



World Food
Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

WFP - saving lives, preventing famine

A basic guide to the work of the world's largest humanitarian organization as we face down a global hunger crisis

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The World Food Programme (WFP) has issued an urgent warning that 45 million people are teetering on the very edge of famine in 43 countries, with the slightest shock likely to push them over the precipice. Globally, up to 811 million people are chronically hungry, with 283 million acutely food insecure.

Against this backdrop, WFP is aiming to target 140 million people in 2021. This document outlines the general context and provides a snapshot of WFP's work across several areas.

A hunger crisis

The world is facing a seismic crisis, as “four Cs” combine to plunge millions of people closer to the brink:

- **conflict**, which is still the single biggest driver of hunger, with 60 percent of the world's hungry living in conflict-affected areas;
- **climate** crises, with shocks and stressors destroying lives, crops and livelihoods, and undermining people's ability to feed themselves, having displaced 30 million from their homes globally in 2020;
- economic consequences of **COVID-19**, which are driving acute hunger to record levels; and
- the rising **cost** of reaching people, as the strains on global supply chains lead to a ten-year high in food and fuel prices.

WFP is undertaking the biggest operation in its history, targeting 140 million people in 2021. With sufficient funding and access, WFP has the expertise and footprint to provide all those who risk famine with life-saving food and nutritional assistance. Working with a large network of partner organizations, WFP also supports communities and nations with solutions that promote self-reliance and reduce hunger. Saving lives and changing lives.

WFP IS UNIQUELY PLACED TO RESPOND

WFP and its partners are uniquely placed to meet the huge challenges posed by this crisis.

As the world's largest organization fighting hunger, we save lives in emergencies and use food assistance to help build peace, stability and prosperity for people recovering

from conflicts, disasters and the devastating effects of climate change. Our work in using food as a pathway to peace led to WFP being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020.

We are a first responder in emergencies, providing food and other support to survivors of conflicts, droughts, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes and, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. We further work with governments, communities and households to break persistent cycles of hunger and malnutrition, and to make them more resilient to disasters.

In short, we have response systems and processes in place and the expertise to ramp up operations once funding is made available.

BENEFICIARIES ARE THE PRIORITY

WFP's most important partners are the people we serve across more than 80 countries. In 2020 we assisted 116 million people, more than 80 percent of whom were women and children. To reach them, each day WFP has up to 5,600 trucks, 30 ships and 100 planes on the move, delivering food and other assistance through our 21,000-plus staff.

HOW WE MEASURE WHO IS HUNGRY

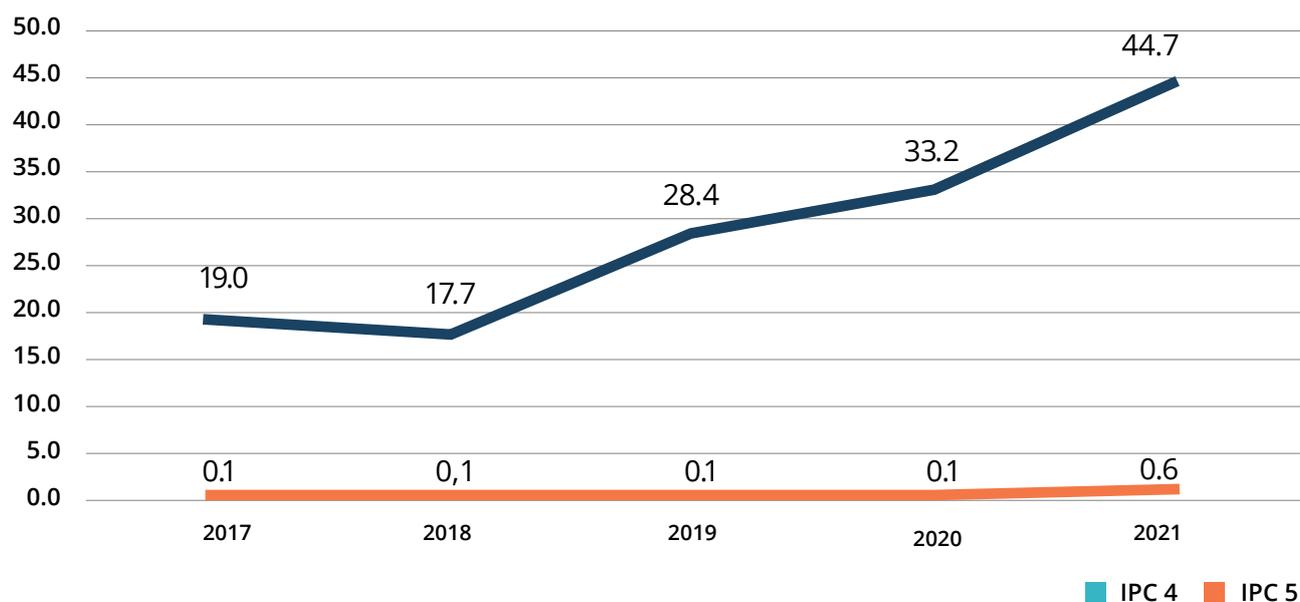
We measure hunger levels using what is known as the [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#), where IPC 4 indicates people are at emergency levels of food insecurity, and IPC 5 signals catastrophe levels where famine is present and people are already dying from starvation. WFP's [HungerMap LIVE](#) monitors food security in more than 90 countries and issues predictions for places where data is limited.

FAMINE IS LOOMING

45 million people are now teetering on the edge in 43 countries, and the slightest shock will push them over into famine. This number has risen from 27 million in 2019. Without immediate emergency food assistance, these people will face starvation. The cost of inaction will inevitably be measured in terms of lives lost.

Famine also has a long-term economic impact, from lost productivity to spiking health care costs – not to mention the incalculable cost of losing the human potential of whole generations.

ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY IN 43 IPC 4+ COUNTRIES (MILLION PEOPLE)



THE TABLE BELOW ILLUSTRATES COUNTRIES THAT HAVE MORE THAN ONE MILLION ACUTE FOOD INSECURE PEOPLE IN EMERGENCY (IPC 4) AS WELL AS COUNTRIES WITH POPULATIONS IN CATASTROPHE (IPC 5), THE MOST SEVERE CATEGORY.

COUNTRY	POPULATION IN IPC 4+
Afghanistan	8,700,000
Democratic Republic of the Congo	6,700,000
Yemen	5,100,000
Ethiopia	4,700,000
Sudan	2,700,000
South Sudan	2,500,000
Venezuela	2,300,000
Haiti	1,300,000
Syria	1,300,000
Madagascar	500,000

The numbers are based on the IPC (or equivalent) estimated peak for 2021, or latest peak available.

AT THE FOREFRONT OF TACKLING EMERGENCIES

WFP is working with partners to fend off the threat of famine that looms for 45 million people, chiefly through life-saving food and nutrition assistance. Across all of our programme activities, we aim to directly reach 140 million.

About two-thirds of WFP's life-saving food assistance already goes to people facing severe food crises, caused mostly by conflict. We are currently tackling eight large-scale emergencies: in Afghanistan, Central Sahel, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen, where the effects of conflict have been compounded by factors such as COVID-19, economic slumps, price surges and the effects of climate change.

SUPPLY CHAIN IS THE BACKBONE OF OUR OPERATIONS

Our [supply chain](#) work involves operational planning, procurement, quality control, transport, storage and tracking, necessary to ensure life-saving food assistance is delivered promptly and efficiently. WFP works with local transporters and logistics companies, who carry more than 90 percent of WFP's food assistance to its final destination, supporting the economies of the countries we operate in.

In 2020, WFP procured 3.3 million metric tons of food. 55 percent of this was procured in advance through our Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF), an advance financing mechanism that allows us to buy food and pre-position it strategically in hubs around the world, ready to be sent to our country operations when most needed. This reduces delivery times and means food can be bought while market prices are better and moved when transport conditions are favourable. In 2020, we delivered 1.8 million metric tons of food (for a total food value of US\$827 million) to 49 countries through the GCMF.

**900K
MT FOOD** WFP also received
900,000 metric tons
of food in the form of
in-kind donations



More than 80 percent of the food WFP purchases is bought from developing countries, with a focus on buying within the countries or regions where WFP operates, in order to support local economies, minimize transport costs and reduce environmental footprint.



A woman carries supplies from a WFP distribution in Aleppo, Syria. WFP/Khudr Alissa



Food is unloaded from a WFP helicopter in Mansila, Burkina Faso. WFP/Esther Ouoba

WE DELIVER LIFE-SAVING ASSISTANCE

After a disaster, during lean seasons, or in conflict or displacement situations, WFP's [food assistance](#) reaches people who cannot access enough food to meet their needs.

The WFP food basket is tailored to local preferences, demographic profile, activity levels, climatic conditions, local coping capacity and existing levels of malnutrition and disease. In 2020, WFP distributed 4.2 million metric tons of food.

WE USE CASH TRANSFERS TO EMPOWER PEOPLE

Where market conditions allow it, [cash transfers](#) empower people to buy food and other items to address their essential needs, while helping boost markets caught in economic downturns. In 2020, WFP transferred US\$2.1 billion to 38.4 million people in 67 countries. We are the largest cash provider in the humanitarian community. We give money to people because it gives them choice and access to fresh foods, and gives a boost to local economies. We put cash in the hands of women. Our monitoring shows that most of it is spent on food, with the balance spent on other essential needs.

Cash transfers include physical bank notes as well as e-money or mobile money, distributed through debit cards or value vouchers via mobile phone, which are redeemable at locally contracted shops. WFP works with partners to monitor our cash distributions and the results of this form of assistance. We also help make sure that cash transfers provided through governments' social welfare programmes are well-managed and reach the right people.

WE ADDRESS ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION TO HELP END HUNGER

Sustainable development is only possible where malnutrition is eradicated and future generations can flourish.

WFP works with partners to [address all forms of malnutrition](#), including vitamin and mineral deficiencies, and overweight and obesity. We provide specialized nutritious foods and other support to address malnutrition from the earliest stages through programmes targeting the first 1,000 days from conception to a child's second birthday. We also provide access to healthy diets, targeting young children, pregnant and breastfeeding women and people living with HIV.



Southern Madagascar has been suffering from its most acute drought in four decades. WFP/Tsiory Andriantsoarana

WE SUPPORT SCHOOL FEEDING AS AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

[School meals](#) increase school attendance and improve children's nutrition and health, while also increasing access to a potentially life-changing education. Investing in the health, skills, knowledge, experience and habits of children – their 'human capital' – is among the most effective and productive investments that countries can make in creating a more sustainable future. We support nations to put in place home-grown school feeding by procuring food for nutritious school meals from smallholder farmers, increasing their incomes and boosting local economies. WFP is the largest humanitarian organization implementing school feeding. Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP was providing school meals or snacks to over 17 million schoolchildren, 50 percent of whom were girls. Restoring school meals, after interruptions due to the pandemic, is an urgent priority for WFP.

WE HELP PEOPLE OFFSET THE WORST EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The [climate crisis](#) has joined conflict as a main root cause of famine. WFP deploys Forecast-based Financing to provide cash to vulnerable families, allowing them to buy food, reinforce their homes and take other steps to build resilience ahead of climate disasters. Another

measure involves providing food and cash to households as they engage in activities to restore land such as tree-planting and irrigation.

The effects of the crisis are felt in countries such as drought-afflicted Madagascar, where 1.3 million people are suffering from hunger and nearly 28,000 are in "famine-like conditions" (IPC 5) as crops fail repeatedly – a number expected to double by the end of the year.

WE SUPPORT SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

[Smallholder farmers](#) produce most of the world's food but are also prey to various threats. We protect farmers from the worst effects of climate change by providing insurance in return for work in areas such as land development and road building, which increases both their crop production and access to markets. The private-sector focused [Farm to Market Alliance](#) also connects smallholders to markets and helps them diversify their crops and increase their business potential, farming practices and post-harvest loss management. Furthermore, to meet our own programme requirements in 2020, WFP procured 110,486 metric tons of food commodities valued at US\$49 million from smallholder farmers, a 16 percent increase in tonnage compared with 2019.

WE BUILD RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS AND OTHER THREATS

WFP builds [resilience for food security and nutrition](#), using half a century of experience and learning. We have invested in early-warning and preparedness systems that allow governments to prevent crises or respond quickly when they happen. We are helping to develop national capacities to manage disaster risk through approaches such as weather-risk insurance. Our expertise includes vulnerability analysis and mapping, as well as support to social protection systems, including cash transfers.

INNOVATION IS OUR ALLY

We deploy [bold new tools and approaches](#) across our operations to help address hunger, from helping people threatened by hunger to grow their own food in harsh environments through hydroponics, to using drones to monitor the impact of climate change. We use blockchain technology to secure cash transfers, and deploy airdrops and all-terrain amphibious vehicles to reach inaccessible areas. WFP's Munich-based Innovation Accelerator was launched in 2015 to pilot new solutions and scale promising innovations to disrupt hunger. Since then, it has supported more than 80 projects around the world, with 14 innovations scaling up to reach 3.7 million

people. For example, the H2Grow project, which allows vulnerable communities to grow food with no soil and very little water through hydroponic technology, has so far benefited more than 26,500 people in nine countries.

WE SERVE THE WIDER HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- **Air assets**
Where conflict is rife and road networks destroyed, access to communities can prove a major obstacle. Through our [UN Humanitarian Air-Service \(UNHAS\)](#) we provide critical access for our staff and for other humanitarian agencies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we reduced the risk to our staff and others through increased remote needs assessments and web surveys. UNHAS is currently managing a fleet of more than 100 aircraft, serving 400 destinations across 25 countries. In 2020, a total of 250,000 passengers were transported.
- **Storage solutions**
Managed by WFP, the [United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot \(UNHRD\)](#) is a global network of hubs that procures, stores and rapidly transports emergency supplies for the humanitarian community. UNHRD enables humanitarian actors to pre-position and stockpile relief items and support equipment



Crops produced in the hydroponic garden at Purity's school in Zambia are used for school meals and the surplus is sold to the community. WFP/Andy Higgins

for swift delivery in emergency situations. UNHRD is currently working with 98 UN, NGO and government partners. During 2020, they dispatched 80,000 m3 of supplies through 1,700 consignments to 164 countries.

- **Logistics Services**

The WFP-led [Logistics Cluster](#) is a coordination mechanism activated to ensure an efficient and effective emergency response. It comprises a group of humanitarian actors committed to commonly addressing needs in humanitarian contexts, by ensuring coordination, information management, and, where necessary, facilitating access to logistics services.

- **Emergency Telecommunication Services**

In times of emergencies, communications services can save lives. They support the delivery of assistance and ensure that people can access information, receive assistance, contact loved ones and make informed decisions. For over a decade the [Emergency Telecommunications Cluster \(ETC\)](#) – led globally by WFP – has provided prompt, predictable and effective telecommunications services to humanitarians responding to crises.

HOW WE ARE FUNDED

[Our funding is 100 percent voluntary](#), chiefly through governments but also corporations and individuals. In 2020, we raised a record US\$8.4 billion, but this was still well short of the US\$13.7 billion needed to meet the needs of all the people we targeted for assistance that year. As we rely entirely on voluntary contributions, the timing of funding is critical in allowing us to provide assistance as quickly as possible to vulnerable people, most of whom are women and children. Where contributions for activities are not confirmed but the assistance is required immediately, WFP uses internal advance financing to provide our operations with

corporate funding that can then be repaid when the donation is received. In 2020, a total US\$1.4 billion was provided to 57 country offices, giving them access to funds an average of 54 days before contributions were confirmed, thus allowing them to respond to needs more quickly.

WE ARE FULLY ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT

The trust of our donors, partners and supporters is critical to WFP's work. Our commitment to transparency is reflected in our top ranking among the 1,360 organizations who are members of the [International Aid Transparency Initiative](#). We continue to earn trust through our public reporting and internal oversight mechanisms. WFP's [Annual Performance Report](#) details how WFP uses the resources entrusted to us, consistent with our mandate and in support of expected results. We publish financial reports – the [Annual Accounts](#) – that are audited by the auditor general of a state member of the UN or FAO. Notably, we were the first UN system organization to implement International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and full accrual accounting, in 2008. The [Office of the Inspector General](#) of WFP provides objective and independent assurance and oversight to protect the integrity, efficiency and effectiveness of WFP's programmes and operations, detecting and deterring fraud, waste and abuse, through internal audit, advisory services, inspections and investigations. The [Office of Evaluation](#) conducts evaluations of WFP's work and issues reports that are publicly available in the [Evaluation Library](#). See also: [Performance Management and Accountability](#)

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