

VOICE OUT LOUD

#34

FIGHTING AGAINST HUNGER:
A HUMANITARIAN LENS



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**FIGHTING AGAINST HUNGER:
A HUMANITARIAN LENS**

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VOICE wishes to thank the
contributors of this issue.
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Editorial



The steady and alarming deterioration in the scale and intensity of food insecurity has become increasingly evident in the last few years, making this an obvious topic for this latest edition of VOICE out loud. The contributors to this issue mostly work for VOICE member organisations that are delivering humanitarian responses in some of the world's most food-insecure countries. The articles call for bold and immediate actions to be taken to fight hunger, and they give us an opportunity to reflect on how best humanitarian efforts may contribute to addressing the food crisis.

The newly launched [Global Humanitarian Overview](#) warns that at least 222 million people in 53 countries will face acute food insecurity by the end of 2022, and that 45 million people in 37 countries are at risk of starvation. These figures are truly shocking but have received little or no attention outside of the humanitarian community.

According to the [Global Hunger Index 2022](#), sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are the regions with the highest levels of hunger. Despite repeated urgent calls for action, global progress against hunger has largely stagnated in recent years, and the situation is likely to worsen because of compounding factors such as increasing conflicts, extreme weather-related events, the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine and its global economic repercussions on global food, fuel, and fertilizer availability and prices.

While showcasing the hard and cruel realities that they witness when delivering humanitarian aid, the VOICE members in this issue stress the intertwined connections among hunger, conflict, and climate change, and make an urgent call for donors to break the current global hunger paradigm. Any such shift should include: a closer look at climate adaptation measures; greater investment in anticipatory actions to ensure rapid responses that minimise the effects of climate change on food security; and recognition of the need for a community-based and multi-sectoral response to address the complexity of food crises, especially in fragile contexts. The articles reflect the differentiated and disproportionate impact of hunger on women and girls in humanitarian crises, and call for the recognition of the key role of women-led organisations in the fight against hunger.

Humanitarian NGOs have shown great expertise and professionalism in setting up climate adaptation programmes to enhance communities' resilience through anticipatory actions, disaster risk reduction, early response mechanisms, and flexibility, as well as in working with other actors to promote multi-sectoral responses.

Sadly, we are a long way from meeting the Sustainable Development Goal 2 of reaching Zero Hunger by 2030. The unprecedented locust infestation in East Africa between 2019 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact of the conflict in Ukraine on the export of grains and fertilizers have contributed to the realisation of the FAO's warning that the growing levels of food insecurity, and the disruption in food supply and incomes have increased the risk of child malnutrition – something that is currently being seen all too clearly across the Horn, and most acutely in Somalia.

SDG Goal 2 is a development objective, but it is also a humanitarian one, and we call on the EU and its Member States to seriously respond to the urgent call launched by our members and step up their efforts to tackle the underlying drivers of food insecurity.

A discussion on the response to the unprecedented global food crisis is included in the draft programme for the European Humanitarian Forum planned for March 2023. This forum is a key opportunity for the EU collectively to go beyond their current commitments and to make a more meaningful contribution to the fight against this food insecurity crisis which is killing people, destroying lives and human dignity, and affecting all of us. We cannot ignore this crisis. As humanitarian actors, we must stand ready to work together to fight against it.

Dominic Crowley

VOICE President

IT'S TIME TO BREAK THE GLOBAL HUNGER PARADIGM

THE ISSUE

FIGHTING AGAINST HUNGER: A HUMANITARIAN LENS



Dried Kasava at Marie Senegale's Kasava stand in Yaloké on 23/2/22 © Photo: Ed Ram/Concern Worldwide

“Conflict and hunger together exacerbate inequalities, creating life-changing dangers, leaving women and girls particularly vulnerable, shouldering the responsibility of keeping their children alive, with fewer resources and coping mechanisms. These multiple and compounding shocks erode people’s ability to recover, causing long-term setbacks.”

2021 was a year of summits, commitments and pledges: the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the European Humanitarian Forum, the Food Systems Summit, the Nutrition for Growth conference, and more.

A clear message emerged from them: bold, transformative action is needed to end hunger and allow every person to attain their right to nutritious food.

The spirit that galvanised the world to face the COVID-19 pandemic gave a sense of hope and possibility. Now, our fragile global food system is enormously challenged by the conflict in Ukraine, compounding existing protracted conflict and increasing numbers of climate emergencies.

Economic instability, food and fuel prices, and global recession are pressuring already-overstretched government budgets. The growing gap between humanitarian needs and funding is evidence of this. The World Bank has warned that it is unlikely to meet the 2030 target to end extreme poverty¹, so we must also question the likelihood of ending hunger by 2030.

1. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/10/05/global-progress-in-reducing-extreme-poverty-grinds-to-a-halt>

FAMINE IN 2022?

“Famine is conquerable.” It is almost 25 years since Alex de Waal opened, *Famine Crimes*, with this simple statement. In a more recent book, *Mass Starvation*, he emphasised how political decision-making was central to every famine.

Perhaps it should be obvious that famine is person-made, preventable, and political, but there is a stubborn belief that famine is a natural phenomenon. The presence of famine indicates the absence of political will or, worse, the active desire to deliberately starve people. It is this reality that gave rise to UNSC Resolution 2417 in 2018, which sought to prevent the starving of civilians as a method of warfare, and to prevent the unlawful denial of humanitarian access to vulnerable civilian populations.

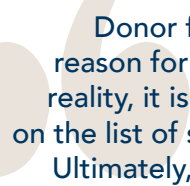
The latest UN projections are that nearly 50 million people are experiencing ‘crisis’ levels of hunger. The next shock that affects their access to food and livelihoods may well push them into famine. It is unconscionable that we now face the distinct possibility of a new declaration of famine in Somalia, where at least 600,000 people are currently on the brink of starvation.

The increase in the number of people needing humanitarian assistance from 235 to 274 million people in just one year, is deeply alarming. More than ever, we need our governments and leaders to unite to prevent and end conflict and crises. Instead, geopolitical interests are fuelling conflicts and proxy wars. Climate change is compounding the challenges created by conflict and vice versa. Cyclical crises mean that needs outstrip both humanitarian and development investments, year on year, and the sustained under-funding of humanitarian appeals is contributing to the steady increase in the number of people in acute need.

IN CONFLICT, NOTHING KILLS LIKE HUNGER

Conflict is the biggest driver of food insecurity, affecting more than 100 million people in 2021. The Global Report on Food Crises 2021² estimates that over 70% of people in crisis levels of food insecurity live in countries affected by conflict.

For people living in conflict-affected areas, war is not only a threat to their lives, but also to their livelihoods. Conflict destroys people’s ability to provide for their most basic of needs, restricting movement, and access to



Donor fatigue is often cited as the reason for inadequate funding but, in reality, it is about where a country sits on the list of strategic political priorities. Ultimately, this leads to a decline into de-development, eroding communities’ resilience and driving up the human and financial cost of recovery.

markets, farmlands and employment. Often, services are cut, facilities destroyed, and banking systems blocked. Conflict prevents people from accessing humanitarian assistance and denies humanitarian actors access to affected populations – this denial is often deliberate.

Conflict and hunger together exacerbate inequalities, creating life-changing dangers, leaving women and girls particularly vulnerable, shouldering the responsibility of keeping their children alive, with fewer resources and coping mechanisms. These multiple and compounding shocks erode people’s ability to recover, causing long-term setbacks.

For example, 10 million people are projected to be in crisis levels of food insecurity or worse in Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger in 2022. Armed conflict is the main driver of hunger in each country. If you compare a map of food insecurity in the Sahel with a map of its conflict severity, the two will almost perfectly overlap.

In too many places, conflict has been allowed to fester. One crisis is forgotten, under-resourced and ignored, as another takes priority. Donor fatigue is often cited as the reason for inadequate funding but, in reality, it is about where a country sits on the list of strategic political priorities. Ultimately, this leads to a decline into de-development, eroding communities’ resilience and driving up the human and financial cost of recovery.

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

States hold the responsibility and means to try to prevent conflict, and to promote adherence to international humanitarian law. But geopolitical interests too often override the political responsibility to promote and protect peace.

The politicisation of debate on issues of peace and security in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and elsewhere is harmful to us all in this new era of global instability.

2. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-report-food-crises-2022>

An encouraging development aimed at addressing this self-interest was seen this year in the use of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) framework, United for Peace. To bypass Russia's veto against a UNSC resolution condemning its actions in Ukraine, the majority of UNSC members used the framework to call on the UNGA to act instead – which it did. The Emergency Special Session of the UNGA passed the resolution with 141 votes in favour and only five against.

More progress is needed. In particular, Member States should support the suspension of the veto in the UNSC in cases of mass atrocities so that the Council can effectively respond to the world's most severe crises. They should also support the criminalisation of starvation as a weapon of war in all situations of armed conflict.

'BUSINESS AS USUAL'

Humanitarian assistance is not the answer to the world's crises. As they deepen, becoming more protracted and complex, fundamental changes are needed.

A break from 'business as usual' would see Member States fulfil the commitments made at the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021, not with fanfare announcements of new alliances or coalitions, but with the hard, painstaking work of cooperative, substantive policy reform, including in the area of trade.

EU Member States and other donors, must take concrete steps to implement the Humanitarian Call for Action that they signed. It is time to deliver on the rhetoric of Good Humanitarian Donorship and The Grand Bargain and fully fund global humanitarian appeals. It is past time to ensure that restrictive measures include standard exemptions for humanitarian actors to enable us to continue to reach those in hard-to-reach areas, and ensure that we are not further constrained by bank de-risking.



Dead livestock in Qaranri. ©Photo: Yusuf Ibrahim Ali/Lifeline Gedo International/Concern Worldwide

Governments must tackle the problems that give rise to extreme poverty, conflict and hunger. Beyond grand statements that name and shame, states must take bold steps to bring conflict to an end. More and braver investment in humanitarian diplomacy, conflict prevention and resolution, is required.

HUMANITARIAN AID CANNOT REPLACE POLITICAL WILL

Can anyone say that the impending famine in Somalia is a surprise? That it was not flagged months ago, or that the calls for support were not made by agencies working on the ground? The hand-wringing that will follow this crisis is more business as usual. We need to deliver on what we know would make a difference – early and sufficient funding to stop people from falling into acute crisis.

Beyond anticipating emergencies, and taking early action to prevent disaster, we must address the root causes of crises. In many instances, such interventions are beyond the capacity of humanitarian and development actors. Governments must tackle the problems that give rise to extreme poverty, conflict and hunger. Beyond grand statements that name and shame, states must take bold steps to bring conflict to an end. More and braver investment in humanitarian diplomacy, conflict prevention and resolution, is required.

The humanitarian imperative requires us to save lives and reduce suffering. Surely the political imperative is to prevent those lives from being endangered in the first place.

Réiseal Ní Chéilleachair (Rachel Kelleher)
Head of International Advocacy, Strategy, Advocacy and Learning Directorate, Concern Worldwide

HUNGRY FOR A BETTER FUTURE: POLITICAL WILLINGNESS CAN CHANGE CLIMATE-INDUCED HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

THE ISSUE

FIGHTING AGAINST HUNGER: A HUMANITARIAN LENS



South Sudan. © Peter Caton for Action Against Hunger

Around 828 million people worldwide do not have enough to eat, and the number is rising. Climate change, together with growing global inequalities and increasing violent conflicts, is one of the main causes of the rising levels of hunger and malnutrition. Today, 27 of the 35 countries most affected by climate change suffer from extreme food insecurity. An increase of 2 degrees in global warming could result in up to 80 million additional people being affected by hunger in 2050, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Central America. The world is currently on track for 2.8 degrees. A scandalous scenario that not even the best-funded humanitarian system could alleviate. Action Against Hunger Germany supported the global COP27 [position paper](#) and several side-events around food and nutrition security on-site in Egypt together with other AAH colleagues.

To help those most at risk of hunger, the EU member states and other industrialised countries, which are the most responsible for a heating planet, must drastically reduce their emissions to keep climate change from escalating. At the same time, they need to make honest

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commitments to support affected communities adapt to the new reality and bounce back from increasing shocks. Expectations were high at this year's climate conference COP27 in Egypt and the hope was that world leaders would take bold action to stamp out climate-induced hunger. During the conference, the EC's Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans announced \$1 billion to help countries in Africa adapt to climate change. However, what sounded like a grand gesture was, in reality, part of a broken promise: the \$1 billion is part of \$100 billion in annual climate finance, which industrialised countries



Dead livestock in Qaranri. ©Photo: Yusuf Ibrahim Ali/Lifeline Gedo International/Concern Worldwide

had already committed to providing to developing countries by 2020. A deadline that had to be extended to 2025 since in 2020 the number only reached \$83.3 billion. If efforts are not significantly stepped up, the most food-insecure people on the planet are left to fend for themselves. However, there are a set of actions that could be done:

BETTER EQUIPPING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The global humanitarian system is already struggling to meet the needs of crisis-affected communities. In a worsening climate emergency, the situation will only get more stretched.

“With our emergency aid, we support people around the world who are losing their livelihoods due to the climate crisis and are acutely threatened by hunger and poverty. But to address the scale of future climate impacts, we humanitarian organisations urgently need additional funding. Governments and donors must pledge binding investments now to save lives,” demands Mamadou Diop, Action Against Hunger’s regional representative in West and Central Africa. And beyond more funding, humanitarian agencies also need a paradigm shift to more preventative measures: humanitarian donors should follow the German donor priority - strengthening early warning and anticipatory humanitarian action to save lives.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL AUTONOMY

“Smallholder farmers produce a third of the world’s food but receive only 1.7 per cent of global climate finance. Yet they are among the people most affected by climate change! It is imperative that funding for climate change adaptation is provided directly to local communities and civil society organisations,” says John Otieno, Advocacy Officer for Action Against Hunger in East Africa. Context-specific solutions and adaptation measures must be developed and implemented by the affected population groups themselves. The involvement of girls and women is also central, as they are at higher risk of suffering the negative consequences of climate change and food insecurity, and at the same time play a key role in the fight against hunger. Further, often multi-faceted vulnerabilities challenge communities’ resilience in times of hardship: climate change and conflict. We ask for a multi-sectoral humanitarian response in fragile settings.

NEXUS: PROMOTING AGROECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

Already today, the global food system, despite its large ecological footprint, leaves many people hungry. Safe access to healthy and affordable food is not possible without a sustainable and local transformation of agriculture. At the same time, food systems are not solely a topic for development actors: access to food is often hindered by conflict and violence in affected areas. For governments and international donors, therefore, large-scale investments in agroecology are imperative. Such investments not only make agriculture more climate-friendly, but also strengthen the long-term food and nutrition security and climate resilience of communities. Disadvantaged groups such as smallholder farmers and women benefit particularly in the long run.

Lisa Jörke, Project officer Advocacy
Action Against Hunger Germany

HUNGER IS A FEMINIST ISSUE

THE ISSUE

FIGHTING AGAINST HUNGER: A HUMANITARIAN LENS



Amina Yusuf (left), a 90-year-old who has lived through 12 different droughts, from Xidhinta (Somaliland). © Daniel Jukes for ActionAid

The world is confronting an unprecedented global hunger crisis. As of September 2022, the population facing the three highest phases of acute food insecurity and requiring urgent humanitarian assistance is greater than at any point since 2017, standing at more than 205 million people.³ The compounded impacts of the climate crisis and COVID-19 are being further exacerbated by rising food, energy and fertiliser prices provoked by the war in Ukraine, deepening the lack of access to livelihoods and poverty.

That hunger has a differentiated and disproportionate impact on women and girls in humanitarian crises is a well-documented phenomenon. Women and girls account for 70% of all people currently in urgent need of food assistance.⁴ When food is scarce, women and girls eat least and last, despite the fact that 90% of the time they are responsible for preparing and purchasing food for their families.⁵

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Hunger also exacerbates existing protection threats and vulnerabilities, creates new ones, and deepens inequalities. Girls are more likely than boys to be taken out of school when families resort to negative coping strategies to feed their families, and girls are at heightened risk of early marriage, transactional sex, and violence. In the East African countries affected by food and climate crises, risks of gender-based violence—

3. GRFC 2022 MYU Final.pdf (foodsecurityportal.org)

4. Real Choices, Real Lives: World Hunger and Its Impact on Girls - World I ReliefWeb

5. Who Does Hunger Affect? - Donate to Save Lives Today | Action Against Hunger

“Women-led and women’s rights organisations understand best the specific needs of women and girls. Local, women-led responses are rooted in their communities, along with the local understanding, networks and connections to respond rapidly to crisis.”



Aisha Berkhad, 60-year-old migrant pastoralist living outside Ceel-Giniseed (Somaliland). © Daniel Jukes for ActionAid

including sexual violence, sexual exploitation, intimate partner violence and female genital mutilation—are increasing, while services to respond remain limited.⁶

At the same time, across the spectrum, women are instrumental in addressing hunger⁷: in food availability (production), food access (distribution) and food utilisation, the three main components of food security.⁸ They are also key in activities that support agricultural development, with women producing 70% of Africa’s food. But here too, gender inequality limits their access to land, inputs, and credit vis a vis their male counterparts.

Such tendencies lay bare the fact that when talking about the global hunger crisis, we must necessarily talk not only about the specific vulnerability and susceptibility of women and girls to hunger, but the critical role that women play in the response and the need for transformative humanitarian action that goes far beyond the vision of women as vulnerable, as victims, instead supporting concrete actions to address women’s inequality at all levels.

This must happen in terms of what is done to address hunger: scaling up rapid funding to address the food crisis, ensuring that it reaches women and girls, and promoting an integrated response to hunger that takes into account the multifaceted impact that hunger has on women and girls.

But it must also consider the “how”. At ActionAid, we have witnessed again the value of women’s leadership in crisis. Women-led and women’s rights organisations understand best the specific needs of women and girls. Local, women-led responses are rooted in their communities, along with the local understanding, networks and connections to respond rapidly to crisis. Women-led responses have also been invaluable in challenging entrenched inequality and harmful stereotypes.

Yet we have also witnessed how local women’s leadership continues to be undervalued and overlooked in different humanitarian crises. Despite women and their organisations being at the frontlines of humanitarian responses, women and girls are often excluded from the decision-making processes that impact their lives. Local and national women-led organisations are barely registered on the humanitarian funding scale - the estimated level of total humanitarian funding that they receive stands at a tiny 1%.

In addressing hunger, there is a critical need to recognise and prioritise the needs of women and girls, and the leadership role that women play as a means to truly shift power, resources and influence to local, women-led responses. This means working with women’s organisations and platforms, such as the Feminist Humanitarian Network, of which ActionAid is a co-creator and board member. This network brings together a collective of women leaders, including women’s rights organisations in the Global South, and is committed to a transformed humanitarian system that promotes a feminist humanitarian agenda.

We believe that hunger is a feminist issue, and that any effective response must necessarily be feminist.

Alianza por la Solidaridad-ActionAid Spain

6. OCHA, August 2022.

7. Invisibile Women and Girls Hunger Report (care-international.org)

8. <https://plan-international.org/eu/blog/2022/10/28/the-hunger-crisis-isnt-gender-neutral-our-response-shouldnt-be-either/>

CONFLICT AND HUNGER IN EASTERN DR CONGO: BUILDING RESILIENCE WITHIN COMPOUNDING CRISES

THE ISSUE

FIGHTING AGAINST HUNGER: A HUMANITARIAN LENS

Mercy Corps is one of the largest humanitarian organisations working in Eastern DRC, operational since 2007, and providing urgent relief to people displaced by violence and extreme weather events, while working with communities to build long-term food security, water access and stability to address some of the underlying causes of conflict and violence.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is host to one of the world's most complex and long-standing humanitarian crises. Despite its vast human and natural resources, including more than 80 million hectares of arable land, it remains home to the world's largest number of people in need of urgent food assistance. More than a third of the population, or 27.3 million people, are considered acutely food insecure. The food security crisis in DRC reflects deeper issues, including over two decades of conflict in the country's east, coupled with economic instability, dilapidated infrastructure, high food prices impacted by global crises, compounding epidemics, and low agricultural productivity. At the same time, more systemic challenges such as crop theft and lack of access to land and capital negatively affect food production, while child-feeding practices, contaminated water and poor sanitation facilities lead to high levels of malnutrition.

In the country's east, home to more than [120 active](#) armed groups, food insecurity is as much a driver of conflict as it is a consequence. More than 5.5 million people are displaced, with new displacements happening continuously. Many of the battlegrounds in the east are home to rural communities reliant on **agriculture for subsistence and income**. While estimates suggest more than 70 per cent of the employed population is engaged in agriculture, the majority remain subsistence, small-scale farmers. When forced to flee, they leave behind their livelihoods. When fighting calms, they often return to find their crops or livestock have been stolen or have else failed in their absence. With every new displacement, they return to zero.

Mercy Corps' emergency programme provides one-time cash or voucher assistance to help displaced families meet their most urgent, life-saving needs. This is followed by interim emergency assistance to ensure



©Ezra Millstein for Mercy Corps

families have access to a predictable supply of nutritious food, alongside water and sanitation facilities, to be able to restart their lives and livelihoods.

Cash and voucher programming has been proven to be an effective type of response in areas where markets are still operating, providing displaced families with choice, while stimulating economic recovery by supporting local markets and vendors.

Funded by ECHO, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and delivered by five NGOs with Mercy Corps as consortium lead, SAFER project operates through mobile teams that deploy to hard-to-reach areas allowing for timely assessment of displacement alerts and relief for populations in need. Balancing the timeliness of the response and sound understanding of the situation, SAFER aims to include, consult with, and create opportunities for participation and leadership for affected communities. In addition, protection mitigation plans and rapid assessment of markets ensure the response is safe and appropriate

to the needs of the community and the capacity of the market. With an average intervention size of more than 4,200 households, Mercy Corps reached more than 82,000 conflict-affected people in the last twelve months.

What is needed from donors? Further investment in both multi-sectorial humanitarian response as well as longer-term approaches that can address medium and long-term effects of food security crises and build resilience and, stability.

➤ At just 24 years-old, Grace Ganisikale, mother of two, knows what it is like to rebuild one's life from scratch. In April 2021, violence broke out in her village, just 45km from Ituri province's capital, Bunia, forcing her and thousands of others to flee into the hills to seek safety. Despite returning just five months later, she remained cut off from her fields due to ongoing insecurity on the outskirts of her village. After an initial round of SAFER voucher assistance, in which Grace bought essential food and household items for her family, Mercy Corps taught Grace and other families how to grow vegetables in permagardens set up at their homes. "We eat vegetables regularly now, which helps us not just survive but also to live better," she said.



©Ezra Millstein for Mercy Corps

“For Mercy Corps, a comprehensive response to DRC’s food security challenges will require a coordinated effort across sectors, including life-saving humanitarian response, agriculture, nutrition and health, as well as a recommitment to a resilience approach.”

Given the complex combination of threats facing communities in DRC, solutions must include bold, multisectoral humanitarian response, as well as medium, and longer-term development approaches that address the underlying drivers of food security and fortify communities to cope with and withstand future shocks, create sustainable food systems, and prevent future food crises.

Mercy Corps’ seven-year food security programme funded by BHA since 2016 in South Kivu province demonstrates that it is possible to achieve long-term food security improvements in areas with relative stability. With an integrated approach that builds resilience while addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition, the Food Security Project program saw a 16% decrease in the prevalence of severe food insecurity in the Kabare and Kalehe intervention areas between 2020 and 2021, where Mercy Corps works hand in hand with more than 175,000 community members. Improving agricultural production, market access, resource management, governance, water sources and nutrition while adapting to climate change puts communities at the forefront of building more resilient food systems.

For Mercy Corps, a comprehensive response to DRC’s food security challenges will require a coordinated effort across sectors, including life-saving humanitarian response, agriculture, nutrition and health, as well as a recommitment to a resilience approach. Ultimately, we will continue grappling with these crises until we find a way to meaningfully address the underlying drivers of conflict and help prepare communities to weather future shocks.

Margarite Clarey,
Communications and Advocacy Advisor
Mercy Corps DRC

LOCALISED ANTICIPATORY HUMANITARIAN ACTION TO MINIMISE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND REDUCE THE RISK OF FOOD INSECURITY

THE ISSUE

FIGHTING AGAINST HUNGER: A HUMANITARIAN LENS



©Welthungerhilfe/Haddad 2021

We need to find new ways to oppose the already visible and growing impact of the changing climate, and contribute to avoiding loss and damage and support those particularly at risk of food insecurity. Yet, current efforts are not sufficient to stop the spiralling of humanitarian needs which are caused by an increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and other escalating threats. This growing demand for humanitarian support causes humanitarian funding to be even more overstretched than it already is ([IFRC 2019](#)).

To overcome this dilemma, humanitarian actors are continuously working on innovative approaches. One concept to combat rising humanitarian needs tries to utilise existing forecasts and early warning systems. Around 20 percent of all hazards can be accurately predicted, yet the use of the critical time between the warning and the occurring disaster remains largely unused ([GFFO 2022](#)). Anticipatory humanitarian action, however, can fill this gap by enabling humanitarian actors to take early action when a disaster is forecasted with a high degree of probability based on scientific data. This makes it possible to save lives and prevent damages.

“Anticipatory approaches such as FbA are able to mitigate effects of climate change while preventing human suffering, including reducing food insecurity and preserving human dignity.”

“ Anticipation should be streamlined in the humanitarian system, accessible to all actors and communities. ”



©Welthungerhilfe/Haddad 2021

Anticipatory humanitarian action unites manifold approaches which make use of technical progress made. Current forecasts have been enhanced over the past years now being able to predict extreme weather events more accurately and timely. This newly gained time and information advantage can be used to prepare for and implement lifesaving and damage-controlling measures before the actual occurrence of a disaster. Anticipatory approaches all have in common that action is being taken before the hazard materialises with the goal to prevent the negative impacts of forecasted hazard rather than relieving it in the aftermath. All actions taken under anticipatory humanitarian action are initiated on scientific indicators and risk analysis ([Anticipation Hub 2022](#)).

FORECAST-BASED ACTION AS ONE WAY TO ACT IN ANTICIPATION OF CRISIS AT WELTHUNGERHILFE

For several years, Welthungerhilfe and its local partners are using the Forecast-based Action (FbA) approach to address drought induced-food insecurity using a long-term localised anticipatory approach even before droughts can unfold their full impact. FbA uses detailed hazard and risk analyses to identify extreme weather events in due time. This enables the people at risk to respond to impending crises through early actions. Based on comprehensive data analyses, Welthungerhilfe works with scientific partners to develop forecasting models that can predict disasters and their effects on the local population. For every disaster scenario, a community-based Early Action Protocol (EAP) is developed, which sets out in detail which trigger leads to which concrete early actions at which specific timeframe. This plan provides information on who does what, when and thus makes it possible to respond quickly to forecasted hazards. At the same time, funding for these actions is pre-agreed and guaranteed by the donor. This ensures rapid and efficient action before an imminent danger turns into a disaster with high losses and damages ([World Risk Report 2022](#)).

ECONOMIC AND MORALE REASONING FOR ANTICIPATORY HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Using the time between an early warning and the hazard enables us to minimize risks, avoid losses and damages, and allow people to prepare and cope with crises more effectively: it can save lives. Anticipatory humanitarian action also ensures a more efficient and targeted use of limited resources and value for money. Some studies calculate how much every US Dollar spent on anticipatory assistance translates into US Dollars hypothetically needed in reactive humanitarian response to account for potential losses. This of course is a valuable side-effect of anticipatory humanitarian action in the fight against rising humanitarian needs and stretched humanitarian budgets. Welthungerhilfe nevertheless advocates to stress the inherent value of preserving human dignity and prevent human suffering as enough reason to apply the concept of anticipation besides its positive economic effects. Welthungerhilfe believes humanitarian actors are even obliged to act when forecasts predict highly potential hazards and their humanitarian impacts.

The notion of preventing human suffering and preserving human dignity can also be traced through Welthungerhilfe's first activation of the FbA approach. In January 2021, Welthungerhilfe's EAP for drought-induced food insecurity in Ambatondrazaka District in Alaotra-Mangoro in North Madagascar was implemented. The trigger of prospective food insecurity was met and, as a result, the Start Network released pre-positioned funds, provided by the GFFO, to implement early cash distributions. Similar anticipatory interventions were since implemented in Zimbabwe, Kenya, and other countries.

These early actions targeted the most vulnerable people, mainly day laborers, to reduce the risk of food insecurity, prevent negative coping strategies before the peak of the lean season and thus minimised the loss of household assets among drought-affected households. A post-distribution evaluation indicated how people used their cash distributions, showing that more than 85 percent of respondents used some of their money to buy basic food staples. This was confirmed by focus group discussions, in which participants explained that they spent most of their cash on white rice, generally to stock up to survive the coming months of drought. Households also used the money to prepare for the start of the school year (14.2 per cent), for necessities (12.4 per cent), agricultural inputs (8.5 per cent), medicines (6.7 per cent) and agricultural equipment (2.7 per cent). Some beneficiaries (30.9 per cent) spent part of their money on things besides daily household needs. These included house repairs, paying debts and reviving small businesses, like purchasing raw materials. Around 5 percent of respondents saved some of their money to serve as an emergency fund if further problems arose during the lean season. All of these enabled the participating households to effectively prepare and individually minimize the impact the drought had on their livelihood. Overall, the post-distribution monitoring showed that the early cash distributions were effective, that beneficiaries put their cash to its intended uses and this has enabled them to endure the incoming months of drought in a dignified manner ([Welthungerhilfe 2022b](#)).

LOCALISATION IN ANTICIPATORY ACTION AS AN OPPORTUNITY

Besides obvious benefits for the vulnerable population, another main objective of anticipatory humanitarian action can be the fostering of localisation and locally led humanitarian action. FbA as an approach is designed in a localised manner with buy-in of all stakeholders at all levels. Welthungerhilfe is convinced that this will ensure the sustainability of the approach, increased ownership of stakeholders and communities and identification of the most effective and suitable pre-emptive measures adapted to the context and needs. Developing community-based EAPs bears completely new opportunities for an empowered design of humanitarian action and inclusive, community-led (anticipatory) humanitarian action.

However, there are still high barriers to accessing anticipatory funding for NGOs, especially local NGOs. Therefore, Welthungerhilfe rolled out its so-called EAP Custodian Approach which made anticipatory funding provided by GFFO and pre-positioned by Start Network accessible to in-country Start Network member organisations and their local NGO partners.

Still more accessible funding opportunities for civil society organisations is needed to make this a more commonly applied approach amongst (local) NGOs. EAP Custodian tandems took over the responsibility for EAP development in their allocated region. During the EAP development process, all custodian tandems engaged with actors at all levels: community members, community committees, and local and national governments and agencies. Research and consultations were conducted to select suitable early actions for each region. For example, communities provided their experience on the impacts of past droughts, their anticipated needs and potential risk factors. This was done through a range of participatory methods, including key informant interviews, focus group discussions, community visits, consultations and stakeholder workshops. By ensuring a community-based EAP development process with high engagement from locally-rooted civil society organisations, EAPs were specifically adapted to local context and needs, accepted by communities and roles and responsibilities division were agreed to allow for a smooth roll-out and effective and efficient averting of drought impacts ([Welthungerhilfe 2022c](#)).

In short, it can be concluded that anticipatory approaches such as FbA are able to mitigate effects of climate change while preventing human suffering, including reducing food insecurity and preserving human dignity. These approaches become even more effective when being implemented in a localised manner involving stakeholders at all levels including local NGOs and communities. Therefore, Anticipation should be streamlined in the humanitarian system accessible to all actors and communities.

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Website:
[Forecast-Based Action: Recognizing disasters early - Welthungerhilfe](#)

FLOODS IN PAKISTAN: CESVI'S INTERVENTION IN THE DISASTER SYMBOL OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

A CLOSER LOOK



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Since 14 June, torrential rains - three to five times more intense than the average of the last 30 years - have hit the region and combined with the rapid melting of glaciers due to an abnormal heat wave, have affected more than 33 million people, with 6.4 million – including 3.4 million children – requiring immediate assistance. An estimated 1,700 people died and about 13,000 were injured, while 2.1 million homes, 25,000 schools and 13,000 km of roads were destroyed or damaged.⁹

CESVI has been working in Pakistan since 2005, focusing its intervention on activities to prepare the population for catastrophes and natural disasters, reaching more than 2.5 million beneficiaries. For years, CESVI has been operating in Sindh, where it has been helping communities and local authorities to improve their capacities to respond to disasters through training activities aimed at improving their crisis response capabilities. CESVI has also set up “river water monitoring systems” to monitor river levels and prepare for the impact of flooding once the alert threshold is reached.

In addition to the activities in the villages, which have proved to be lifesaving because they have enabled the population to evacuate the areas at risk well in advance, and the volunteers to come to the aid of the victims, CESVI has immediately started distributing emergency kits to support the communities affected by the crisis. We are now stepping up our interventions to stem the spread of disease and mitigate the risk of food insecurity. In Sindh and Balochistan, we continue to provide to over 354,000 people emergency hygiene kits – containing soaps, women’s dignity kits, nail clippers, jerry cans and water purification tablets –, tents, mosquito nets to fight malaria infections, lamps and solar panels to counter frequent power cuts.

With winter just around the corner – even now that the rainfall has decreased in intensity – the consequences of the floods have to be reckoned with: the floods have paved the way for what could become a real long-term humanitarian catastrophe with serious effects on the already extremely vulnerable population. Eight million

9. UN OCHA, October 2022
10. UN OCHA, October 2022

people have lost their homes and fields. These are still flooded by the waters that have been stagnating for more than two months, resulting in the spread of diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, cholera, acute diarrhea and typhoid. Numbers are increasing at an alarming pace, also due to the extensive damage to basic services that forced about 5.4 million people to start using unprotected water sources and about 6.3 million people to lose access to household sanitation facilities (an estimated 950,000 household latrines are damaged or inaccessible).¹⁰

Adding to the worrying sanitation situation is the shadow of hunger. Already before the floods, some 6 million people were at risk of food insecurity. The current emergency has further exacerbated hunger in the region and – due to rising food prices, loss of livestock, fields and other income opportunities – the number of people at risk could rise to 11 million in the coming months. The situation is particularly serious for the most vulnerable groups: in the most affected provinces of Sindh and Balochistan 1.6 million children – 1 in 9 – suffer from acute severe malnutrition and urgently need life-saving treatment.¹¹ To support the communities in the fight against hunger, CESVI has been assisting them with cash grants for those who have lost their income. Moreover, we are distributing food parcels – containing flour, rice, pulses, vegetable oil and other nutritional products – and Plumpy'Sup-based therapies for severely malnourished children and pregnant and lactating women.

Simona Denti
Communication Manager
CESVI



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Interview with Andreas Papaconstantinou

Director-General Neighbourhood and Middle East, Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

VIEWS ON THE EU



As the humanitarian arm of the European Union, DG ECHO has mobilized substantial funding: 950 million euros for humanitarian food assistance and it will continue to do so as necessary in the near future. A key point is that while we have increased the level of funding to Ukraine due to the very critical humanitarian crisis, both Commissioner Lenarčič and DG ECHO have voiced in very strong terms that other crises in the world remain priorities for us, and they have not been forgotten at the expense of Ukraine. The EU will continue monitoring the food situation worldwide in all the vulnerable hotspots.

In the longer term, we want to continue working closely with the development and peace actors, under what we call the Nexus approach to help build more resilient food systems. Overall, we aim to provide humanitarian food assistance in more efficient ways and promote further anticipatory actions.

- > 1. According to the recent Global Hunger Index, 44 countries have alarming or serious levels of hunger. What are the EU's priorities to address the growing humanitarian needs, especially regarding the rising hunger levels?**

The issue of hunger is very high on our agenda, and even more today considering the very dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine and its global impact. According to recent figures, specifically the "Hunger Hotspots" analysis from September of this year, there are currently over 220 million people in need of food assistance, which represents a 14% increase over the course of only nine months.

In the short term, the European Union (EU) is working on different fronts to target the countries most in need. We have deployed the EU "Solidarity Lanes" initiative, allowing Ukraine to export over 15 million tonnes of grain through alternative routes, and, as recently announced by the EU Commission President Mrs. von der Leyen, the EU is supporting financially the "Grain from Ukraine" initiative by the World Food Programme. Moreover, the Commission works closely with the EU Member States in the "Team Europe" approach with our Global Food Security Response. This initiative has so far reached 8 billion euros from the EU budget, covering the period from 2021 to 2024.

- > 2. Conflict is one of the biggest drivers of food insecurity. How could the EU and the wider international community address this root cause?**

The EU can only address the root causes of food insecurity by bringing in other key actors, not only the European Union, its Member States and other like-minded states, but also the development and peace actors since they are essential. Within the European Union, we have been successful in joining forces with like-minded actors by using conflict advocacy and diplomacy.

In Yemen, for example, the European Union and its Member States have successfully advocated for increased access, improving the working conditions for the humanitarian workers. This has been done in tandem with the international humanitarian community. In that same conflict we have given strong support, and continue to do so, to the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Ambassador Hans Grundberg, to promote the peace talks, ensure respect for international humanitarian law, and secure access to humanitarian actors.

A key premise of our approach is that we should not aggravate or induce conflicts, according to the "do no harm" principle, we should bind all international actors to monitor intended and unintended impacts and avoid contributing to instability and violence.

- > 3. The humanitarian-development-peace nexus is often seen as one of the key approaches in the fight against hunger. What is your perspective on this? How does the EU apply concretely this joint approach to prevent but also address the consequences of hunger?**

The humanitarian-development-peace nexus is absolutely essential. As we continue to provide short-term humanitarian assistance, we must also address, in a longer-term perspective, the key drivers of food insecurity. These drivers are conflict, economic shocks, and - very importantly - climate change, as well as the underlying factors of inequality in the world and poverty. This approach should be done in close coordination with the development and peace actors to support the development of resilient food systems.

Over the last few months, ECHO has rolled out several initiatives to advance the nexus approach in very concrete ways. There was a high-level meeting on the food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel, and Lake Chad, which we co-organised with the Sahel and West Africa Club and the Global Network Against Food Crisis, to tackle the food and nutrition crisis in that region. This event brought together humanitarian and development actors around the problem of hunger in the Sahel. The aim of the event was not only to raise funds but to agree on a roadmap toward an integrated approach against hunger. This approach would bring together short-term humanitarian responses with longer-term actions to promote resilient food systems. We did a similar event in the Horn of Africa and we aim to have similar initiatives in other countries too.

We want to bring the nexus to an even larger scale through our Team Europe approach. One example is the Global Food Crisis Response, agreed in June, where the European Commission and the EU Members States work with the countries affected by the food crisis. It is a huge undertaking, but the political drive is very clear. The nexus approach works if it is very concrete, from the outset of a crisis and throughout the various phases. This approach needs clear guidance from the political level, which is what the EU has been ensuring. Even recently, new guidelines have been issued, showing that there is a clear political direction to make this approach operational and bring all the actors together in specific contexts where a difference can be made.

- > 4. The lack of access to humanitarian aid is yet another key issue of great concern when food aid cannot reach the most affected communities. Which role can the EU play in enabling the delivery of aid from their partners to those most in need?**

The lack of access is a key concern in many conflict zones, such as in Nigeria, Somalia, Ethiopia and Yemen. At EU level, we are using all the tools at our disposal to overcome this challenge. In September, Commissioner Lenarčič made a strong statement calling for committed humanitarian access in Northern Ethiopia and condemning the International Humanitarian Law violations. This happened after the resumption of hostilities in August, with reports of thousands of people displaced and widespread damage to civilian property and infrastructure, amid drought and grave food insecurity.

On the front of Yemen, the EU together with Sweden, through the senior official meeting process, is facilitating coordinated advocacy among the international humanitarian community. This has enabled us to maintain a unified position, which is essential in sustaining principled negotiations over time. While the context remains very challenging and more needs to be done, our advocacy in Yemen has contributed to increasing access and improving working conditions for humanitarians.

- > 5. Anticipatory approaches and preparedness are key in preventing famine. How does the EU promote the most effective approaches? How are these approaches operationalised?**

The EU is committed to stepping up its approach to anticipatory action and preparedness. However, Anticipatory action is not a priority for the EU alone. This approach features prominently on the current international agenda against the food crisis. The UN and the G7 have been very actively promoting anticipatory action over the last few years. It was one of the five action lines in the G7 "famine and humanitarian crisis compact" adopted last year. The German G7 presidency has made it now one of its main priorities.

Our aim through the anticipatory action approach is to help respond to needs and to support building the resilience to shocks of local communities, climate shocks, based on reliable early warning systems, that should be integrated within the national social protection systems.

Over the last few years, we have conducted several projects with a clear focus on food security. In Burundi, we are working with the World Food Programme to set up an anticipatory action scheme that can be activated ahead of climate shocks, such as floods or droughts. We are transferring capacities to the Burundi Red Cross so that the scheme can be run locally. DG ECHO is also closely working with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to establish anticipatory action in a number of countries worldwide.

➤ 6. Bridging the funding gap is key to reducing suffering and supporting the raising number of people in need. Considering the limited humanitarian budget line just approved for 2023 (1.8 bln euros), how does DG ECHO plan to address the global food insecurity worldwide efficiently and effectively on top of all other commitments for life-saving aid?

The funding gap is of great concern to me. According to UN OCHA, humanitarian appeals are covered at less than 50%, as we speak. Part of the problem is that humanitarian assistance depends too much on a very limited number of donors. The 10 top donors, provide around 90% of the humanitarian assistance in total. And this includes us, the European Union. While we are making efforts to increase our support further in a challenging budgetary situation, it is crucial that other donors step up their efforts as well. The EU alone cannot solve this issue.

Bridging the funding gap is a problem and while food assistance needs have doubled over the last six years, food assistance has unfortunately stagnated at the global level. Though ECHO funding has increased, the needs have significantly increased as well and the global trend is that the overall funding is not going up.

To address this worrying trend, we need funding to become more efficient, we need to further coordinate with other key donors, and change the architecture of the donorship worldwide with more actors stepping in. Non-traditional donors need to be mobilised and this is a key challenge. We need to work with other financial actors on what we call innovative finance and create more synergies with civil protection and in-kind assistance.

The challenge is enormous, and we need to work very hard toward the resolution of this issue.

➤ 7. Regarding the importance of enlarging the donor base, what are your expectations for the next European Humanitarian Forum?

We are still finalising the program with our Swedish colleagues and one of the issues that my leadership wants to bring to the forum is the funding gap. We want to send a very powerful message to the world that we need to step up our efforts, even in this very difficult context where we're in. It is one of the biggest issues that we are facing in the humanitarian world.

Interview conducted by Roberta Fadda and Francesca Giubilo on 9 December 2022.

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AUSTRIA

-  CARE Österreich
-  Caritas Österreich
-  SOS Kinderdorf International

BELGIUM

-  Caritas International Belgium
-  Médecins du Monde (MDM) Belgium
-  Oxfam Solidarité - Solidariteit
-  Plan Belgium

CROATIA

-  International Medical Corps Croatia

CZECH REPUBLIC

-  ADRA Czech Republic
-  Caritas Czech Republic
-  People in Need (PIN)

DENMARK

-  ADRA Denmark Nødhjælp og udvikling
-  CARE Denmark
-  Dansk Folkehjælp Danish People's Aid
-  DanChurchAid (DCA)
-  Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
-  Mission East Mission Øst
-  Save the Children Denmark

FINLAND

-  Fida International
-  Finn Church Aid
-  World Vision Finland

FRANCE

-  Action Contre la Faim
-  ACTED Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement
-  CARE France
-  Handicap International Humanity and Inclusion
-  La Chaîne de l'Espoir
-  Première Urgence Internationale
-  Médecins du Monde (MDM) France
-  Secours Catholique - Réseau Mondial Caritas
-  Secours Islamique France
-  Secours Populaire Français
-  Solidarités International
-  Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF)




GERMANY

-  ADRA Deutschland
-  Aktion gegen den Hunger
-  Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) Deutschland
-  CARE Deutschland-Luxemburg
-  Deutscher Caritasverband Caritas Germany
-  Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
-  International Rescue Committee Germany
-  DIE JOHANNITER. Aus Liebe zum Leben
-  Malteser International
-  Medico International
-  PLAN International Germany
-  welt hunger hilfe
-  World Vision Germany

ITALY

-  Caritas Italiana
-  CESVI - Cooperazione e Sviluppo
-  COOPI COOPERAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE
-  INTEROS Organizzazione Umanitaria Onlus
-  JRS Jesuit Refugee Service
-  Oxfam Italia
-  Terre des Hommes Italy
-  WeWorld

IRELAND

-  CONCERN worldwide
-  GOAL Global
-  trócaire

LUXEMBOURG

-  caritas LUXEMBOURG

THE NETHERLANDS

-  CARE Nederland
-  Cordaid
-  MERCY CORPS
-  World Vision Netherlands
-  OXFAM Novib
-  Save the Children Netherlands
-  WAR child
-  ZOA

NORWAY

-  CARE Denmark
-  Norwegian Church Aid
-  NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL (NRC)
-  Redd Barna Save the Children - Redd Barna

POLAND

-  pah Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH)

SLOVAKIA

-  Habitat for Humanity International

SPAIN

-  ACCIÓN CONTRA EL HAMBRE
-  Alianza por la Solidaridad-ActionAid
-  Caritas Española
-  EDUCO
-  MÉDICOS DEL MUNDO
-  OXFAM Intermón






SWEDEN

-  LM International (Läkarmissionen)
-  PMU Interlife
-  Svenska kyrkan - Church of Sweden

SWITZERLAND

-  MEDAIR Medair

UNITED KINGDOM

-  ACTION AGAINST HUNGER
-  CAFOD just one world
-  christian aid
-  PLAN International UK
-  Save the Children UK

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