

Hammer-blow

How the conflict in Ukraine will have a catastrophic impact on displaced communities in crises

June 2022



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Updated: 14/06/2022

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Cover photo: Enayatullah Azad / NRC

Caption for cover photo. Pari, a 30-year-old displaced mother of eight from BalaMurghab district of Badghis.

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GLOSSARY

CH	Cadre Harmonise
CONASUR	National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation, Burkina Faso
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FAP	Food Assistance Programmes
FFPI	FAO Food Price Index
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GRFC	Global Report on Food Security
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
KII	Key Informant Interview
mVAM	Vulnerability and Food Security Assessment Lebanon
NRC	The Norwegian Refugee Council
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
VASYR	The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon
WFP	The World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Global food insecurity has markedly increased over the last two-years due to conflict, economic and political instability, displacement, environmental degradation and disasters, and major disruptions to global food systems because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, levels of hunger surpassed all previous records¹ with close to 193 million people acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance across 53 countries and territories. This represents an increase of nearly 40 million people compared to what was previously considered a record level high in 2020. Importantly, this increase occurred even prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Since then, there have been massive disruptions to global food systems and key agricultural inputs.

The conflict in Ukraine is expected to be a major compounding factor pushing vulnerable communities toward famine. As of June 2022, close to 50 million people in countries affected by conflict and displacement are spiralling toward famine.²

The conflict has exposed the significant vulnerability of global food systems to shocks and stresses. The consequences extend beyond states that depend directly on Ukrainian and Russian supply chains and markets for imports and international assistance. Further disruption to global food systems, without an adequate collective international response, will have dire consequences in parts of the world already experiencing conflict, displacement, and rising humanitarian needs.

Communities affected by conflict and displacement will likely face disproportionate risks from the consequences of worsening global food insecurity. These communities already face an array of barriers and limitations to recovery and self-reliance and often remain dependent on assistance to meet basic household needs, including adequate and diverse foods. People affected by displacement are already more likely to be faced with erosion of their support systems and networks while on the move, while also experiencing little or no access to employment and income generation, social protection, or markets.

In 2021, more than 88 per cent of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) were in countries or territories experiencing food-crisis. The six countries or territories with the highest numbers of IDPs – Syria, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, Ethiopia and Sudan – were also among the ten largest food crises in 2021 by numbers of people experiencing acute or worse food insecurity.³ Out of around 21 million refugees and four million asylum seekers globally in 2021, over 60 percent were hosted in countries or territories experiencing food-crisis, where a mix of conflict and insecurity, Covid-19, poverty, food insecurity and weather extremes compounded their humanitarian plight.

Findings from this report are based on a comprehensive secondary source analysis and 35 key informant interviews with refugees, IDPs, and host community respondents from 11 key conflict and displacement affected contexts. This is not a representative sample, nor extensive across all major food insecure, conflict and displacement affected contexts. While further in-depth analysis is needed, respondents and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) expert analysis highlighted stark commonalities for displaced communities across otherwise distinct crisis contexts.

The findings, which are outlined in more detail below, highlight widespread and worsening food insecurity, desperate coping strategies, and prospects of further tension, conflict, and displacement. This in turn has both immediate and long-term consequences, including for achieving durable solutions, ensuring stability, and broader community recovery and prosperity.



Photo: Ingebjørg Kårstad/NRC

Key Findings

- **Tens of millions of displaced and displacement affected people** in some of the worst global food crises and protracted conflicts, including Somalia, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Burkina Faso, will be **pushed closer to famine⁴ due to the conflict in Ukraine, major global food systems disruption, potential aid diversion, and a reduction in humanitarian funding and assistance.**
- Countries and territories experiencing high levels of conflict and displacement, are also experiencing some of the highest levels of food insecurity. Many practitioners are anticipating **major and potentially disproportionate impact on displacement affected communities.**
- **Refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs report witnessing a sharp increase in food insecurity over the last 6-12 months**, in some cases reporting tripling or quadrupling prices of basic food basket item and significantly reduced availability in many contexts.
- **Refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs in communities where NRC operates are reporting significant challenges in accessing adequate food** to meet the needs of their household, both in terms of quantity and diversity.
- Food insecurity will likely be a compounding factor of community tension and conflict with many refugees, **asylum seekers and IDPs in NRC areas of operation already reporting increased tension, violence, and insecurity** within their respective communities, with rising food insecurity as a major contributing factor. In many of the contexts assessed, food security is also likely to become a driving factor for internal and cross-border displacement.
- **Negative coping strategies employed by affected populations are and will continue to rise because of increased food insecurity** including meal skipping, debt accumulation, early forced marriage, and child labour.
- **There is a significant discrepancy between funding commitments, funding received and the scale of current and increasing humanitarian needs** as a result, in part, of rising food insecurity across multiple crises contexts, including Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Iraq, Lebanon, Mali, Somalia, and Yemen.
- **The prospects and conditions for durable solutions to displacement are increasingly undermined in many contexts** by both food insecurity and associated negative coping strategies. The capacity and avenues for marginalised groups, including women, youth, and elderly, to recover and become self-reliant are reduced.

Key Recommendations

- **States should sustain and intensify diplomatic and multilateral efforts to address the root causes of food insecurity**, including newly emerged and protracted conflict. This should be done through the UN Security Council (UNSC), other multilateral fora, and direct bilateral diplomatic engagement.
- **UNSC should fully implement and assess adherence to Resolutions 2417 (2018) and 2573 (2021).** Sustained and systematic monitoring of food insecurity and the risk of famine in conflict affected states and violations of international humanitarian law – including denial of access, the use of hunger as a weapon,

attacks on or destruction of civilian infrastructure (including food systems), and attacks on civilians – should be prioritised by UNSC members for timely and adequate response and accountability measures.

- **States should avoid unnecessary food protectionism and individualistic trade policies** on essential goods as this approach will only bring relief to the country in the short run. It will also further reduce and disrupt global supplies, reduce the capacity of global markets to absorb shocks, and further increase prices.
- **National and local authorities, donors, and humanitarian actors** should immediately prioritise refugee and IDP inclusion in existing or expanded social protection programming and/or new standalone social protection programming. They should aim to mitigate as much as possible the primary and secondary consequences of rising food insecurity and other displacement associated consequences, including widespread negative coping strategies.
- **Donors should refrain from** diverting aid, and from funding and resource cuts to humanitarian crises because of the Ukraine crisis and domestic refugee programming costs.
- **Humanitarian Country Teams should strengthen and prioritise coordination across agencies**, clusters, and sector working groups toward a more holistic response to food insecurity among displacement affected populations. They should also mitigate the secondary consequences.

INTRODUCTION

On February 24th, 2022, a dramatic escalation of international armed conflict in Ukraine set in motion a rapidly spiralling humanitarian and displacement crisis. As of June 2022, more than 7.1 million people⁵ have been internally displaced while close to 7 million refugees⁶ have fled across Ukraine's borders. Beyond the immediate impact for the people of Ukraine and neighbouring countries, the conflict is anticipated to have immense consequences for tens of millions of people across the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and other regions already experiencing conflict and displacement.

Ukraine and the Russian Federation are key members of the global food basket. Combined, both states provide 19 per cent of the world's barley supply, 14 per cent of wheat, and 4 per cent of maize, making up more than one-third of global cereal exports⁷. They are also lead suppliers of rapeseed and account for 52 per cent of the world's sunflower oil export market, in addition to essential agricultural inputs such as fertiliser and fuel.

The Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), an organisation that procures at least half of its grains from Ukraine and provides food to areas where food is either scarce or unaffordable, has warned that the war in Ukraine will have a global impact *"beyond anything we've seen since World War II."*⁸ This is especially the case for the world's most fragile, food insecure and import-dependent states. Countries like Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, Sudan, and Yemen, are expected to be directly impacted by the disruption of key food system and agriculture input supply caused by the armed conflict in Ukraine. Even states that are not direct importers, including Ethiopia, Syria, and Afghanistan, will be highly vulnerable to the shocks and stresses to global food systems and supply chains. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), this sudden and potentially prolonged reduction in food exports will mean a rise in global food prices to the detriment of economically vulnerable countries.

Scenario mapping undertaken by WFP shows that if the conflict in Ukraine affects future production of wheat and maize in 2022/23, acute hunger is estimated to increase by 17 per cent and affect 47 million people. This means that up to 323 million people could become acutely food insecure in 2022.⁹ The potential for a significant global food crisis, disproportionately impacting communities affected by conflict and displacement, is increasing each day with the lack of diplomatic solutions to the war in Ukraine, and with alternative solutions for major food insecure states not being collectively agreed.

Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) - Acute food insecurity phase descriptions (Area)

IPHASE 1 Minimal	Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income.
PHASE 2 Stressed	Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies.
PHASE 3 Crisis	Households either: - Have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition; OR - Are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies.
PHASE 4 Emergency	Households either: - Have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality; OR - Are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation.
PHASE 5 Famine	Households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution, and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. (For Famine Classification, area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality.)

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

This report was developed to demonstrate the potential disastrous impact of the global food crisis on communities experiencing conflict and displacement. As an organisation committed to helping people affected by conflict and displacement, many of the countries highlighted in recent reports are countries where NRC operates. Our field teams and the people we serve have experiencing first-hand the impact of the emerging global food crisis over the past year.

The analysis in this report was informed primarily through a review of existing secondary data of food insecurity in crisis contexts. This data was supplemented by 35 semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with affected individuals – including IDPs, refugees, and asylum seekers – across 11 countries experiencing humanitarian and displacement crises: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen. In addition, cross-department workshops and expert interviews were conducted in NRC areas of operation with technical programs staff members and field-based practitioners. These perspectives were compiled to identify trends across the contexts in focus for this report.

The methodology does not include a representative sample of affected populations, nor does it claim to represent a comprehensive global analysis of food systems, availability and pricing and definitive projections of likely secondary consequences.

The report is intended to support timely, adequate, and targeted policymaking by national and international actors for displacement and conflict-affected communities experiencing rising food insecurity.

DETERIORATING FROM BAD TO WORSE

In 2021, global levels of hunger had already reached an unprecedented high with 193 million people in need of urgent assistance.¹⁰ The numbers were four times what was observed in 2020 and seven times what was observed in 2016.

The Ukraine crisis puts further strain on a system that was already experiencing significant stress. Food prices have been on a stark rise since mid-2020, while the availability of key food system inputs such as seeds, fertiliser and oil have been on the decline. FAO's Food Price Index, a measure of the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities, reached a new all-time high in March 2022, and prices have remained volatile since.

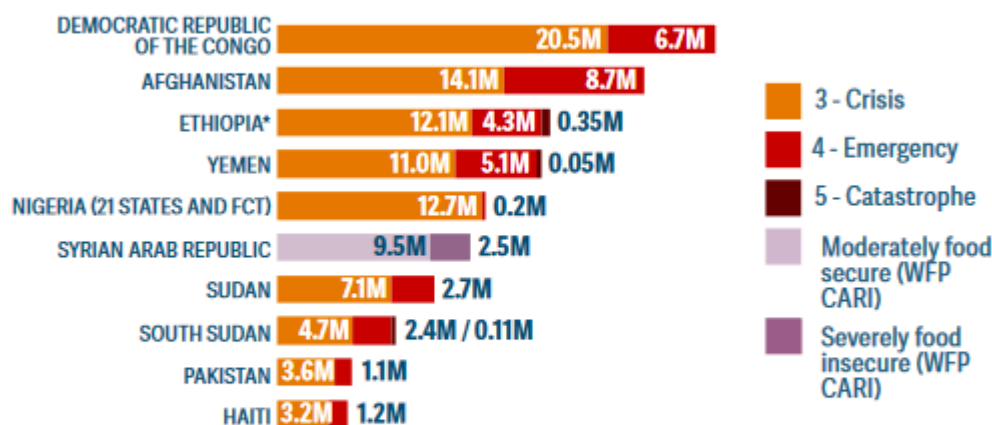
The additional global rise in energy and fertiliser prices will further worsen the situation. As a result of the high prices of commodities such as natural gas (and coal in the case of China), global fertiliser prices are higher than they have been since 2010, according to the World Bank¹¹. If this continues, farmers may shift production towards less input reliant crops, thereby lowering outputs of core food commodities. The limited availability and higher cost of fertiliser could lead to significantly reduced yields and further depress food production, leading to less grain domestically and on the market in 2022 and 2023. This will drive food pricing and food availability concerns well into the future.

Communities at heightened risk of food insecurity: Displacement-affected groups

Recent data has revealed that populations in displacement are worse off than other vulnerable groups. Nearly 80 per cent of people affected by displacement - including IDPs, refugees, and asylum seekers – were living in countries or territories experiencing a food crisis in 2021.¹² In fact, the six countries and territories with the highest numbers of IDPs – the Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, Ethiopia and the Sudan – were among the ten largest food crises in 2021 by numbers of people experiencing food insecurity.¹³ Over 60 per cent of the 21 million refugees and 4 million asylum seekers recorded globally in 2021 were hosted in 52 food-crisis countries or territories, where a mix of conflict and insecurity, Covid-19, poverty, food insecurity and weather extremes compounded their humanitarian plight.

FIGURE 1.13

Ten countries/territories with the highest number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) or equivalent in 2021



* These consolidated estimates combine two IPC analyses – the October 2020 analysis of Belg and Meher-dependent areas (covering January–June 2021) and the May 2021 update of conflict-affected areas of Tigray, Afar and Amhara (covering May–June 2021). The Government of Ethiopia has not endorsed the May 2021 analysis.

Source: FSIN, using IPC, CH and WFP data; GRFC 2022.

NRC conducted an in-depth review of the following contexts, in addition to key informant interviews with affected communities across several crises, and found the following realities, now at further risk of exacerbation due to conflict in Ukraine:

- In **Lebanon**, a drastic deterioration of food security was reported already in the second half of 2021, a trend that continued into 2022, according to the World Food Programme's (WFP) Vulnerability and Food Security Assessment Lebanon (mVAM). Food insecurity rose by 14 percentile points from an average of 32 per cent between January to June 2021, to 46 per cent from July to December 2021.
- In **Afghanistan**, the combined impact of acute drought – the worst in more than three decades – and economic collapse in the second half of 2021, has left the country in a hunger crisis of unprecedented proportions. As of May 2022, 22.8 million people, half of the population, are projected to be acutely food insecure this year, including 8.7 million at risk of famine-like conditions¹⁴. Six out of ten families are resorting to crisis coping strategies¹⁵, which is six times higher than in August 15 2021.
- In **Bangladesh**, 40 million people, one quarter of the population, remain food insecure, according to a WFP country brief from December 2021. Food insecurity is caused by extreme weather shocks such as floods and cyclones, especially across the southern coast of the country. This has led to crop loss and loss of arable land due to increased salinity.
- In **Yemen**, over 19 million people are expected to experience Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) levels of acute food insecurity between June and December 2022 – including 7.1 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). 161,000 people are

projected to reach Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) within the same timeframe representing a fivefold increase compared to January and May 2022¹⁶.

- **Mali** is facing its worst food and nutrition crisis in a decade. 1.8 million people are currently experiencing food crisis in the midst of agricultural lean season. This number is likely to be larger and faster than anticipated in areas affected by early pastoral and agricultural lean periods due to accelerated depletion of stocks, uneven renewal of pastures, unusually high prices, and the impact of insecurity.
- In **Burkina Faso**, current agricultural production is estimated to be down 10 per cent compared to last year, leaving over 2.3 million people food insecure. With the number expected to reach almost 3.5 million people during the lean season (June-August) in 2022.
- In **Sudan**, WFP and FAO estimated prior to the Ukraine crisis that more than 18 million people were likely to face acute food insecurity by September 2022. This was driven by the failing economy, prolonged dry spells and erratic rainfall, and a reduced area cultivated last year. That is double the number of people who were food insecure in 2021.
- In north-east **Nigeria**, the cost of the food basket as of January 2022 was 36 per cent higher than 2021 and 73 per cent higher than in 2020¹⁷. In the State of Borno, the price-increase has a direct effect on food insecurity and dependence on humanitarian assistance. Between October 2021 and March 2022, the number of people in need of food security assistance increased by 19 per cent¹⁸.
- In **Somalia**, the food crisis due to the worsening drought has reached critical levels, following the fourth rainy season (April-June) failing in a row – the first time since 1981¹⁹. Acute food insecurity in Somalia has and is drastically worsening, with a projected 213,000 people facing famine, and 7.1 million people, almost half the population, going hungry.
- In **Iraq**, the cost of vegetable oil increased by 16 per cent and the cost of flour by 9 per cent with the onset of the Ukraine crisis.²⁰ Iraq is highly dependent on food imports, particularly following drought conditions that reduced cereal production in the last year and increasing prices of essential food commodities, which have already impacted the most vulnerable communities. Iraqi IDPs in camps, and returnees, are the most food insecure throughout the country and have already been forced to resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as acquiring debt, and children and youth dropping out of school to be able to afford critical food items.
- In **Syria**, recent surveys conducted by NRC have revealed that Syrians are worse off than they have been since the start of the conflict. Economic devastation – exacerbated by rising food prices – are now a driving factor of displacement.²¹
- In **Iran**, economic reforms resulting in the removal of subsidies for food, medicine and other utilities will gradually take effect. As of 11 May, food prices have significantly increased. For instance, for a family of four in the lowest economic decile, monthly expenditure on food items has more than doubled overnight. This will disproportionately affect Afghan refugee families given that they are not covered by the Iranian government's aid package to poor families.²²



Photo: Zaynab Mayladan /NRC

A self-perpetuating cycle: Conflict, displacement, and food insecurity

Food insecurity represents both a major contributing factor to conflict and violence and a significant consequence of it. Global consensus around these linkages, as well as displacement, have been articulated in UNSC resolutions in recent years.²³ This relationship has been known to result in protracted cycles of emergency and instability where the drivers and consequences perpetuate one another, particularly in countries with weak governance and overstretched infrastructure, and where there are little to no mitigation capacities in place for the effects of climate change.

Disruption of food production, trade, and market access in conflict settings has profound impacts on hunger. Physical and bureaucratic impediments to the operations of humanitarian actors put lives at risk. Food shortages create desperate competition for resources, deepen existing fault-lines, and fuel tensions and grievances²⁴.

The relationship between forced displacement – both internally and across borders – and food insecurity, is complex and often contextually dependent. However, it is not without clear patterns of correlation, cause, and significant consequence, as noted in UNSC Resolution 2417 (2018) “*armed conflict, violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and food insecurity can be drivers of forced*

displacement, and, conversely, forced displacement in countries in armed conflict can have a devastating impact on agricultural production and livelihoods”.

In 2021, around 139 million people were facing crisis level or worse food insecurity across 24 countries and territories where conflict or insecurity was considered the primary driver²⁵. This is a 40 per cent increase from 2020. The 2022 Hunger Hotspots report noted that in most of the hunger hotspots – which included Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen among the top four – organised violence or conflict are the primary drivers, actual or potential, for a likely deterioration of food insecurity levels. The consequences of conflict on food security are further compounded, and/or drive additional challenges, in many food insecure states. The report notes that a worsening effects of climate change threaten to be a significant compounding factor across many fragile and conflict affected states.

While conflict affects food security and nutrition, deteriorations in food security can exacerbate tensions and risks of conflict. The combination of poverty and hunger, lack of opportunities, unequal access to jobs, land, or wealth, is a volatile mix that can create feelings of anger and hopelessness²⁶.

AN INADEQUATE GLOBAL RESPONSE

Despite increasingly available evidence that today’s emerging food crisis, which is being compounded by the crisis in Ukraine, will likely have a disastrous impact on populations experiencing conflict and displacement, the global response by states with influence has been far from adequate. States are increasingly exploring and implementing “food protectionism,” measures which threaten to further undermine a sorely needed collective international response to widespread food insecurity and global food system disruption. This leaves fragile and food insecure states at most risk.

In addition to the direct effect on food-prices and farming commodities in conflict affected countries, the indirect effect due to WFP’s main supply line being Ukraine will have a massive impact on conflict-affected countries across the globe. David Beasley, WFP’s Executive Director, called for a political solution to the crisis to avoid massive increase in hunger levels as food supplies depend on the opening of Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea²⁷. Prior to the escalation of conflict in Ukraine, WFP was already forced to cut rations in some of the world’s most food insecure states due to a lack of international funding, including Yemen, Niger, the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger²⁸. The conflict in Ukraine, further disruption to global food systems, and the inadequate international response to prevent and end conflict through diplomatic means – such as upholding commitments on anticipatory action, fully funding and delivering on humanitarian appeals, and promoting a collective stabilisation of global food commodity markets – will be a hammer-blow for millions displaced.

Food protectionism

Food protectionism refers to measures put in place by food commodity exporting states to reduce or alter international sales or putting in place restrictions including taxes and quotas to safeguard domestic food supplies and reduce price inflation. Protectionism can lead to significant disruptions to global food supply systems and price volatility disproportionately affecting low-income, fragile and food import dependent states.

Though these measures can reduce domestic food pricing and stabilise availability in these states in the short-term, in the longer-term it can result in insecurity and supply volatility. Following the global recession in the late 2000s, the World Bank^[3] recorded an increase in global food prices of 13 per cent due to individualistic approaches, with trade policy changes accounting for a 45 per cent increase in the price of rice and a 30 per cent increase in the price of wheat.

The armed conflict in Ukraine, protracted impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and worsening consequences of climate change has driven many states to engage in food protectionism. The Covid-19 pandemic continues to have a significant impact on food production, supply chains, access, and pricing, particularly for low-income and food insecure states and communities. Protectionist measures employed by states at the beginning and throughout the pandemic contributed to further market shocks and stresses and food insecurity for at-risk states.

Climate change continues to threaten national and international food systems as drought, heatwaves and flooding are dramatically affecting yields across continents including India, one of the world's largest producers of wheat. In May 2022, the government of India announced a ban on wheat exports with immediate effect²⁹ as a result of record heat and reduced yields with estimates as high as a 50 per cent reduction in some parts of the country.³⁰ The full conditions of the export ban, including the length of the export ban and potential exceptions for food insecure and dependent states, are yet to be confirmed. However, the removal of another major wheat producing state from global supply chains will likely have significant consequences for global availability and pricing.

No longer able to cope

Across NRC countries of operation, field teams are witnessing communities affected by conflict and displacement suffering the consequences of rising global food insecurity distinctly and disproportionately. Refugees,³¹ IDP populations and host communities in many crisis contexts are highly vulnerable to additional shocks and stresses. Many lack the resources, financial and social capital, livelihoods and income generating activities, social protection programmes, and support networks that would otherwise allow for greater self-reliance and adaptation. NRC programming experience has long shown limited access to documentation, land, and subsistence

and income generating agricultural activities often leaves displacement affected communities at distinct risk and highly dependent on international assistance.

The negative coping strategies adopted in periods of food insecurity have longer-term consequences with distinct and disproportionate risks faced to different members of displaced households including, but not limited to, protracted and cyclical displacement, malnutrition, early and/or forced marriage of children and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV). These coping mechanisms also impact access to education, contribute to school drop-out and illiteracy, as well as poor health outcomes. Longer term, the consequences of these coping strategies may also impede displaced households from achieving durable solutions by reducing opportunities to build self-reliance, resilience, and human capital.

Perspectives gathered by NRC staff for this report point to the potential detrimental impact that a food crisis worsened by the conflict in Ukraine could have on displacement-affected families supported by NRC operations. The following section outlines emerging challenges and concerns in the countries in focus.



Photo: /NRC

FINDINGS IN DETAIL

Speaking to the UN General Assembly last month, the Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned that the Ukraine conflict – adding to the effects of climate change and the pandemic - "threatens to tip tens of millions of people over the edge into food insecurity followed by malnutrition, mass hunger and famine."³²

In all eleven contexts reviewed by NRC for this report, price increases, scarcity of products, and depletion of stock were noted, in many cases the situation was deteriorating from already dire levels³³. For example, respondents in Lebanon reported expecting food security to worsen in the short and medium term. Cost of food commodities (particularly wheat and cooking oil) have been on the rise in Lebanon for the last several years. The additional challenges Lebanon will face in securing fuel and agricultural inputs to continue to produce food domestically are expected to exacerbate this.

Increased need for import is in some countries linked to this past year's harvest. In Iraq, where a recent NRC survey found that a third of farmers witnessed crop failure due to record levels of drought, a 9 percent price-increase for wheat and a 16 per cent increase for vegetable oil, already making it more difficult for vulnerable households to buy enough food for their families.³⁴ In Iran, the production of wheat is likely to be around 30 per cent less this year due to expected lower rainfall, which increases the need for imports. In addition, Iran's Feed and Grain Importers Union has recently announced that the Ukraine crisis can also cause problems in the imports of livestock feed and grain because companies cannot keep their deliveries due to logjams in supply chains.³⁵

Widespread and Worsening Food Insecurity

IRAN

The Ukrainian crisis has intensified the severity of economic pressures on both host communities and Afghan refugees in Iran. The downturn of Iranian economy started in 2018 with re-imposition of US sanctions on the country by the Trump-administration and was compounded by the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 pandemic³⁶. Just within four years, the cost of a minimum food basket of an Afghan family in Iran has increased six times, based on NRC's tracking of the cost of basic needs. Recently Iranian authorities were forced to remove subsidies of many food commodities further increasing pressure on satisfying basic needs by

host and Afghan refugees; general subsidies were replaced by direct cash assistance which only poor Iranian families will receive³⁷.

In May 2022, the first phase of economic reform launched on food items, and it is expected to be extended to other subsidised consumable items including medicine and fuel. As a consequence of removing subsidies as well as increasing prices due to the Ukrainian crisis, food prices specifically have significantly increased in Iran³⁸. For instance, for a family of four in the lowest economic decile, monthly expenditure on food items has more than doubled overnight. Malnutrition rates in children in the country have already significantly increased compared to data from before 2020³⁹. The price-increase will affect Afghan families given that they are not covered by the Iranian government's aid package to poor families.

Moreover, Iran is expecting increased need for import of many food commodities linked to this year's poor harvest. In Iran, the production of wheat is likely to be around 30 per cent less this year due to expected lower rainfall⁴⁰. In addition, Iran's Feed and Grain Importers Union has recently announced that the Ukraine crisis can also cause problems in the imports of livestock feed and grain because companies cannot keep their deliveries due to logjams in supply chains⁴¹. Iran is among many countries significantly impacted by environmental hazards and climate change.

The import-dependency in many African countries, often highlighted as a general resilience challenge, is now even more apparent. Over 50 per cent of the wheat imported by both Mali and Burkina Faso comes from Ukraine and Russia. Further worsening the situation, North African neighbouring countries are preserving security stocks which reduce the availabilities on the market, especially preventing access for vulnerable groups⁴². A decline in production due to low access of fertilisers is in addition lowering countries' own production by 20 per cent compared to the 2017-2020 average, according to a recent report on the effect of the Russo-Ukrainian crisis on ECOWAS countries done by WFP and FAO.⁴³

The import-dependency is also clear in the land-locked Central African Republic, being heavily dependent on import from Russia and Ukraine for food staples. Neighbouring Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Republic of Congo have now halted exports to protect their own markets. The stark increase in food prices in this region is already being felt. In a recent briefing for humanitarian donors, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Central African Republic, Denis Brown expressed concern about the rise in food prices and the lack of response due to low levels of funding. The price of a baguette, a staple food in most families, had increased by 40 per cent in only two weeks, while a bag of flour has gone up 36 per cent.⁴⁴ As a result of food and commodity prices increasing coupled with renewed violence in the centre of the country, it is estimated that over 2.2 million people, close to half of the country's population, will experience food security crisis levels

between April and August 2022. Due to lack of funding, very low levels of those in need have received any sort of food assistance so far in 2022⁴⁵.

Interviews conducted with IDPs, refugees, and asylum seekers, as well as field practitioners between March and April 2022 provide further insight into what it might translate into on the ground if this food insecurity were to continue to worsen in these contexts.



Photo: Itunu Kuku/NRC

Negative coping strategies could become even more widespread

In every KII conducted with IDPs, refugees and asylum seekers across the eleven contexts highlighted, there were already reports of increased negative coping strategies in the last 12 months, as a result of rising food insecurity and associated consequences. Displaced individuals reported increasingly being pushed into desperate decision making and basic needs prioritisation just to feed their families, often with far-reaching and long-term consequences. The most reported coping strategies, and other consequences, included further displacement (both internally and across borders), meal skipping and reduced dietary diversity. These strategies were distinctly affecting women girls and the elderly in many contexts reviewed, including forcing individuals to reduce expenditure and access to essential services like healthcare.

MALI

From October–December 2021, 90,900 IDPs were estimated to be in Crisis or worse (CH Phase 3 or above) phases of acute food insecurity, representing 24 per cent of all IDPs, including 10,400 in Emergency (CH Phase 4)⁴⁶. From June–August 2022, the acute food insecurity situation for IDPs was expected to worsen with 140,400 projected to be in Crisis or worse (CH Phase 3 or above), representing 35 percent of all IDPs, including 16 300 in Emergency (CH Phase 4) (CH, November 2021).

The child nutritional situation in IDP sites deteriorated with 15.9 per cent of under 5s wasted in 2021 compared with 10.4 per cent in 2020. Around 3 per cent of IDP children were severely wasted⁴⁷. Between June and August 2022, the peak period for acute malnutrition, a progressive deterioration in the nutritional situation is expected, with four IDP sites likely in a Serious (IPC AMN Phase 3) condition and one in a Critical condition (IPC AMN Phase 4) (IPC, June 2021)⁴⁸.

Many families have had to abandon their fields and have seen their livestock stolen. The presence of armed conflict has increasingly limited people's ability to move freely, and in some cases has led to full-fledged besiegement, preventing vulnerable families from accessing aid, their fields, grazing areas for their livestock, and markets surrounding their villages.

"I have a hard time feeding my family as most products became too expensive to buy. Our diet has drastically changed. All the boys in my household have to work to help me cope with the expenses," said a male IDP in Mali.

Food Consumption and Dietary Diversity

One of the most pervasive issues associated with both rising food insecurity and costs reported by all the KII respondents and recorded by NRC staff across all regions surveyed is increased meal skipping and reduced dietary diversity. While meal skipping and poor dietary diversity are protracted coping strategies across several contexts, respondents, and food security and protection experts, highlighted an increasing upward trend across multiple contexts.

LEBANON

In 2020, close to 80 per cent of total wheat imports to Lebanon came from Ukraine. A further 15 per cent came from Russia.⁴⁹ Significant rates of cooking oil and other basic food system imports were also sourced from the now conflict affected region, making the food security situation particularly dire.

In February this year, the WFP stated that food prices in Lebanon had increased by 1,000 per cent since 2019 as a result of one of the worst economic collapses since the mid-nineteenth century, the neighbouring conflict in Syria and largescale displacement, weak governance, the Beirut blast of 2020, and high import dependency. An estimated 80 per cent of the population have been plunged into poverty.⁵⁰

While the situation has deteriorated for both Lebanese and displaced populations, those displaced are distinctly affected. 90 per cent of Syrians in Lebanon are now living in extreme poverty. In 2021, 94 per cent of Syrian refugees faced challenges when accessing food and had to employ coping strategies to manage their food shortages. The 2021 The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) recorded a close to tripling of households with poor dietary diversity between 2019 and 2021.

Similarly, in 2021 73 per cent of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon witnessed increased poverty rates with widespread and worsening food security and coping strategies reported by UNRWA⁵¹, rising to 87 per cent of Palestinian refugees displaced from Syria.⁵²

With East Africa experiencing record level drought, the situation in Somalia is notably critical. In a recent survey conducted by NRC in April 2022, only 22 per cent of households surveyed reported that they consistently had enough food to eat in the past month. Less than one fifth of respondents in the same survey reported that they had access to a sufficient variety of food in the past month. Self-reliance among vulnerable communities is rapidly being eroded with income generated from agriculture reducing by more than half between January and April 2022 to 19 per cent. Meanwhile, income from livestock has reduced by more than 60 per cent since the beginning of the current drought to 13 per cent. One displaced mother in Somalia detailed her harrowing and traumatic experience of witnessing her daughter pass away:

“My little daughter was doing well last night, the family just drunk tea since we had no food to eat. In the middle of the night, we woke up the sound of vomiting - it was my little daughter. I took her outside. Her body was also full of diarrhea. I cleaned and gave her some water to drink and immediately she vomited. She kept on vomiting and diarrhea the entire night. At around 5AM, my daughter cried ‘Mummy, I am feeling hungry, just give me some milk’, but we did not have it in the house. As she was crying with hunger my daughter passed away, the pain of seeing my own blood take her last breath while not being able to afford to give her something to eat or drink will forever haunt me.”



Photo: Will Carter/NRC

SOMALIA

The situation in Somalia is critical. Acute food insecurity has drastically worsened since the beginning of 2022, with more than 6 million people – 38 per cent of the population – projected to face Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) levels of acute food insecurity between April and June 2022, including 1.7 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels and 81,000 people in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) levels. Humanitarian assistance is preventing worsening of food security and nutrition outcomes but has not kept pace with the rising levels of needs.

Further deterioration of the food security and nutrition situation is expected through September 2022 projection period, with more than 7.1 million people facing Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or higher) levels outcomes, including 2.1 million people facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels and over 213,000 people likely in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe)⁵³. Domestic food prices are rapidly approaching levels recorded during the 2011 Famine with further increases expected as a result of global price volatility and the dependency on wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine⁵⁴.

As of May 2022, an estimated 1.5 million children under the age of five years (total acute malnutrition burden) face acute malnutrition through the end of the year, including 386,400 who are likely to be severely malnourished. These figures are

likely to increase as the nutrition situation deteriorates further in the affected areas.

Most of the estimated 2.9 million IDPs across Somalia are poor with limited livelihood assets, few income-earning opportunities, low access to communal support and high reliance on external

humanitarian assistance. Decades of conflict, recurrent climate shocks, disease outbreaks and increasing poverty are devastating the people of Somalia. Despite progress in recent years, the compounding impacts of these shocks continue to erode coping strategies and undermine resilience against future crises. As a result, around one third of IDPs in rural and urban settlements faced moderate to large food consumption gaps through 2021⁵⁵.

Consecutive below-average harvest seasons due to extreme drought conditions have led poor rural households to relocate to towns to access income opportunities and humanitarian support. More than 770,000 people have been displaced by drought since the start of 2021. It is currently estimated that out of 2.9 million IDPs, 75 per cent - or 2.2 million people - require urgent multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance. To buy food was the most critical need indicated by 61 per cent of IDPs, 59 per cent reported healthcare as urgent, while 58 per cent stated the need for shelter. The overall nutrition situation among IDPs in the 2021 Gu season is Serious (IPC AMN Phase 3) (11.2 percent). Seven out of ten assessed IDP groups were either in Serious or Critical (IPC AMN Phase 4) levels, underscoring the underlying vulnerability of IDP populations to wasting (IPC AMN, November 2021).

While many IDP households have lost their means to produce their own food, for those engaged in agro-pastoralism, drought conditions in 2021 severely impacted crop and livestock production. Reduced agricultural income eroded and disrupted livelihood activities and households were unable to pay off debt and cover the cost of purchasing more water and livestock feed. Conflict has also affected humanitarian food assistance provision in rural areas. Other barriers to food security included rising food prices and cost of living, declining availability of milk for both consumption and sale, and a likely reduction in agricultural employment opportunities during the Deyr (rainfall) season, which was drier than expected⁵⁶). The desperate realities faced by communities was highlighted by one IDP mother who recounted:

"The father of my children passed away one year ago from Covid-19, when I was pregnant. After three failed rain seasons, I had to leave the village. I want to survive and to save my children. We walked eight days and about 195 km before reaching Baidoa. It's a horrific journey. We slept on the road, exposed to the risk of deadly animals and risks of any harm. We could not bear the hunger, and there was no-one to beg from. I have eight children and four of them are very ill, due to exhaustion, and lack of water and food. My son Yussuf is 8 months old and he cries every day and night for food or milk. I am losing my mind because there is nothing I can do about it. We have been here for weeks and there is no assistance so far. I sometimes go to the town and ask people to give me something, but I fear for my children's lives."

In west and central African countries, respondents interviewed by NRC reiterated reduction in meals as a key coping strategy, some noting they have been dealing with rising food prices for years. In Nigeria the total number of households with inadequate food consumption has now increased to 58 per cent in 2022,⁵⁷ one female IDP said: *“For the past three years food prices have been rising, we simply cannot afford enough food to feed our family.”* A displaced head of household in Burkina Faso told NRC: *“Some family members skip meals. Adults no longer eat breakfast. Sometimes they do not eat lunch.”* In Mali, a female IDP respondent interviewed by NRC highlighted; *“I have a hard time feeding my family as most products became too expensive to buy. Our diet has drastically changed. All the boys in my household have to work to help me cope with the expenses.”*

BURKINA FASO

There were half a million new IDPs in Burkina Faso in 2021 according to the 2022 Global Report on Food Crises⁵⁸. More than half of surveyed IDPs had been displaced for more than one year. IDPs are hosted among local communities or in temporary reception sites and the majority - 62 per cent - of them are children⁵⁹.

Almost all surveyed households (95 per cent) for the 2022 GPFC reported food as a priority need. Among surveyed IDP households who received humanitarian food or cash assistance, only 20–35 per cent had acceptable food consumption. Only 7–9 per cent of women of reproductive age had minimal dietary diversity, and only 2.5–4 per cent of children had access to minimally acceptable diets.

Despite receiving humanitarian assistance, 94 per cent of the IDP population had to reduce the quantity of their daily food consumption, 35 per cent had to consume less preferred food, and 22 per cent had to borrow or beg for food. In some localities of Oudalan (Sahel), 60 per cent of IDP and hosting community households had only one meal per day, and some of them had to go entire days without eating, according to the National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation, Burkina Faso (CONASUR)⁶⁰.

Most displaced populations abandoned their livelihoods including agricultural assets and food stocks, which were often stolen by attackers after their departure. In the far north of Burkina Faso, most displaced households were unable to cultivate due to displacement and the deteriorating security situation⁶¹.

As of October 2021, around 76 per cent of IDPs depended on market purchases to access food⁶². While food supplies were lower than average at the national level, demand for food in markets was above normal because of the increasing number of IDPs. This increased demand contributed to an increase in prices. Staple prices were above their previous year levels and their five-year average in several monitored markets. Future agriculture cycles are also under threat with a 94 per cent deficit in fertiliser supply recorded in June 2022⁶³.

"We need support now, there is a need to diversify the place where food is sold or to transport food to villages so that communities can get basic food supplies. I have been to the store several times to buy food but with no success. I have spent several days waiting to buy food and it is just not available. When food is available the quantities are too small with prices that are too high. The 50 kg bag of rice currently on sale is not enough to feed my family," a male IDP said.



Photo: Enayatullah Azad/NRC

Rising debt accumulation and asset depletion

Across various contexts respondents reported families accumulating further debt. In Nigeria one in four households have resorted to crisis or emergency coping strategies with 52 per cent of households incurring debt.⁶⁴ In Afghanistan one IDP respondent noted how more than half the families in their community have borrowed money just to afford food to survive.

Every respondent interviewed amongst displacement-affected communities said that debt accumulation was a common coping strategy in response to food insecurity. Refugee and host community respondents in Lebanon noted both protracted and worsening coping strategies including having to go into debt just to feed their families, particularly during the recent Ramadan month. One Syrian household in Lebanon noted: *"We always use a lot less quantity of meat and chicken in cooking than before. Sometimes we buy food on debt"*.

Asset depletion to supplement basic food costs among other household essentials was noted as on the rise across almost all contexts surveyed, including the Middle East and North Africa region. One IDP in Iraq responded when asked about the pervasiveness of the act: *“I am one of those people who had to sell some of their assets. I’ve seen people in our village forced to sell their livestock because they can’t afford buying food for them as well”*, while a Syrian refugee in Lebanon highlighted: *“people are selling all their assets; gold, livestock, furniture, anything they can. This is an economic war on us.”*

Respondents also highlighted that this strategy was increasingly being used beyond sustainability or possibility of repayment. In Lebanon one refugee household reported: *“some people are not even able to borrow anymore as they are in so much debt already or because the situation is that bad, so they are going days without eating.”*

In addition, households are being forced to make desperate decisions about which needs to prioritise. Owing to rising food insecurity and pricing, several respondents highlighted how they are no longer able to access other essential services and support. This included healthcare, markets, and livelihoods due to transport costs, as well as education as a result of increased demands on already limited household income. One IDP respondent in Yemen highlighted the desperate decisions families were forced to make: *“The elderly and individuals with chronic diseases are not getting health care services in order to secure food.”*

NIGERIA

In Nigeria, close to 19.5 million people, the highest level ever recorded, are projected to be in Crisis or worse (CH Phase 3 or above) levels of acute food insecurity during the lean season (June– August 2022), including 1.2 million in Emergency (CH Phase 4), if humanitarian interventions are not scaled up⁶⁵.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, food prices have been on the rise for 24 consecutive months, with inflation reaching 20.75 per cent in October 2021⁶⁶. As of January 2022, the cost of the food basket² in MMC/Jere (Borno State) increased by 36 per cent and 73 per cent as compared to 2021 and 2020 respectively. With more than 80 per cent of the vulnerable population to food insecurity depending on agriculture-based livelihoods for food and income, these increased prices make food production critical to fill the gap.

According to the March 2022 Cadre Harmonise (CH) analysis of the 442 areas analysed (comprising of zones and LGAs) across the 21 states 183 were classified in the minimal phase, 224 under pressure, 48 in crisis phase while Gubio LGA in Borno State in the emergency phase of food and nutrition insecurity. In the projected period (June to August 2022), Seventy- eight (78) LGAs /Zones will be in crisis while three (3) LGAs (Abadam, Gubio and Mobbar) in Borno State will be in the emergency phase of food and nutrition insecurity. There is extreme concern on

rising numbers of acute malnutrition, as 1.74 million children under 5yrs expected to suffer in the northeast.

The Northeast of the country is disproportionately affected due to protracted conflict and instability, marginalised and poorly accessible rural areas, and camps with limited to no infrastructure and services, and significant humanitarian access challenges. Internally displaced, refugee, returnee, and host communities affected by displacement are at disproportionate risk of protracted and rising food insecurity, with women, children, elderly, and people with disabilities the most vulnerable groups to the primary and secondary consequences.

Negative coping strategies are widespread and expected to increase as food insecurity rises and communities are pushed to further depths of desperation including meal skipping, debt accumulation, prostitution and survival sex, street begging, theft or stealing, and looting of humanitarian services among others.

Lack of access to land, resources, and conditions of basic survival caused by conflict, protected displacement, and climate change are driving intercommunal tensions including violence between displaced and host communities, farmers, herders, and wider community riots over rising food prices.

Rising Protection Issues

The extreme coping measures being undertaken will have far-reaching and likely intergenerational consequences including the distinct and disproportionate impact on girls and boys, who often represent the greatest avenue for community recovery, self-reliance, durable solutions, social and economic stability, and prosperity.

Rising food insecurity and costs of basic household items may result in increasing rates of early forced marriage and other forms of GBV, disproportionately affecting young and adolescent girls. One Syrian refugee in Lebanon noted: *“parents are forcing their girls to get married since they think that the husband becomes responsible for the expenses, including food”*, with a similar reality reported by IDPs in Iraq: *“many families are forcing their daughters to get married from age 13 because they can’t provide for them.”*

With households increasingly pushed to new depths of vulnerability and food insecurity, respondents frequently highlighted increased rates of children being forced to work to supplement household income to meet rising costs. Many respondents noted an increased removal of children from education due to this requirement to supplement household income. As one respondent in Afghanistan, where an estimated one fifth of families are sending children to work⁶⁷ said: *“We are forced to send our children to work and earn some livelihood. My 8-year-old daughter is working in other homes as domestic help and survive on the food which is given in*

return.” This trend was also noted in Sudan, where NRC staff recently reported observing reduced attendance in school, primarily because children are being forced to work to supplement household income.

AFGHANISTAN

On 15 August, the Taliban took control of Kabul and by extension the vast majority of Afghanistan. What followed, including severe economic measures and asset seizure imposed by western governments, near total economic collapse, significant currency devaluation and a liquidity crunch, on top of protracted internal and cross-border displacement, successive droughts, pre-existing high rates of food insecurity, and the Covid-19 pandemic, has pushed tens of millions of Afghans to the very brink.

As of May 2022, 22.8 million people, half of the population, are projected to be acutely food insecure this year, including 8.7 million at risk of famine-like conditions⁶⁸. Six out of ten families are resorting to crisis coping strategies⁶⁹, which is six times higher than 15 August.

For the first time since the introduction of IPC in the country in 2011, catastrophic conditions (IPC Phase 5) are present for 20,000 people in Ghor due to limited humanitarian access during the March to May period. In the outlook period, acute food insecurity is projected to increase by 60 per cent year-on-year⁷⁰.

27 out of 34 provinces are above the emergency threshold for acute malnutrition. At least 3.9 million people need acute malnutrition treatment services in 2021, including one million children under five with severe acute malnutrition, 2.2 million children under five with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), and 0.7 million pregnant and nursing women with acute malnutrition (Afghanistan Nutrition Cluster, April 2022)

Afghanistan is home to one of the world's most acute internal displacement crises. IDP communities represent one of the most vulnerable groups in Afghanistan with 42 per cent of the IDPs estimated to have a poor and 36 per cent have a borderline food consumption⁷¹ score: they have a very low level of income, far below the cost of a basic food basket, and 75 per cent of the IDP's surveyed in this study reported a high level of debt.

Due to the severity of the conflict and its sudden nature, most of the livelihood assets of IDPs are either looted, sold at very meagre prices, lost, or killed in the case of livestock. IDPs often migrate without the necessary legal documents of identity and school certificates of their children, which hinders their access to support services. They also pay very high prices for transportation to move their families to a safer location. Therefore, in the absence of agriculture and livestock-based livelihoods and with no urban labour skills, they are left with almost zero livelihood options. Their arrival increases the pressure on the local job market,

reducing wages and adding strain on infrastructure, ultimately fuelling tensions and conflict with the local population.

Between August to September corresponds to the post-harvest season when wheat flour prices usually decrease slightly following seasonal trends. However, in 2021, there was a dramatic and sudden price increase for wheat flour (+28 per cent from June to September) and other food commodities. In addition, cooking oil prices increased by 55 per cent compared to the same period last year and more than 80 per cent above the previous 5-year average, contributing to increasing food and non-food prices⁷². As of April 2022, the Agricultural Commodity Price Index is up 29 per cent compared to January 2021. Maize and wheat prices are 48 per cent and 60 per cent higher respectively, compared to January 2021, while rice prices are about 17 per cent lower.

Protracted food insecurity is set to threaten tens of millions in Afghanistan as a result of low access to agricultural inputs (seeds and fertilisers in particular) which is creating major constraints for farmers. In a recent IPC Survey⁷³ only 24 per cent of farmers had access to sufficient noncertified seeds during the last wheat cultivation season, and only 8 per cent certified seeds. For the upcoming wheat cultivation season, only 31 per cent and 8 per cent respectively, said they had access to the same type of seeds. The price of fertiliser increased by 25-30 per cent compared to the same period last year.

In Yemen an estimated 17.4 million people are currently experiencing food insecurity, which is expected to rise to over 19 million people (in IPC Phase 3 or above) by the end of 2022, making it one of the world's largest food crises. This in turn is driving a child protection crisis and likely condemning entire communities to decades of instability. In 2021, an estimated two million children were out-of-school. This year continued rises in food prices and limited availability is pushing more households to the brink and resulting in an increase in children dropping out-of-school. Displaced families are most affected as many feel they have no choice but to send their children to look for food in markets and bring water to the family. In Yemen, an IDP respondent warned, *"Girls' and boys' education will be neglected as they will be out of school, which put them at further risk of exploitation by the conflicting parties."*

In Mali, a similar reality is faced by displaced households with one respondent highlighting that: *"children aged between 12 and 17 are required to work to ensure their family survives and can afford enough food to feed themselves"*.

Possible rise in domestic violence

Respondents across a number of surveyed contexts also highlighted an increase of intra-household tensions and violence including GBV as a result of the reduced availability of basic food items, income, and other basic household needs. In Iraq one

male IDP noted: *“families have been arguing more and causing tension between each other, especially between the wife and her husband.”* A female IDP in Afghanistan highlighted how she witnessed a mother being beaten by her son due to her inability to cover family expenses and other increasing violence and abuse inside the household as a result of rising costs.

Existing tensions could become further compounded and fuel conflict and instability

Food insecurity was identified across Central and West Africa, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia as a driver and compounding factor of community tension and conflict. This was often cited by respondents in affected populations across all regions. Many reported increased tension, violence, and insecurity within their respective communities with rising food insecurity as a major contributing factor.

The situation in Lebanon is particularly concerning as tensions are increasing between refugee and host communities compounded by rapid economic deterioration, political instability, the collapse of many public services and systems, and worsening food insecurity now exacerbated by the crisis in Ukraine. Xenophobia against refugees, in particular Syrians, has grown in intensity as the Lebanese population become increasingly protective over resources and scarce work opportunities. This may result in further rapid deterioration and in a surge in localised violence as different actors compete over resources and pre-existing tensions. One male Syrian refugee said: *“Tensions are rising quickly in the streets. The young men are not working, and they sit all day and fight each other. It is becoming dangerous.”*

Crime, violence, and community-wide instability was reported across contexts including theft, physical abuse, and exploitation, in addition to hijacking and kidnapping. In Yemen and Afghanistan, it was highlighted how food insecurity can drive displaced people to join armed groups and makes them vulnerable to forced recruitment by armed groups and conflict parties, including children required to supplement household income.



Photo: Tom Peyre-Costa/NRC

Food insecurity may fuel further displacement - within and across borders

In many contexts, economic devastation contributing to food insecurity is increasingly becoming a driver of displacement. While in Burkina Faso, the main factor fuelling displacement is recognised as insecurity and the conduct of non-state armed groups, the consequences for food insecurity are significant. Food insecurity in many localities is a major contributing factor in Burkina Faso, especially in fragile areas where populations cannot access food, fields, or markets.

In April 2021, the National Trade Minister declared that some 450,000 hectares are currently abandoned in the country due to instability, leading to a deficit in cereal production of 461,000 tonnes and resulting in an overreliance on imports and international assistance⁷⁴. As of June 2022, national cereal production has fallen by about 10 per cent⁷⁵ while measures taken by authorities to restrict grain exports have significantly disrupted cross-border flows.

Testimonies compiled of households who have fled Mansilla in the Yagha Province, highlight a direct link between the inability to feed one's family, and the decision to leave despite the risks of being arrested or worse by armed groups encircling the town. Respondents who fled noted extreme food shortages and limited dietary diversity including meals prepared based of leaves, water and salt, a lack of functioning or accessible markets, and violence from and confiscation of food items by armed groups. One female IDP in Burkina Faso told NRC, *“Whatever happens on the road, we have to take our chances. If the choice is dying on the way, or dying of hunger in Mansilla, it is better to at least die trying to get out.”*

In Yemen, further rates of internal displacement are predicted as a result of worsening food insecurity across the country ⁷⁶among other and interrelated factors. Rising food prices and reduced availability coupled with the suspension of civil servant salaries and broader economic issues will likely cause the displacement of individuals and households from urban areas to rural locations, often the area of origin for some. While the full scale of likely displacement is not yet known, this trend has already been observed in Yemen over the last seven years when conflict, insecurity, and food prices have increased alongside to diminished food availability. One male IDP in Sanaa, northern Yemen, noted:

“As a result of a range of reasons such as being unable to pay home rent, taking a lot of debt, and being unable to provide my households members with basic needs like food, we will relocate to the countryside. At least there we will be able to reduce our expenditures and spending and allocate more money for food. We will be able to get free water regardless of water shortages. Also, we will be able to get free wood for cooking. We will live in our old houses for free - without rent.”

YEMEN

As a result of the seven-year conflict, millions of people in Yemen suffer one of the worst and most protracted global food and humanitarian crises. Today, more than 17.4 million Yemenis are food insecure⁷⁷, an increase of more than 1.2 million from 2021. This figure is projected to rise to over 19 million people (IPC Phase 3 or above) between June and December 2022 – including 7.1 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) level. The number of people in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) level is projected to increase five-fold to 161,000 compared to the January-May 2022 estimate⁷⁸.

Across Yemen, 2.2 million children are currently acutely malnourished, including more than half a million children facing severe acute malnutrition. In addition, around 1.3 million pregnant or lactating women are acutely malnourished. According to the latest WFP data covering the month of December 2021⁷⁹, food security outcomes in Yemen plateaued at very high levels in December 2021 with 47 per cent of Yemeni households nationwide reporting inadequate food consumption in December, significantly above the “very high” threshold of 40 per cent.”

Conflict remains a strong driver of food insecurity and malnutrition. Restrictions on the entry of commodities into Hodeidah Port have led to severe fuel shortages and a concomitant further increase in the price of food and essential non-food items. Furthermore, the conflict has led to increased and protracted displacement with internal displacement rates recorded at more than 4.3 million Yemenis while the country is home to more than 95,000 refugees and asylum-seekers⁸⁰.

Food insecurity has a disproportionate and negative impact on IDPs, returnees and asylum seekers who have limited or no access to income generation, self-

sufficiency, and self-reliance opportunities; host communities who live in hard-to-reach locations and all classes of women, girls, and boys. This combined with ongoing conflict and a lack of other services including clean water, sanitation and hygiene service led to high rates of malnutrition and the adoption of extreme negative coping strategies. Displaced families are four times more at risk of being in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) levels than other Yemenis. Over 67 per cent of IDPs live in districts classified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) (UNHCR February 2021, IPC December 2020) levels. In the last 12 months, displaced communities and NRC staff have reported a significant increase in the adoption of negative coping strategies as a result of rising food insecurity and other drivers including meal skipping, poor dietary diversity, debt accumulation, asset depletion, reduced or no access to other essential services like healthcare, child labour, early forced marriage, and the removal of children from education.

"We have been suffering since the beginning of the war in 2014. But last year we had the most severe suffering for many families, including when it comes to having enough food to eat. The war, blockade, currency devaluation and increasing food prices have made everything impossible," a female IDP told NRC.

In Sudan, respondents and NRC staff anticipate a stronger likelihood of internal displacement in 2022 and beyond if conditions, including the availability and purchasing power for food, continue to deteriorate, although comprehensive data is needed. Increasing tension and violence is being recorded between displaced and host communities due to dwindling resources such as food items, electricity, and other household essentials. It is not envisaged that high rates of cross-border displacement will occur in the coming months as a result of food insecurity due to the high costs and risks associated.

In Lebanon, significantly worsening economic, political, and social conditions are driving refugees and Lebanese communities to the brink. Given the plethora of interrelated crises it is difficult to determine a singular factor driving displacement and migration inside and outside of Lebanon's borders. However, the rapid and enormous increase in the prices of basic food items, historic currency devaluation and dwindling purchasing power over the last three years alone is a major contributing factor. Importantly, this rapid deterioration occurred prior to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine which threatens further food and agricultural input insecurity in the coming months.⁸¹

Conditions for Syrian refugees, including the limited availability of or purchasing power for food and the many dire consequences are placing households in an impossible situation with one refugee highlighting that; *"If conditions get worse, we might have to go back to Syria. The situation there has not improved yet, but at least I would be close to my relatives that can support me whenever I need them and it's not expensive living in our village back there. We can't go abroad like many people go to*

Europe because we don't have money.” The UN and several humanitarian agencies and human rights groups have long maintained that Syria is not safe for return.⁸²

Respondents in Iraq noted how the challenging conditions, particularly inside camps, are driving people to seek protection across borders with people opting to attempt travel to Europe via the use of illegal smugglers.

In Afghanistan, food security was repeatedly identified by respondents as a major contributing factor to both internal and cross-border displacement owing to and further compounding insecurity and the dire economic situation. One IDP male noted that *“many people have left for Pakistan and Iran despite it being very dangerous. If the conditions get worse or continue the same, and I cannot feed my family, we will have to relocate to other countries too - like Iran or Pakistan”*.

Displacement must be fully recognised as both a current and near future risk and consequence of the worsening food security situation globally, now compounded further by the Ukraine crisis and the significant disruption to global food systems and humanitarian food assistance. Without immediate and adequate intervention, preparedness and response measures taken by national and international actors, further outlined below under recommendations, tens of millions of people risk displacement and the many associated extreme consequences. Additionally, tens of millions of people already displaced risk being plunged into new depths of vulnerability with undoubted far-reaching consequences.



Photo: Ingebjørg Kårstad/NRC

DURABLE SOLUTIONS FURTHER OUT OF REACH

Consequences of rising food insecurity globally, disproportionately affecting communities affected by conflict and displacement, is and will continue to exacerbate insecurity, suffering, and displacement threatening the realisation of durable solutions for millions of refugees and IDPs.

It is critical to acknowledge the broader challenges associated with durable solutions across many displacement crises such as protracted conflict and instability preventing safe, voluntary, and dignified returns, limited or absent diplomatic solutions to protracted conflicts, policy barriers to local integration, and the absence of international responsibility, including record low levels of resettlement. Nevertheless, worsening food insecurity for displacement affected communities represents a major compounding factor. Potentially worsening coping strategies paired with limited adaptation capacity to absorb further household shocks and stresses undermine the basic conditions needed to support self-reliance, and ultimately durable solutions to displacement.

DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO DISPLACEMENT

For IDPs a durable solution refers to one of the following outcomes: sustainable reintegration at the place of origin (return); sustainable local integration in areas where IDPs take refuge (local integration); or sustainable integration in another part of the country (settlement elsewhere in the country). A durable solution is achieved when IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and such persons can enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement. IDPs who have achieved a durable solution enjoy, without discrimination, an adequate standard of living, including at a minimum shelter, health care, food, water, and other means of survival.

For refugees, durable solutions to displacement refers to one of the following outcomes: voluntary repatriation when safe to do so; local integration; and resettlement to a third country. Central to durable solutions to cross-border displacement, as with internal displacement, is access to self-reliance which UNCHR defines as the economic and social ability of the individual refugee, household, or community to meet essential needs in a sustainable manner and with dignity. This includes access to adequate food, dietary diversity, and income generation.

See IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and the 1951 Refugee Convention

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Even prior to the war in Ukraine, WFP warned ⁸³that 2022 would be a year of ‘*unprecedented hunger*’ with the devastating intersection of conflict, climate change, Covid-19, and rising costs over successive years. Now with further disruption to global food systems, tens of millions of people affected by conflict and displacement were and remain acutely food insecure.⁸⁴ Worsening global food insecurity and inadequate international responses to some of the world's most complex and extreme crises may push close to 50 million people closer to famine,⁸⁵ the majority of whom are living in states affected by conflict, instability, and displacement. The war in Ukraine and deepening conflict and humanitarian crisis is expected to be a major compounding factor that has exposed the vulnerability of global food systems to shocks and stresses and will likely have a severe knock-on impact on the lives of already vulnerable displaced communities.

Refugees and internally displaced communities with whom NRC spoke with across 11 countries and complex crises described in harrowing detail the worsening realities they face as a result of rising food insecurity and the desperate decisions they are already being forced to make. Widespread negative coping strategies will have far reaching and potentially intergenerational consequences as tens of millions are pushed to new points of desperation and further away from self-reliance and any prospect of durable solutions. Worst yet, the potential for intensified instability and conflict and new and protracted displacement is growing every day that the international community fails to address both the drivers of conflict and conditions perpetuating an unprecedented hunger crisis.

Despite increased evidence of a looming disaster, the global response has thus far been inadequate. The shape of the world in the coming two years and the survival of tens of millions already affected by conflict, displacement, and widespread food insecurity, will be defined by the immediate actions or lack of action taken by the international community. The armed conflict in Ukraine and rapidly evolving global food system crisis may represent one challenge too many for millions displaced already on the brink.

Decision-makers must act immediately, comprehensively, and collaboratively to prevent famine, crisis level food insecurity, and large-scale loss of life and suffering. Based on perspectives collected from IDPs, refugees, asylum seekers, as well as field practitioners confronting these looming realities, NRC offers the following recommendations to national governments, donors, international organisations and relevant policymakers:

All states, particularly UNSC members:

- Intensify and sustain diplomatic and multilateral efforts to address the root causes of food insecurity, including newly emerged and protracted conflict, through the UNSC, other multilateral fora, and direct bilateral diplomatic engagement. Diplomatic solutions represent the only sustainable solution to conflict, displacement, and conflict driven food insecurity, including in Ukraine.
- Ensure the full implementation and assess adherence to UNSC Resolutions 2417 (2018) and 2573 (2021). Sustained and systematic monitoring of food insecurity and the risk of famine in conflict affected states, violations of international humanitarian law including denial of access, the use of hunger as a weapon, attacks on or destruction of civilian infrastructure including, but not limited to, food systems infrastructure, and attacks on civilians, must be prioritised by UNSC Members including timely and adequate response and accountability measures.
- Intensify and sustain concerted diplomacy and collective action on rights-based trade, economic, climate, food systems, and social protection policies addressing at-risks groups like communities affected by conflict and displacement. They must work to prevent individualistic and restrictive trade measures that may cause further global food system disruption and drive tens of millions of new people into acute food insecurity.
- Avoid unnecessary food protectionism and individualistic trade policies on essential goods. States must prioritise a collective and collaborative approach in response to mounting global food insecurity and supply chain disruptions including dialogue and global market transparency and the G-20's Agricultural Market Information System.
- With the support of the UN system, explore immediate and effective avenues to address access, cost, and food import limitations for the world's most food insecure and import dependent states. This could include the FAO proposed Food Import Financing Facility (FIFF)⁸⁶ or alternative collective approaches which could enable vulnerable countries to mitigate long-lasting impacts on their agri-food systems and reduce future needs for emergency assistance.
- Ensure humanitarian assistance is exempt from any export bans, extraordinary taxes and duties imposed by states to prevent a further deterioration of food insecurity and ensure humanitarian actors can prevent and respond to the most affected populations across the world's most complex crises.
- Ensure humanitarian assistance is exempted from all restrictive measures imposed by states, including counter terror legislation or sanctions, to facilitate the delivery of impartial and principled humanitarian assistance as stipulated under international humanitarian law.
- Ensure the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in any income generation and livelihoods activities by promoting an enabling policy environment to access safe and decent work.

Donors, UN agencies, humanitarian, and development actors, including international financial institutions (IFIs):

- Immediately prioritise strengthening localised agri-food systems in fragile contexts including climate and conflict-smart, adaptive, and resilient systems, and increased and sustained access for displacement affected populations.
- Prioritise anticipatory action and robust and collaborative scenario planning across the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus. This should work towards ensuring the provision of immediate assistance for food insecure and displaced populations in addition to targeted assistance for communities at-risk of further consequences of food insecurity, to mitigate against compounding factors and mounting humanitarian need.
- Immediately prioritise refugee and IDP inclusion in either existing or expanded social protection programming or new standalone social protection programming. This should aim to mitigate as much as possible the primary and secondary consequences of rising food insecurity and other displacement associated consequences including widespread negative coping strategies.
- Ensure that refugees and IDPs have access to documentation, adequate housing, and, where relevant or possible, land for subsistence and profit agriculture to prevent statelessness, reduce vulnerability to shocks and stresses, aid dependence, and promote recovery and self-reliance.
- Alongside responding to emergency needs, simultaneously prioritise the strengthening of national and local food systems. This should include conducting rapid and comprehensive food system and market assessments, collective multi-sector planning and response, and the mobilisation of funding, resource, and expertise support to build food system and community resilience, reduce humanitarian needs over time and enable avenues for sustainable solutions to hunger, malnutrition and secondary consequences.

Donors and humanitarian actors:

- Prioritise partnerships with, investment in, and the leadership of national NGOs and civil society actors in response to both emergency food needs and the strengthening of and prevention of collapse of localised and national food systems in full alignment with Grand Bargain commitments, sustainability, and long-term solutions to food insecurity.

Donor governments:

- Refrain from any diversion of funding and cutting resources to humanitarian crises as a result of the Ukraine crisis and any domestic refugee programming costs.
- Immediately ensure the full funding of humanitarian response plans and ensure pledges are delivered to enable national and international actors to mitigate and response to the impact of rising food insecurity and other interrelated factors as soon as possible.

- Increase and sustain quality, flexible, and multi-year funding in response to both immediate and rising food insecurity needs and the number of secondary consequences.
- Prioritise access to livelihoods, income generation and livelihoods reactivation for displaced communities in both the onset of crises and protracted crises through financial and resource supports for local and national labour markets and through diplomatic and multilateral engagement on the rights of refugees and IDPs.
- Increase financial, resource, and technical expertise supports, including extension services, to small-scale farmers and food producers across food insecure crises contexts. This should include conflict and climate sensitive and sustainable agriculture practices, such as agroecology and renewable energy for agricultural production.

Humanitarian country teams:

- Strengthen and prioritise coordination across agencies, clusters, and sectors toward a more holistic response to food insecurity and displacement affected populations and the number of secondary consequences.
- Scale up investment in improving humanitarian access in hard-to-reach communities and areas, including by conducting more incident and barrier mapping and promoting collective action to strengthen access negotiations.
- Prioritise rapid, systematic and cross-agency, cluster, and sector, data collection and sharing on the impact of rising food insecurity on displaced communities toward preventative and response programming.
- Prioritise advocacy and engagement with states, donors, the World Bank, regional and global food system actors, including commodity exchanges, to avoid speculation on essential food commodities and to secure stable supply of food and essential food system inputs.
- Support pragmatic measures to facilitate humanitarian, development, and peace nexus coordination and collective action in response to both immediate emergency needs and longer-term efforts to strengthen national and localised food systems.

Endnotes

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¹⁰ WFPs recent *Global Food Crisis report 2022*, *This increase must be interpreted with care, given that it can be attributed to both a worsening acute food insecurity situation and a substantial (22 percent) expansion in the population analysed between 2020 and 2021. However, even when considering the share of the analysed population in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) or equivalent, the proportion of the population in these phases has increased since 2020*” (GRFC 2022)

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³¹ For refugees, despite clear legal guidance and obligations (⁽¹⁾ UDHR Article 23, ICESCR Article 6 and 7, International Refugee Convention Article 17,18, and 19), an estimated [70% of refugees](#) live in countries with restricted rights to work, close to 70 per cent live in situations with limitations on freedom of movement (likely higher due to COVID-19), and close to 50 per cent of refugees live in contexts with restrictions on access to bank accounts. IDP livelihood access barriers and the impact on self-reliance outcomes and durable solutions are also [documented](#) across multiple complex crises.

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