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Joint statement of the Global Food Security, Health, Nutrition, and WASH Clusters

Famine and Food Crises

Urgent and coordinated action needed to avert wide-scale catastrophe

23 September 2021

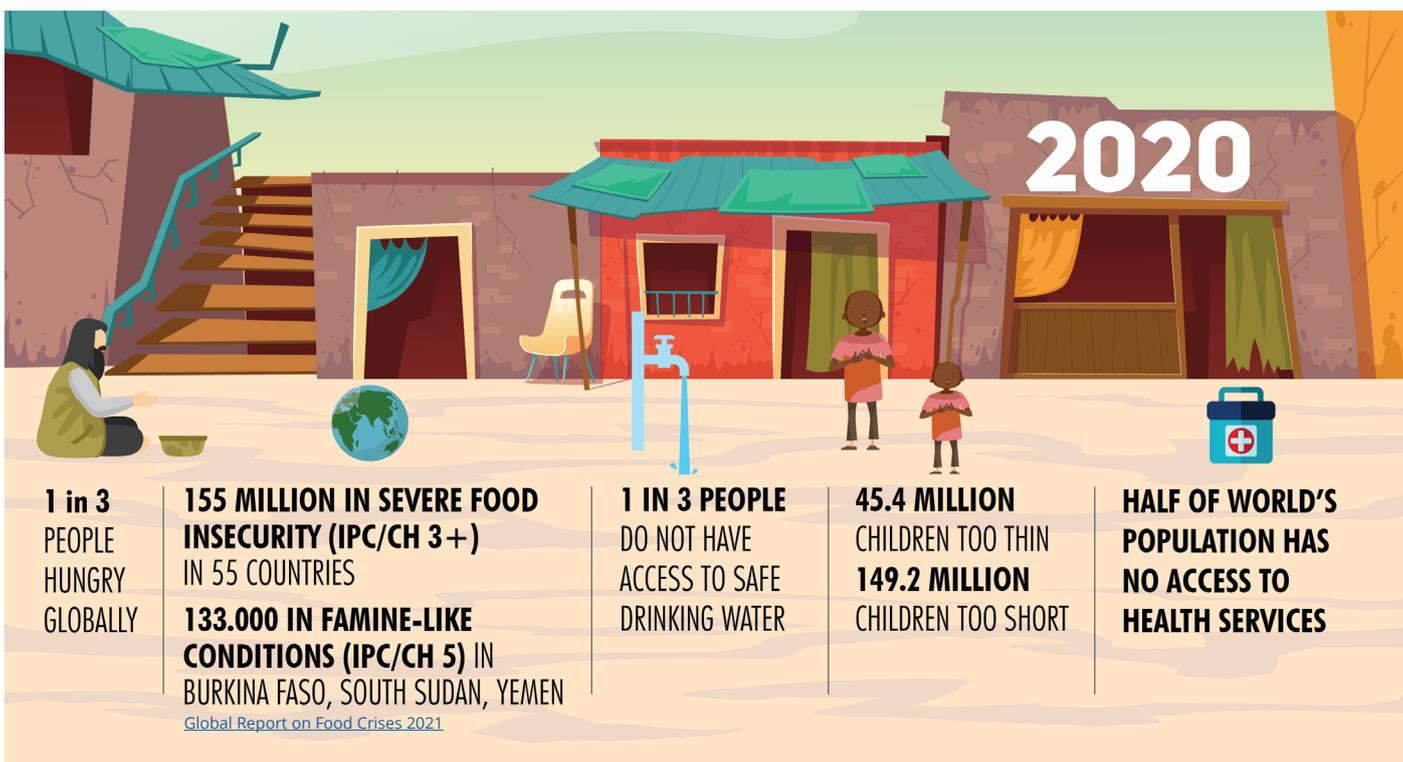
In 2021, 41 million people across 43 countries are at imminent risk of famine¹ without urgent funding and humanitarian access - a drastic rise from 27 million in 2019. The global hunger crisis is clearly reaching a tipping point, and the window to avert famine and devastatingly high levels of acute hunger in multiple countries is closing fast. Among the most at risk are 584,000 people facing famine-like conditions in **Ethiopia, Madagascar, South Sudan and Yemen**², with **Nigeria and Burkina Faso** also of extreme concern. Just one more shock could push them over the edge.

Multiple factors are driving today's levels of severe hunger and malnutrition, primarily protracted armed conflicts, climate change, and economic shocks exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Water scarcity and extreme weather such as droughts and floods wreak havoc on vulnerable lives and livelihoods, while those caught in conflict often cannot access food, water or medicine. In these conditions, children under five years of age and pregnant and lactating women are at particularly high risk, especially those already in poor health.

Urgent action and increased investments are needed now to prevent widespread malnutrition, starvation and death. We know what happens when the international community responds too late: waiting until [famine has been declared](#) to scale up the response imperils millions already facing a crisis. The 28 million people globally in Emergency food insecurity (IPC 4) are already on the cusp of catastrophe. Without adequate food, health and nutrition services, safe water and sanitation, the risk of famine can skyrocket; the developmental, economic, social and health repercussions can be equally devastating and long-lasting.

¹ [FAO-WFP Hunger Hotspots Report, August-November 2021](#)

² [WFP news release on Famine, June 2021](#)



Our anticipatory action and rapid response must therefore be multisectoral, based on early data sharing, joint analyses and a coordinated approach: no single sector or intervention can prevent a crisis from becoming a famine, but combined our impact will be far more targeted, pre-emptive, and effective.

The Global Food Security, Health, Nutrition, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Clusters are scaling up our combined support to partners in the field with improved coordination, programming capacity and quality services to prevent, respond to, and recover from famines. The more aligned our priorities, the better prepared we are, and the earlier we act, the more lives we save.

 The four Clusters **commit** to leading efforts to improve and expand the use of early warning data and to coordinate timely, multi-sectoral efforts to respond to the threat of famine.

- We are working to implement a global coordination platform on countries facing famine or the risk of famine, including Ethiopia, Madagascar, South Sudan, Yemen, Nigeria and Burkina Faso.
- We are providing operational support to help countries develop and implement guidance and tools and to strengthen the capacity of all stakeholders to work together for famine prevention and response.

Inter-cluster Coordination Country focus: South Sudan



In 2019-2020, South Sudan was facing impending famine. The four clusters implemented an [integrated inter-cluster response plan](#), a minimum famine response package of services, and agreed on joint geographical convergence. The combination of strategies enabled **humanitarian actors to share mutual resources and act together to save lives.**



However, despite developing the joint response plan, the four clusters received funding for different activities and geographical areas in South Sudan. This meant they were unable to implement a joint response package in most locations due to **a lack of holistic funding.**



We call on all national governments and de-facto authorities to:

- Invest in a strategic multi-sectoral agenda towards strengthening famine early warning and early action systems and supporting the most vulnerable to build their resilience through livelihoods initiatives.
- Commit to a people-centred approach and better access to essential services and social protection for those most in need of humanitarian interventions.

Restricted and sporadic humanitarian access to affected populations in the Central African Republic, Ethiopia's Tigray region, and parts of North-East Nigeria, among others, are putting people of all ages at increased risk of malnutrition, severe hunger, disease and death.



We call on all resource partners to:

- Ensure needs-based, impartial, predictable, timely and geographically coherent funding across priority clusters to implement joint plans in prioritized areas.
- Use their influence to advocate for all parties to ensure that civilian populations can safely access life-saving assistance, particularly in contexts of wide-scale insecurity or armed conflict.



We call on all humanitarian stakeholders to:

- Establish and reinforce collaboration at all levels to ensure holistic response and multi-sectoral programming to address the multi-dimensional vulnerabilities of people at risk of famine.
- Use evidenced-based approaches for preventing and responding to famines based on commonly agreed international definitions.

The Global Food Security, Health, Nutrition, and WASH Clusters are united in calling for solidarity in a joint response and across our network of partners. Together, we must act on our moral duty to meet the needs of those in crisis and work actively to prevent them from spiralling into famine.

KEY MESSAGES

<p><i>With 41 million people at imminent risk of famine and 584,000 in famine-like conditions already, urgent action and investments are needed to prevent widespread malnutrition, starvation and death.</i></p>	<p><i>All actors must ensure civilian populations can safely access life-saving assistance, particularly in contexts of insecurity or conflict.</i></p>	<p><i>Coordinated anticipatory action and rapid response must be multisectoral, based on early data sharing, joint analyses and agreed priorities.</i></p>	<p><i>The Clusters call on donors to ensure needs-based, predictable, timely and coherent funding to implement joint plans in targeted areas.</i></p>	<p><i>National authorities are urged to invest in a multisectoral agenda to strengthen early warning and early action systems and build resilience.</i></p>
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