptions to the sanctions regime, a pervading reluctance by banks to engage in transactions involving Afghanistan continues to limit both essential imports and humanitarian operations. Imports into Afghanistan declined by 47 percent in the second half of 2021 relative to the same period in 2020. Without further clarity on sanctions, alongside diplomatic efforts to revive Afghanistan's ailing economy as well as support to the central bank, millions of Afghans will continue to suffer from some of the most severe levels of food insecurity in the world.





### Reaching the hungry

Due to liquidity and banking constraints, humanitarian programming has been largely reliant on the use of the Hawala system – networks of informal money transfer – since August 2021. Despite its high costs and other limitations, the Hawala system has enabled the continuation and scale up of lifesaving humanitarian activity, with essential IRC operations expanding to new regions of Afghanistan in this time. The wider humanitarian response successfully staved off famine over winter and has resulted in a reduction of the number of people suffering from acute food insecurity from 22.4 to 19.7 million, as well as reducing the number of people in emergency food insecurity by nearly 2 million.

However, to scale up the humanitarian response further and address the risk of renewed rises in levels of food insecurity resulting from Afghanistan's economic collapse as well as global wheat price increases, Afghanistan's economic crisis must be addressed. Formal mechanisms of money transfer need to be re-established, Afghanistan's central bank needs to be appropriately supported, development assistance needs to be urgently resumed, and ultimately foreign assets should be released. Further details on addressing Afghanistan's economic crisis can be found in the IRC's *From Humanitarian Response to Economic Recovery*.

Until the international community moves to offer support towards the functioning of Afghanistan's economy, more immediate steps should be taken. One short-term method of injecting cash into the economy whilst targeting the most food insecure populations are humanitarian cash transfers. Humanitarian cash transfers are a proven, effective means of addressing basic needs and steadily encouraging economic recovery. Through supporting people to purchase food, cash can strengthen local markets and offer a small-scale source of liquidity for Afghanistan's economy. Overwhelming evidence from multiple regions of the world shows that people who receive humanitarian cash spend a large proportion on food. Moreover, in other contexts, cash transfer programmes have helped to mitigate the exclusion of women and marginalised populations by giving them more independence and control over resources.

## Yemen

	Number of acutely food insecure people: <b>19 million</b>
	Number of children under 5 suffering from acute malnutrition: <b>2.2 million</b>
	Total percentage of food imported: <b>90 percent</b>
	Percentage of wheat imported from Ukraine or Russia: <b>46.3 percent</b>

### Yemen's hunger crisis

More than seven years of protracted conflict, a devastated economy and a fractured political system have left 23.4 million Yemenis in need of humanitarian assistance, including 19.1 million currently requiring food assistance – an increase of 2.9 million since last year. Since 2020, humanitarian appeals for Yemen have seen shortfalls of more than US\$2 billion at each pledging conference, with the 2022 appeal more than US\$3 billion underfunded nearly halfway through the year, in stark contrast to fundraising for Ukraine. In January 2022, these persistent funding shortages forced the World Food Programme to halve food rations for 8 million Yemenis. At the same time, an economic crisis has left 15.6 million Yemenis in extreme poverty and undermined the delivery of critical public services, hindering Yemenis' capacity to meet their needs.

Prior to the war in Ukraine, the affordability of food in Yemen had severely declined, with the average cost of the minimum food basket having increased by a staggering 119 percent in areas controlled by the Government of Yemen in 2021 alone. One in three displaced households are headed by women, which makes them particularly vulnerable to food insecurity, violence and increases their challenges to accessing humanitarian assistance. Persistent malnutrition already afflicts 2.2 million children under the age of five, has left 45 percent of Yemen's children stunted, and an estimated 1.3 million pregnant and breastfeeding women are projected to experience acute malnutrition.

### Effects of the war in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine threatens to severely exacerbate food insecurity across Yemen just as the number of Yemenis at risk of experiencing famine-like conditions is set to rise to 161,000 people. Yemen is a heavily import-dependent economy. 90 percent of its cereals are imported, with 46.3 percent of its wheat coming directly from Ukraine and Russia. Similarly, nearly all fuel – vital for the distribution of goods – is imported, leaving Yemen at acute risk from global price increases. The war in Ukraine had already driven the price of wheat, Yemen's primary import, to record levels in March, a 19.7 percent price increase since February, which follows on the heels of a doubling of the price of the average food basket in 2021. Price rises, combined with a massive humanitarian funding gap, have forced WFP to warn that it will be forced to cut food programming for 15.6 million Yemenis for a second time this year.

### Major drivers of food insecurity

Since 2018, access into Yemen's Red Sea ports and particularly Hodeidah – Yemen's largest port through which 70 percent of all imports arrive – has been severely restricted. The Saudi and Emirati-led Coalition's control of shipping, and delays in issuing clearance for UN-authorized ships, has contributed to a significant reduction in the pace and scale of imports of food and fuel. Since June 2020, restrictions on fuel imports, combined with fuel stockpiling and price manipulation in northern Yemen, saw prices for consumers increase by an estimated 76 percent between 2018-2021, causing huge spikes in the costs of transporting goods, and pumping water for agriculture, all contributing to increased food prices for Yemeni civilians.

Reaching those in need of humanitarian assistance in Yemen necessitates overcoming some of the most severe access barriers in the world, including bureaucratic barriers put in place by conflict parties in all areas of the country, widespread insecurity and regular incidents of attacks on aid workers. Year-on-year, bureaucratic barriers, such as regular incidents of denial of staff movement, requests to share aid recipient lists and months-long delays on visas or travel permits, have been by far the most regularly occurring access impediments, making up 86 percent of recorded access issues in 2021. The now-dissolved Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen stated in 2020 that "all parties to the conflict have impeded humanitarian operations and the population's access to food".





### Reaching the hungry

Despite these extensive economic and operational barriers, the humanitarian response reached 11.1 million Yemenis every month in 2021 with food assistance. The IRC implements life-saving activities, supporting basic needs through multipurpose cash assistance including by targeting households with children recovering from malnutrition to support the family and prevent relapse, combined with support for kitchen gardening as well as business skills trainings and grants for women.

The April 2022 truce announced by warring parties provides a potential opportunity to ease some of the worst of Yemen's food insecurity, and stands as a rare example of diplomatic success in the conflict. As the first nationwide truce since 2016, it offers rare hope for improvements in Yemen's import capabilities, with parties agreeing that in the two month period 18 fuel ships will be allowed into Hodeidah. It is now vital that the international community capitalises on the progress of the truce to keep all of Yemen's conflict parties at the table to build upon the truce and avoid any actions which could undermine the fragile progress that has been made.

The ability of the humanitarian response to support millions of Yemenis from falling into famine conditions depends on concerted efforts by the international community to ensure the fledgling temporary truce is transformed into a permanent ceasefire, the humanitarian response is fully funded, and diplomatic efforts are maintained to ensure improved humanitarian access.

## Somalia and the Horn of Africa

	Number of acutely food insecure people: <b>6 million</b>
	Number of children under 5 suffering from acute malnutrition: <b>1.4 million</b>
	Total percentage of food (cereals) imported: <b>90 percent</b>
	Percentage of wheat imported from Ukraine or Russia: <b>92 percent</b>

### The Horn of Africa's hunger crisis

Climate disaster, conflict and displacement are leading to surging hunger and famine risks across the Horn of Africa. Communities in this region are now facing the driest recorded conditions in over 40 years, one of the worst climate-induced emergencies seen in recent history, with over 13 million people facing acute food insecurity in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. In Somalia alone, six million people are expected to go hungry during April to June 2022.

Drought-induced displacements are also increasing; 671,000 people were displaced in February 2022. Women and children are most affected by the crisis and in dire need of life-saving assistance. Drought has increased the risk of gender-based violence as women and girls travel further to collect water and child marriage practices are already on the rise as people resort to negative means of coping and girls are being forced to drop out of school.

In a bid to save their critical livestock assets from a lack of pasture due to the drought, pastoralists are coping through feeding livestock on the already limited cereal stocks, putting more pressure on the limited cereal stocks and increasing risk of starvation, especially for children and women.

### Effects of the war in Ukraine

The Horn of Africa is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of the war in Ukraine on rising wheat and oil prices and supply chain disruptions. This region imports around 90 percent of its wheat from Ukraine and Russia, with wheat and its products accounting for one-third of average national cereal consumption in the region. Somalia imports 92 percent of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine.

Cereal prices across the Horn of Africa were already high before the crisis in Ukraine, due to the combined effects of macroeconomic challenges and drought. In Somalia, sorghum prices in Baidoa and Dinsoor, located in the sorghum belt, surged by 55 and 105 percent between October 2021 and January 2022. These prices were higher than levels observed during the 2017 drought and the 2008 global food price crisis, and approaching 2011 record levels, when famine was declared. Price projections suggest that cereal prices will continue to rise sharply.

The effects are not only limited to cereal. Prices of other imported and local food commodities are also increasing due to the ongoing drought, increasing fuel prices and transport costs in both international and local markets plus disruptions in supply chains of major imported food commodities. Compared to the same period one year ago, the minimum expenditure basket for food increased everywhere in Somalia, with over 50 percent price increase in certain regions. As water scarcity continues, pricing of water trucking is also increasing in some locations.

### Major drivers of food insecurity

The humanitarian response in Somalia faces constraints on access from bureaucratic impediments, environmental challenges and conflict. More than 900,000 people currently live in areas controlled by proscribed terror groups such as Al Shabaab and have no access to humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian organisations face demands to pay duplicative taxes as well as interference in staff recruitment and contracting processes. Fragile infrastructure and seasonal flooding lead to movement restrictions, disruption to imports and domestic supply chains and the availability of basic commodities, as well as the delivery of agricultural products to markets.



### Reaching the hungry

As a member of the Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS) consortium funded by UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the IRC has been supporting Somali drought-affected communities in Puntland, Galmudug and Banadir to sustainably improve food security and livelihoods and build resilience to recurrent shocks. The programme includes an anticipatory cash component, built on a flexible funding mechanism, through which households receive emergency cash in anticipation of or during an emergency, such as a climate or economic shock, for a period of two to three months. This is combined with a climate-resilient 'multi-storey gardening' approach targeting rural, mostly female-led pastoral households. This type of gardening uses less land and water to grow fresh vegetables, and combines aspects of dietary diversification, nutritional education, women's empowerment, and income generation.

In a region where global warming will lead to increasingly severe and frequent droughts, heat stress, disease and the loss of biodiversity, resilience building for future droughts must be accelerated while continuing to respond rapidly to urgent needs of food insecure communities in the Horn of Africa.



## The Sahel

	Number of acutely food insecure people: <b>34.1 million</b>
	Number of children under 5 suffering from acute malnutrition: <b>over 7 million</b>
	Total percentage of food imported: <b>8-28 percent</b> (of wheat, rice and coarse grains)
	Percentage of wheat imported from Ukraine or Russia: <b>30-50 percent</b>

### The Sahel's hunger crisis

West Africa is hit by its worst food crisis in a decade, with 41 million people expected to go hungry this June – a new historic level. Over 80 percent of these are in the most affected areas are in the Central Sahel Zone: Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso, and Lake Chad Basin Zone: Nigeria-Chad-Cameroon, being affected by the triple threat of climate change, conflict and COVID-19 induced economic downturn.

The latest Global Report on Food Crises reports the number of children under five in the region suffering from acute malnutrition at over 7 million cases. Currently, only 20 percent of children suffering from acute malnutrition are admitted to treatment, and the lack of treatment is deadly. Although data is poor, best estimates suggest that up to two million child deaths globally are attributed to severe acute malnutrition each year.

Food insecurity, combined with displacements, widespread insecurities due to violent extremism and communal conflicts are also increasing the risk of gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and child marriage.

### Effects of the war in Ukraine

Prior to the war in Ukraine, countries in the Sahel were already experiencing soaring food prices, humanitarian access constraints and acute food insecurity. Pandemic-related supply chain disruptions had inflated prices and affected availability of food commodities in local markets. The region is heavily dependent on wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine. Over half of all wheat consumed by Mali and Cameroon, for example, comes from Russia.

Further price increases on the world market due to the Ukraine conflict will certainly affect the region, already facing constrained fiscal space. Local prices for rice, wheat, oil, sugar and other processed imports have already risen between 20 to 50 percent in different countries of the region.

### Major drivers of food insecurity

Already chronically high levels of acute malnutrition in the region have worsened in recent years due to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, insecurity and armed conflict and the impacts of the climate crisis. Conflicts and displacement have led to loss of livelihoods and abandonment of cropland. Recent droughts have also resulted in poor food production. Cereal production in some parts of the Sahel has dropped by about a third compared to last year.

The next agricultural season is also in danger. Limited access to fields due to massive population displacements and insecurity will severely disrupt preparations and harvesting of the 2022 season. Furthermore, seed stocks are exhausted and there are limited options to regain seeds, despite distributions by NGOs.

Faced with a harsh lean season, communities are already resorting to negative ways of coping, such as selling livestock and other possessions, which damage their long-term resilience. People are eating their seeds, leaving them with none to plant and selling livestock. Without any source of income, many have resorted to loans to purchase seeds or fertiliser and are pushed further into a cycle of poverty and indebtedness.

### Reaching the hungry

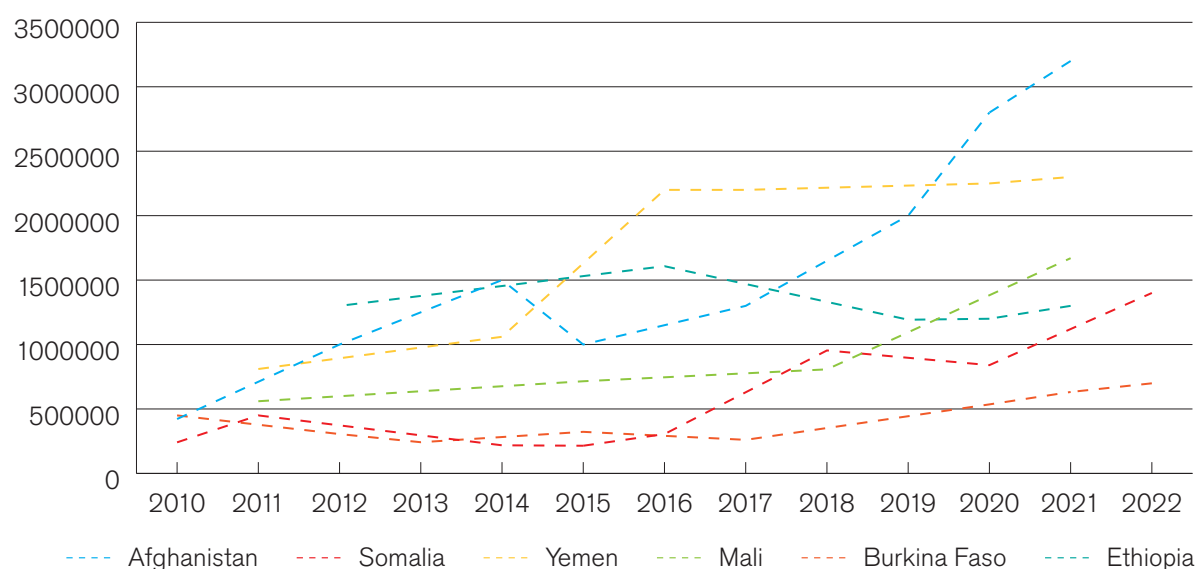
Recovering from economic shocks can take at least two to three years – but given the region's particular climate vulnerability – increases in rates of food insecurity and acute malnutrition are likely to continue in the longer term. In addition to urgently responding to the ongoing crisis, donors should therefore commit to adequate anticipatory financing to be prepared for upcoming climate shocks, as well as innovative forms of anticipatory action to prevent child malnutrition scaling up capacity before a spike in acute malnutrition occurs (see Box 1).

### Box 1: Innovative anticipatory frameworks to address child malnutrition

Anticipatory action is a mechanism to prepare or arrange financing in anticipation of a crisis to enable a better response. By doing so, the impact of a disaster, such as an extreme weather event, can be mitigated and people be protected from its worst impacts. While we can only predict the onset of a humanitarian crisis about half of the time, we know that lean seasons and regularly occurring diseases like malaria lead to predictable increases in risk of acute malnutrition for children under 5.

Rates of child malnutrition are rising across the different contexts that the IRC works despite knowledge of how to prevent and treat it.

**Children Suffering from Acute Malnutrition**



Source: Forthcoming report – IRC “An Untapped Opportunity: Supporting, Scaling, and Simplifying Wasting Treatment”

Applying the principles of anticipatory action can help to prevent deaths of children with acute malnutrition by ensuring that flexible financing, human resources, supply chains and pre-stocked treatments are in place before a spike in acute malnutrition occurs. Anticipatory action can include scaling up capacity to provide simplified approaches to acute malnutrition treatment before the onset of anticipated droughts, inflation of global food prices, or annual flooding.

In the Sahel this year, armed conflict, an early lean season and limited supply of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) has interrupted the continuum of care for children with acute malnutrition. Linking anticipatory action financing to simplified approaches to acute malnutrition treatment means scaling up the approach in advance of an expected increase of the rate of malnutrition, and has the potential to significantly reduce child mortality. In Mali, the government, communities and civil society actors, including the IRC, are working to teach caretakers and families techniques to increase earlier detection of acute malnutrition. In Niger, community health workers have been trained to test for and treat acute malnutrition, which can enable the continuum of care to continue locally, particularly if humanitarian access is limited.

The IPC estimates that almost 700,000 children under 5 in Burkina Faso will be acutely malnourished in 2022, with an 18 percent increase in cases of severe acute malnutrition from last year. A commitment to adequate anticipatory financing for malnutrition treatment to ensure that each child with acute malnutrition can access treatment can mitigate the risk of expected increases in malnutrition cases in the Sahel and other humanitarian contexts in 2022.

## Actions needed to address hunger and support recovery

In its 2021 report *Ending the Hunger Crisis*, the IRC set out the immediate and long term actions that the G7 and wider international community must take to reverse the global hunger crisis. These were funding for humanitarian cash as well as proven interventions to prevent and respond to acute malnutrition in the immediate term, alongside diplomatic action to remove barriers to humanitarian access. Longer term resilience relies on inclusive food systems that empower women and girls and are climate resilient. This combination of coordinated emergency measures coupled with longer term development measures are an effective way to respond to and mitigate rising hunger as shown in all of the case studies above and discussed in Box 2. All of this relies on fully resourced, humanitarian assistance that reaches frontline responders and better preparation for future risks through anticipatory and risk-informed financing. Some promising steps in this direction have recently been taken by the EU, WFP and FAO in their [Global Network Against Food Crises](#) to integrate anticipatory and short-term humanitarian action with development and resilience building to address the root causes of food crises. But with the continuing triple threat of conflict, climate and COVID-19 and the number of people experiencing emergency levels of food insecurity expected to rise in 2022, it is critical that the G7 injects fresh momentum into these actions alongside vital steps to mitigate the risks exacerbated by the war in Ukraine.

### Box 2: Mitigating hunger requires coordinated emergency and longer term development interventions

Preventing acute food insecurity relies on a combination of emergency measures such as humanitarian cash and malnutrition prevention and response, as well as food security interventions that build long term resilience and livelihoods by resourcing local, diverse and climate resilient food systems. This counts on donors bridging the humanitarian development divide through greater coordination, joint design, and longer term funding – which would simultaneously benefit gender outcomes.

An example of where IRC implements this approach in practice is in Afghanistan, where we deliver multi purpose cash assistance in the early phases of an emergency, while also building long term resilience through providing climate-adapted inputs and technical training on climate smart farming practices for women's kitchen gardens. Women are supported to set up home based businesses processing fruits, vegetables and dairy to generate incomes and improve food security for themselves and their families.

### Building inclusive and resilient food systems in the face of global warming and the wake of the Ukraine crisis

After new evidence on the negative impacts of global warming on food security and the past years' COVID-19 related supply chain disruptions, the war in Ukraine is pointing us again to the need for food system change. Diverse, local, inclusive and climate resilient food systems are crucial for reducing reliance on imports of food and energy-intensive chemical fertilisers. This should include [agroecological farming approaches](#) protecting vital ecosystems and biodiversity as well as diversifying production away from a reliance on major grains.

A feminist approach is essential to increase food security and build climate resilience (see Box 3). Long-term investments in local solutions to food security and climate resilience that centre on the leadership of women, girls and displaced populations are critical to protect future generations from shocks such as price increases and disrupted supply chains.

## The importance of anticipatory action

To avoid future crises, the international community should work together to better predict and prepare for future risks through analytical tools and anticipatory and risk-informed financing. Last year, the G7 prioritised anticipatory action in its Famine Compact, predominantly focused on anticipatory action in relation to climate resilience. Similarly, Germany's proposal of a "Global Shield" against climate risks would secure financing to address climate impacts. To maximise the effectiveness of this initiative it is vital that the most vulnerable and affected communities have a voice in the decision-making process so that responses best meet

their needs and circumstances. The German Presidency also has the opportunity to extend to scale up other forms of anticipatory action, for example to prevent child malnutrition (see Box 1 on page 10).

As the hunger fallout from the war in Ukraine begins to hit other crisis-affected countries, the window for an effective anticipatory response is fast closing for millions living under the threat of hunger. G7 countries should now seek to put into action the collective commitment of the famine prevention compact "to increase anticipatory action" and scale up much needed humanitarian funding.

### Box 3: Why take a feminist approach to food security?

In *Ending the Hunger Crisis*, the IRC argued that a feminist approach is essential to increase food security and build climate resilience. The IRC implements a feminist approach in the most challenging settings, by working towards enhancing crisis-affected women's control over and equal access to resources, assets, jobs and markets in our livelihoods and food security programmes. Doing so yields several positive outcomes:

#### 1. Taking a feminist approach means adhering to the humanitarian principle of neutrality.

To ensure that humanitarian interventions for food security serve all people in need, we need to take into account how existing power structures marginalise and discriminate against women and girls.

#### 2. Taking a feminist approach means helping more effectively.

Feminist programming is dedicated to accountability towards the populations it serves. This means feedback loops are built into programming, to ensure it meets the local realities and delivers services effectively.

#### 3. Taking a feminist approach means women are part of the solution.

Women and girls are pivotal agents of change in their communities and are best placed to identify the support they require. A feminist approach to food security works to ensure local women-led and women's rights organisations can participate in decision-making and access resources on equal footing.

#### 4. Taking a feminist approach enables lasting positive change.

A feminist approach to food security supports gender-transformative humanitarian action, that empowers female farmers e.g., by ensuring equal access to financial and agricultural inputs. Closing the gender gap in agriculture would yield significant gains in crop output.

#### 5. Taking a feminist approach ensures the safety of women and girls.

Feminist practice means ensuring the safety concerns of women and girls inform humanitarian assistance across all sectors. Cash-based interventions, for example, should be designed with the safety, dignity and rights of women and girls in mind.

## Recommendations for the G7 and international community

**The overarching goal of the German G7 presidency is to jointly advance progress towards an equitable world. Addressing the unprecedented levels of hunger around the world and building a more equitable and sustainable food system are essential parts of this mission.**

When the G7 meets in Germany in 2022, it has an opportunity and a responsibility to address the global hunger crisis and prevent the war in Ukraine from pushing crisis-affected communities closer to famine. The solidarity that G7 members have demonstrated in response to the invasion of Ukraine must be matched with urgent action to address the hunger fallout in other parts of the world. In addition to responding to the immediate effects of food insecurity and malnutrition, the G7 – working through multilateral mechanisms and with most-affected communities – must take coordinated actions to fix the broken food system and build countries' long-term resilience to future shocks.

### 1. Don't forget other crises: protect and increase funding to prevent acute hunger and famine

**G7 members and other donors should:**

- **Honour existing funding commitments for humanitarian crises** such as Afghanistan, Yemen, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel by fulfilling 2022 humanitarian response plans and addressing the funding shortfalls of humanitarian agencies affected by rising food prices.
- **Increase overall aid budgets** in line with the target of investing 0.7 percent of GNI in international aid, and show leadership by honouring humanitarian aid and development aid commitments, avoiding risks of reallocation and ensuring no one is left behind.
- **Provide anticipatory financing** to humanitarian contexts known to be dependent on Ukrainian and Russian wheat and other products, focused on climate resilience and tackling malnutrition.

### 2. Scale up proven interventions to mitigate the hunger fallout from the war in Ukraine

**G7 members and other donors should:**

- **Scale up gender and climate-sensitive food security interventions** in humanitarian contexts impacted by supply interruptions and increased food prices, as well as multi-year, flexible grants for humanitarian cash transfers to meet the expanded need of food insecure communities and malnutrition prevention and response programmes in high risk contexts. This requires coordination across humanitarian and development actors.
- **Invest in better disaster risk information and monitoring**, more predictable risk financing and other forms of anticipatory action designed in consultation with affected communities in line with [Crisis Lookout Coalition](#) recommendations.
- Increase support for long-term and inclusive **social protection programmes and safety nets** in countries affected by fragility, conflict and displacement to protect vulnerable populations from price spikes, while enhancing linkages between social protection and poverty reduction, food security and nutrition outcomes.

### 3. Fix the broken food system

**G7 members and the wider international community should:**

- Promote long-term and large-scale investments in **local, gender and climate-sensitive and diversified food production and seed systems.** Priority should be given to investments in agroecological approaches to reduce dependency on food, synthetic fertilisers and other input imports, and that increase sustainable resource and water management and access to land.
- Support crisis-affected countries to **improve post-harvest management and diversify processing value chains,** distribution networks and trade relationships.
- **Support the establishment of Global Alliance for Food Security** and a “Global Shield” against climate risks as proposed by Germany, working closely with vulnerable and affected countries to ensure their needs are met.

### 4. Strengthen humanitarian diplomacy and end impunity

**G7 members should:**

- **Prioritise diplomatic efforts to protect and expand humanitarian access in conflict settings** including through: strengthening existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms to enable effective and evidenced-based humanitarian diplomacy by G7 Members with influence over parties to conflict; where existing mechanisms are failing explore options to support the establishment of independent mechanisms to provide timely and robust reporting on access constraints in specific contexts; and take action to remove operational barriers, including restrictive counter-terrorism measures in domestic and international policies, through ensuring there are effective humanitarian exemptions.
- Use all mechanisms to **hold those responsible for international humanitarian law violations to account,** including those that exacerbate hunger and food insecurity and ensure existing international accountability mechanisms, including Commissions of Inquiry, have the resourcing and relevant expertise to effectively address the issue of denial of access or starvation as a weapon of war. At the national level, G7 Members should build commitment to international humanitarian law into all security partnerships and ensure investigation and accountability for any violations that do occur, States should support the suspension of the veto in the UN Security Council in cases of mass atrocities so that the Council can effectively respond to the world's most severe crises.

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