

SAVING  
LIVES  
CHANGING  
LIVES



## WFP Global Hotspots 2020

Potential flashpoints to look  
out for in New Year



January 2020

# WFP Global Hotspots 2020

## Potential flashpoints to look out for in New Year

A new decade may have dawned but there is little cause for fresh optimism in countries and regions where conflict, political instability and climate disasters are threatening the food security of millions of people.

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has identified 15 critical and complex emergencies at risk of descending further into crisis without a rapid response and greater investment. While WFP continues to provide extensive assistance to high-profile emergencies such as Yemen and Syria, Global Hotspots 2020 highlights the fastest-deteriorating emergencies requiring the world's urgent attention.

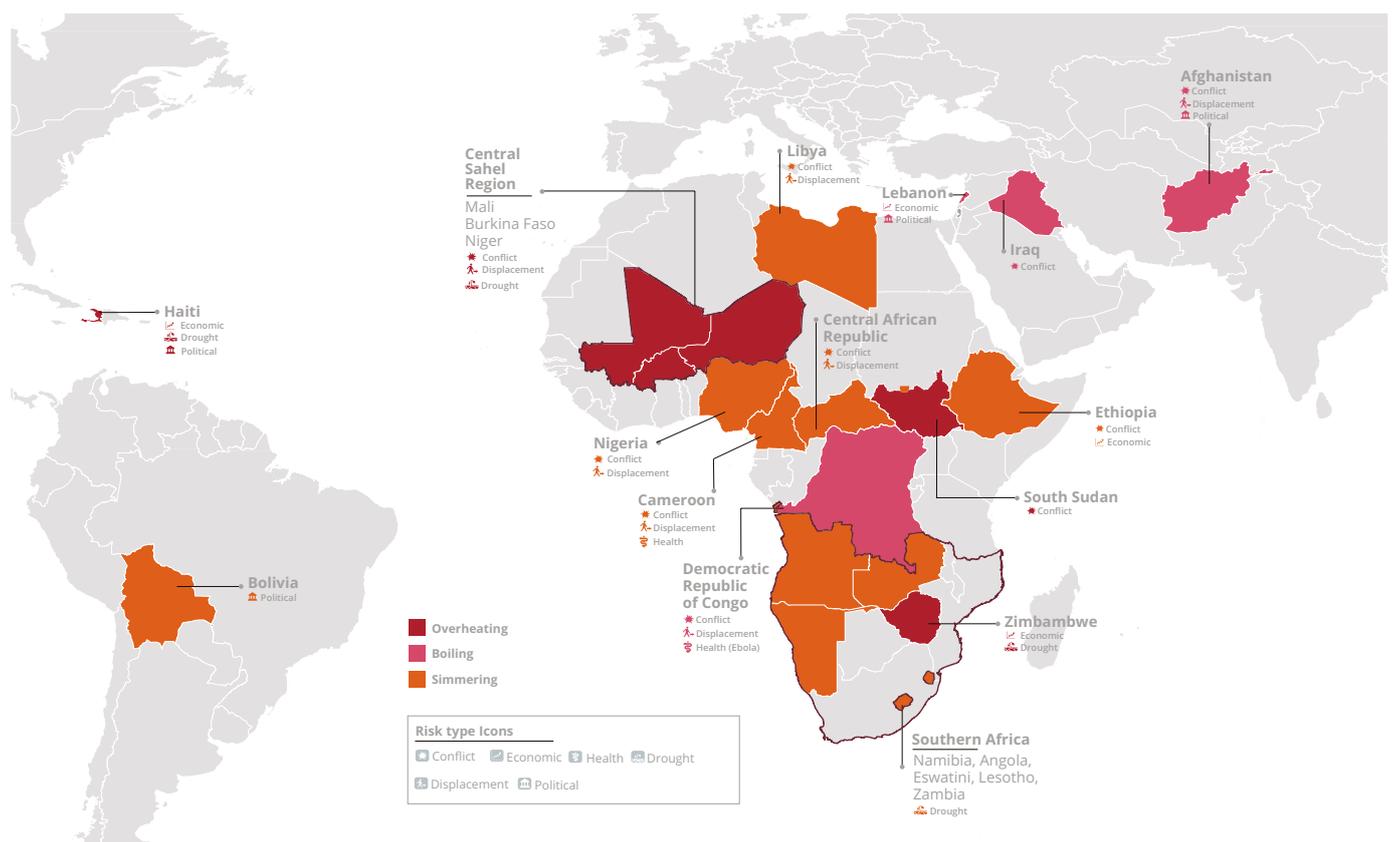
Sub-Saharan Africa dominates WFP's analysis, with Zimbabwe, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central Sahel region all needing immediate attention, given the urgent needs of children, women and men. Elsewhere,

Global Hotspots 2020 reports how a rapidly evolving political and social crisis in Haiti is raising alarm, while Afghanistan continues to face insecurity combined with drought, leaving millions of people uncertain of where their next meal will come from.

WFP is the frontline agency responding to emergencies and strengthening people's preparedness and ability to cope in the face of crises. The largest humanitarian agency working to both save and change lives, WFP is primed 24/7 to step up support wherever needed, given sufficient funding and access. However, the agency estimates it will require more than US\$10 billion to fully fund all of its operations in more than 80 countries around the world in 2020.

Here is a breakdown of the countries WFP considers most at risk of sliding further into crisis in the coming year.

### WFP Global Hotspots 2020: Countries most at risk of sliding further into crisis



# OVERHEATING

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## Zimbabwe

**Context:** Zimbabwe is experiencing its worst drought in decades, with temperatures hitting over 40 degrees Celsius. Food production has been severely affected. Driven by climate change, the drought is exacerbating Zimbabwe's severe economic crisis and causing a humanitarian emergency characterized by hyperinflation and rising food insecurity.

**Effects:** Food-insecurity levels are the highest in a decade. Half the population, 7.7 million people, is food insecure, with the 2019 cereal harvest falling

more than 50 percent short of needs for the 2019-20 lean season.

**Response:** WFP will nearly double its assistance to reach up to 4.1 million of the hardest-hit Zimbabweans. It will switch to distributing food in rural areas from January, due to concerns over hyperinflation and reduced availability of commodities in rural markets. WFP is supporting efforts to boost communities' resilience to crisis, from small dams to retain precious water to vegetable gardens to grow crops.

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## South Sudan

**Context:** South Sudan remains embroiled in local conflicts, while trying to rebuild after a fragile peace deal in September 2018 sought to end a deadly civil war that displaced 3.8 million people. A crippled economy, poorly functioning markets, lack of infrastructure and climate shocks all hamper recovery efforts. Parts of the country were hammered by severe drought and flooding in 2019, which has affected close to 1 million people and destroyed over 73,000 metric tons of cereals. Livestock such as cattle, goats and sheep perished, and grazing pasture was wiped out.

**Effects:** Levels of hunger are expected to dramatically worsen in the coming months unless assistance is

increased, with half the population – 7.5 million people – projected to need support in 2020.

**Response:** WFP reached over 4.6 million people in 2019, including 740,000 flood-affected people who received food and nutrition assistance. WFP also provides cash and deploys all-terrain vehicles and aircraft to reach the most remote communities, while also carrying out road repairs. Efforts to build resilience to shocks include training smallholder farmers in post-harvest storage and access to markets.

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## Haiti

**Context:** Political and social unrest has brought the country to a standstill since mid-September, driving up food prices by 40 percent and hampering agricultural production and access to markets. Political and civil instability could worsen in mid-January when the term of Congress expires, leaving President Jovenel Moïse to rule by decree.

**Effects:** More than one in three Haitians, or 3.7 million people, needs urgent food assistance in both rural and urban areas. Among these,

1 million are suffering from severe hunger. Insecurity has impeded efforts to reach many vulnerable communities.

**Response:** WFP is increasing its emergency operation to provide food assistance to 700,000 people initially. WFP Aviation is providing transport for the humanitarian community. WFP is committed to continuing its long-term programmes, including its school-feeding programme which provide meals to 300,000 children.

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## Central Sahel (Mali, Burkina, Western Niger)

**Context:** The Central Sahel faces a toxic cocktail of rapidly escalating armed conflict, population displacement, hunger and widespread poverty, compounded by the severe effects of climate change. Violent clashes have killed scores, forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes, and pushed communities to the brink. In Burkina Faso, the number of people displaced internally increased by more than 400,000 in 2019.

**Effects:** The number of food-insecure people is expected to double to 4.8 million in 2020. The conflict is devastating agriculture and rural

economies, and almost one in three children is out of school in many conflict-affected areas. Access continues to be a problem due to violence, notably in areas with people in need of food assistance.

**Response:** WFP assisted 2.6 million people across the three countries in 2019, including emergency food and nutritional assistance. It supports smallholder farmers' livelihoods by providing food in exchange for activities including tree planting and repair of irrigation canals, and by sourcing school meals from local producers.



# BOILING

## The Democratic Republic of the Congo

**Context:** Persistent insecurity and conflict in the east are causing large-scale displacement and food insecurity. This is compounded by limited humanitarian access and climate shocks. Flash floods and landslides have affected more than 600,000 people across the country since October 2019. More than 5,000 people, including 4,500 children aged under 5, died from measles in 2019. The second-largest ebola outbreak globally claimed more than 2,000 lives in 2019.

**Effects:** Almost 16 million people are severely food insecure, the second-highest number in the world,

while 4.8 million people are internally displaced. More than 43 percent of children between 6-59 months suffer from chronic malnutrition.

**Response:** WFP provides food and nutrition assistance to internally displaced people, food and other assistance to those affected by the ebola emergency, and specialized nutritious food to vulnerable people including children under 5, and pregnant and breastfeeding women. Livelihood support has included partnering with FAO on business training for smallholder farmers.

## Afghanistan

**Context:** A complex and protracted conflict combined with challenges including climate change have impeded development efforts. Fighting remains intense, hindering WFP operations in some areas. Urban attacks on humanitarian staff are a further concern. A total 421,000 Afghans returned from Iran in 2019, 20 percent of whom require assistance. High food prices and unemployment contribute to food insecurity. A further delay of presidential election results has fuelled political tensions, and US-Taliban negotiations are not expected to stabilize the situation in the next six months.

**Effects:** More than 11 million people are likely to experience severe food insecurity up to March 2020 – 37 percent of the population. Chronic malnutrition affects 41 percent of children between 6-59 months.

**Response:** WFP's support includes emergency food assistance and cash-based transfers to 364,530 people, and nutritional assistance to children, and pregnant and breastfeeding women. WFP is providing food to almost 224,000 people in return for work on projects including drip irrigation, flood-protection walls and training in tailoring, embroidery and food processing.



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## Lebanon

**Context:** A macroeconomic crisis with high public debt, compounded by a political crisis, has triggered nationwide protests since October 2019. Political deadlock followed by the resignation of the Prime Minister is likely to accelerate economic decline. The local currency has shown signs of devaluation in the black market. This might lead to official devaluation of the currency, which in turn could cause food shortages and price hikes. Up to 1.5 million Syrians, about a quarter of the Lebanese population, have taken refuge in Lebanon.

**Effects:** About a third of Lebanese people live in poverty, according to 2018 estimates, with the

figure projected to rise up to 50 percent if the economic situation worsens. Three quarters of Syrian refugees live in poverty.

**Response:** WFP provides cash to 72,000 vulnerable Lebanese and 655,000 Syrian and Palestinian refugees so they can buy food. This is often provided in exchange for activities to improve livelihoods, including digging irrigation channels and planting seedlings, and training in areas such as data entry. This support, and the resulting food security of vulnerable groups, could be threatened by potential food gaps in the first half of 2020.

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## Iraq

**Context:** Unemployment, perceived corruption and lack of basic services have sparked protests since October 2019. Banking services are limited and there is low internet coverage. The Prime Minister's resignation in November may increase unrest. This is against a backdrop of intermittent conflict that continues to aggravate poverty and threaten livelihoods.

**Effects:** 1.77 million people remain vulnerable to food insecurity, while 1.44 million people have

been displaced by conflict. There are 1.55 million displaced Iraqis, 4.35 million returnees and 229,285 Syrian refugees in the country.

**Response:** WFP's food and cash distributions have been interrupted due to the current unrest. Response plans are being reviewed, as are current emergency-preparedness measures.



# SIMMERING

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## Southern African drought

**Context:** Southern Africa has experienced a stream of devastating climate shocks in the past year, with harvests failing as western and central areas of the region suffer the worst drought in 35 years.

**Effects:** A total 45 million people across Southern African will be severely food insecure at the peak of the lean season from January-March 2020.

**Response:** WFP is providing transport and procuring pulses to complement government distributions in Zambia. In addition, WFP is assessing further activities including cash-based distributions in Namibia, as well as technical assistance to the Government of Angola's emergency response.

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## Central African Republic

**Context:** The spectre of ongoing violence looms in the run-up to the electoral period in 2020, in a country beset by repeated coups and waves of conflict. Rising prices mean that up to 75 percent of disposable income is spent on food. Heavy rains in October caused flooding which affected an estimated 50,000 people.

**Effects:** Latest projections report that 2.1 million people will be food insecure from May to August

2020, with 675,000 people expected to be at critical levels, during the lean season between harvests.

**Response:** WFP's support includes distributing food, including specialized nutritious products. WFP has airlifted food for 30,000 people displaced by violence in the northeast. Road supplies are being considered instead as the end of the wet season approaches.

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## Cameroon

**Context:** Continued worsening of violence in the northwest and southwest is likely to be compounded by elections in February 2020, with a high likelihood of a rise in tensions between government forces and separatists.

**Effects:** The current crisis in the northwest and southwest has displaced over 700,000 people, of whom 80 percent are in hard-to-reach areas. In these places, 0.6 million people are expected to

be food insecure in 2020. Insecurity affects the movement of cargo and access to communities.

**Response:** To date, WFP has provided food and nutrition assistance to more than 400,000 people in the affected regions. In 2020, WFP will scale up its operations and seek to diversify and expand its assistance. This includes activities that support people's livelihoods where feasible, including land restoration, infrastructure improvement and skills training.

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## Libya

**Context:** Libya's persistent violence is expected to escalate, with a renewal of hostilities in and around Tripoli since mid-December 2019 and peace talks further delayed until 2020.

**Effects:** A total 1.3 million people need humanitarian assistance, a number likely to rise by 100,000 in coming months. There are more than

343,000 internally displaced people, 60 percent of whom are vulnerable to food insecurity.

**Response:** WFP reaches almost 104,000 people through its food distributions, and is working with the government and other partners on building crisis-resilience among communities including training in business skills.

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## Nigeria

**Context:** An upsurge in violence in the northeast has resulted in a fresh wave of displacement, cutting off access to farming lands.

**Effects:** Nearly 3 million people are struggling to meet their food needs in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states. That could rise to more than 3.8 million people in the June-August lean season.

Close to 2.1 million people have been forced to leave their homes.

**Response:** WFP provides life-saving food and nutrition products to internally displaced people, returnees, young children and pregnant or breastfeeding women. WFP has conducted rapid assessments of the current situation, to inform its ongoing response.

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## Bolivia

**Context:** Controversial October presidential elections saw growing unrest, with roadblocks causing food and fuel shortages. A bill calling for elections by March 2020 has reduced violence.

**Effects:** The deteriorating security situation, interruptions in services and disruptions to markets place people's livelihoods at risk. Almost a third of Bolivians in rural areas cannot afford the cost

of a basic food basket. WFP's activities have been hampered by the unrest.

**Response:** WFP is placing strong emphasis on building government capacity in areas including food and nutrition monitoring. Where it is able, WFP continues to provide cash to communities in exchange for work on projects that will build their resilience to emergencies, such as road and canal building or restoration.

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## Ethiopia

**Context:** A general election scheduled for May 2020 may worsen ongoing civil unrest as well as ethnic and intercommunal violence. Further displacement of people is also likely. Inflation is rising, driving up food and other prices.

**Effects:** An estimated 8 million people were food insecure and in need of humanitarian assistance between July and September 2019, due mainly to conflict and the effects of climate change including

drought. The number of people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance is expected to rise 8.5 million people in 2020, with 2 million experiencing severe hunger.

**Response:** WFP is using food, cash, nutrition assistance and other approaches such as training farmers in water storage, while building government capacity in areas including emergency preparedness.

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*The information contained in this report is drawn from WFP's Corporate Alert System, an internal analysis that is compiled every two months and used to identify countries of high prioritization for emergency assistance.*

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