



SOMALIA

ETHIOPIA

AFGHANISTAN

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC  
OF THE CONGO

YEMEN

SYRIA

SOUTH SUDAN

BURKINA FASO

HAITI

UKRAINE



**TIME TO BUILD BACK THE GUARDRAILS**

# EMERGENCY EMERGENCY 20 23 WATCHLIST







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Abuk Deng holding her 4-year-old daughter Nyirou in front of their flooded home in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan.

**COVER:**  
Malabey Baube, a mother of seven children, came to the Torotorow IDP camp in Somalia because of severe drought. Al Hamza High School in Yemen was bombed by missiles until it was completely destroyed.





# FOREWORD

The International Rescue Committee's (IRC) mission is to help people whose lives are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and gain control of their futures. Our job every day is to understand and respond to crisis. But with so many crises around the world, there is special value in stopping to review the totality of what is happening, pinpoint the important trends and explain them to a wider audience. The IRC's annual Emergency Watchlist is a critical tool for this purpose.

Each year for over a decade, the Watchlist has helped the IRC focus our emergency preparedness and monitoring efforts to ensure we are using our resources where they will have the greatest impact. But the Watchlist is also an important tool for raising the public alarm about the 20 countries where we see the greatest risk of major deterioration in the humanitarian situation.

The strength of the Watchlist lies in its rigor, grounded in a unique methodology that combines quantitative analysis with qualitative insights from our frontline colleagues. Our Global Crisis Analysis team draws up the Watchlist by setting analysis of 67 indicators that all point to humanitarian risks alongside analysis grounded in the in-depth knowledge and experience of IRC and external participants in roundtable discussions held in each of the IRC's regions.

This process is refined each year by reviewing the performance of Watchlists from previous years. We discovered that the Watchlist typically predicts 85–95% of the 20 countries that saw the worst escalations in their humanitarian situation over the following year. There are surprises every year, such as the war in Ukraine in 2022, which drive unexpected humanitarian crises, but the Watchlist's analytical framework can help us make sense of what can seem to be a chaotic world and understand what to watch for as new crises emerge.

In addition to spotlighting individual humanitarian crises, the Watchlist countries as a whole provide a unique lens for understanding what is happening in the world. Over the past decade, there has been an immense increase in immediate

needs, overwhelmingly in countries that appear on Watchlist 2023. The number of people in humanitarian need has increased from **81 million** in 2014 to **339.2 million** in 2023, 90% of whom are in need due to crises in Watchlist countries. The number of people forced to flee their homes has risen from under **60 million** in 2014 to over **100 million** in 2022. Data from mid-2022 shows that four out of five people who are forcibly displaced are in or from Watchlist countries.

Most of the crises in Watchlist countries are not new. There are just five countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Ukraine, Venezuela) that we highlight this year that were not included in our 2014 Watchlist. But the fact that these crises are protracted does not make them any less urgent. The primary reason we are seeing worrying new record levels of need is because three key accelerators of crisis—**armed conflict, climate change and economic turmoil**—are driving long-standing crises to new extremes. And, in some instances, they are sparking new crises as well.

Having diagnosed “system failure” in last year's Watchlist, this year we highlight how the local, national and international “guardrails” protecting crisis-affected communities around the world have been weakened. We think this is a helpful concept because it speaks to the daily experience of our clients and helps define an agenda for action for policy- and decision-makers. The weakening of guardrails is a choice not an inevitability, and needs to be addressed as such.

The startling acceleration of crises globally highlights that action is needed now to save lives. In addition, beyond relief, there is a pressing need to tackle the causes of crisis. Effective action on both fronts depends on understanding *what* is happening and *why*, so we can diagnose what *can* and *should* be done. In addition to being a warning, Watchlist 2023 is intended as a roadmap for how, collectively, we can start to strengthen the guardrails that are meant to limit the impact of these crises on affected communities and to prevent crises from spiraling out of control—and put new guardrails in place where they are needed.

## LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL “GUARDRAILS” PROTECTING CRISIS-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD HAVE BEEN WEAKENED



**David Miliband**  
President and CEO  
International Rescue Committee

**ABOVE:** IRC President and CEO David Miliband observes operations at a medical facility for migrants in San Salvador.





# IRC'S WATCHLIST

## 2023 AT A GLANCE



The IRC's mission is to help people affected by humanitarian crises to survive, recover and gain control of their futures. The Emergency Watchlist report is the IRC's assessment of the 20 countries at greatest risk of new or worsening humanitarian emergencies each year. For the past decade, this report has helped the IRC determine where to focus our emergency preparedness efforts,

successfully predicting on average 85–95% of the 20 countries facing the worst deteriorations. Unprecedented levels of need are concentrated within the small number of Watchlist countries. If we can understand what is happening in these 20 countries—and what to do about it—then we may, finally, have a chance to start reducing the scale of human suffering in the world.

### THE 20 WATCHLIST COUNTRIES ACCOUNT FOR:

**13%** of global population

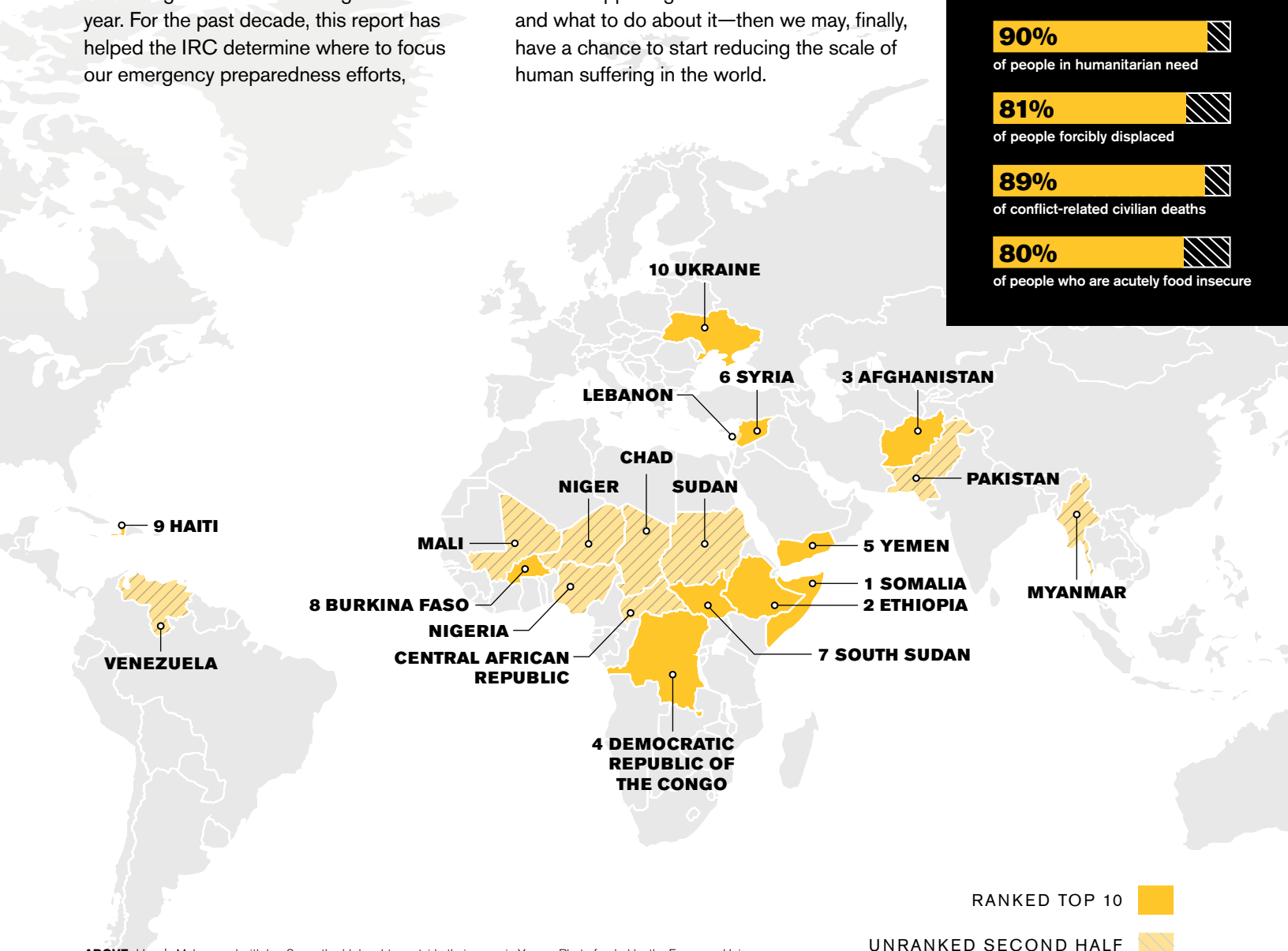
**1.6%** of global GDP

**90%** of people in humanitarian need

**81%** of people forcibly displaced

**89%** of conflict-related civilian deaths

**80%** of people who are acutely food insecure



ABOVE: Hana'a Muhammad with her 2-month-old daughter outside their camp in Yemen. Photo funded by the European Union.

RANKED TOP 10

UNRANKED SECOND HALF



## TRENDS TO WATCH IN 2023

**The world is seeing record levels of humanitarian need because the guardrails that protect communities from humanitarian catastrophe are being weakened, leaving three key accelerators of humanitarian need—conflict, climate change and economic turmoil—unchecked:**

- » **Conflict remains the key accelerator of humanitarian crisis**, driving 80% of humanitarian need. Conflicts are increasing in both duration and size. Watchlist countries have experienced armed conflict for an average of 12 years—fueled in part by a large number of internationalized intrastate conflicts, where at least one foreign country contributes troops. The internationalization of conflict tends to make them deadlier and last longer. Parties to conflicts are also operating with impunity, attacking civilian infrastructure and weaponizing aid. Nearly 40 countries, including every single Watchlist country, are experiencing high to extreme constraints on humanitarian access.
- » **Climate change is rapidly accelerating humanitarian emergencies** despite the fact that Watchlist countries bear little responsibility for climate change. They

contributed just 1.9% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2019 and emit just a fifth of the CO<sub>2</sub> per capita when compared to global averages. Despite this, they face some of the worst climate related disasters. The climate preparedness of Watchlist countries is steadily declining. In 2020, climate financing per capita for conflict-affected countries was a third of what other countries received.

- » **Economic turmoil across Watchlist countries is deepening food insecurity and rapidly exacerbating poverty.** The ripple effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on global food and fuel prices, and long-term impacts of COVID-19 are putting necessities out of reach for many. Seven Watchlist countries imported an average of 66% of their wheat from Russia and Ukraine—with this percentage rising to 90% in Somalia.

### FOOD PRICE INFLATION RATES

Watchlist countries  
**39.7%**

Non-Watchlist countries  
**19.0%**

### THE UNEQUAL BURDEN OF CRISIS

The 20 countries on Watchlist 2023 (over half of which are in Africa) disproportionately account for rising humanitarian needs. Those displaced, women and girls, and LGBTQI+ communities are often hit hardest. For instance, an estimated 80% of people displaced by climate change are women and girls. These populations also face a growing gap between their needs and the support provided. A decade ago, humanitarian operations were underfunded by \$3 billion. In 2022, the gap had grown to a staggering \$27 billion in underfunding. Without aid, those most vulnerable face a heightened risk of gender-based violence, child marriage and labor, and exploitation and abuse as resources become scarce.

### SPOTTING THE NEXT HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The IRC deploys a unique methodology to identify crises before they deteriorate. The IRC analyzes 67 indicators, including measures of fragility, economic resilience, conflict intensity, natural hazard and pandemic risks, and displacement. This data analysis is complemented by the insights of IRC staff on the ground and external partners and experts. Countries are selected according to their risk of *deterioration*, not based on whether they are the largest or most severe crises.



**RIGHT:** Mokube is an activist against gender-based violence from the south-west region of Cameroon. She helps women and girls in her community.





## WHAT 2022 TELLS US ABOUT

# WHAT TO EXPECT

# IN 2023



The Emergency Watchlist shows record levels of humanitarian need in 2022 and real peril ahead in 2023. Our analysis reveals that guardrails against crisis are being weakened in fragile and conflict-affected states around the world.

These guardrails are actions, policies and mechanisms that local, national and global actors put in place to mitigate and alleviate humanitarian crisis. But the scale and nature of **conflict, climate change and economic turmoil** in too many places are overloading these guardrails.

A year ago we diagnosed “system failure”—deficits in respect of state actions, diplomacy, legal rights and humanitarian operations that were driving record numbers of people into humanitarian need. This *high-level* system failure can be seen in the fact that humanitarian need is projected to reach new records in 2023. But in this Watchlist, we address the growth of humanitarian need at the *ground level*, since we see the guardrails that protect people from disaster being weakened every day.

In what follows, we review what the data shows about humanitarian need in 2022. Then, we show how the nature of conflict, the climate emergency and the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine are overrunning the guardrails against humanitarian crisis.

### What are guardrails against crisis?

Guardrails are actions, policies and mechanisms that actors at all levels—from the global through the regional, national and local—can put in place to reduce the impact of crises on affected communities. Common types of guardrails include:

#### PREVENTION

Social services and safety nets that make humanitarian crises less likely.

#### EARLY ACTION

Identifying and preempting risks as they emerge, for example by distributing cash to families living in an area that will soon be hit by flooding.

#### MITIGATION

Reducing the impact on communities from crises that are already underway, for example by delivering food aid or deploying peacekeeping forces to protect civilians.

#### RESOLUTION

Efforts to resolve a crisis, for example by trying to reach a peaceful settlement to end an armed conflict.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY

Operating alongside the different types of guardrails, accountability influences the actors within a crisis and incentivizes them to reduce the humanitarian impact of a crisis, resolve it and, in time, prevent its recurrence. Some examples of accountability include awareness raising, UN resolutions and transitional justice mechanisms.



IRC workers pack heaters from the warehouse to be transported to a distribution site in Dnipro, Ukraine.

**HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT AID, WHEN DEPLOYED EFFECTIVELY, CAN AND SHOULD SUPPORT ALL OF THESE TYPES OF GUARDRAILS**

**ABOVE:** Bilan, a mother of four, fetches water at an IRC water trucking site in Ethiopia during the worst drought in 40 years.



# THE GROWTH OF NEEDS IS NOT INEVITABLE: 2022 HAS PROVIDED ISOLATED EXAMPLES OF HOW CRISIS CAN BE MITIGATED

With so much going wrong in the world, it is easy to overlook what is going right. The outlook for 2023 is undeniably bleak, but we start with humanitarian crises that were mitigated, at least somewhat, in 2022.

The following are *not* examples of crises that have ended. Rather, they demonstrate the importance of smaller actions that mitigate the impacts of humanitarian crisis. These examples are too rare and their impacts, particularly in conflict situations, too limited given the vacuum created by system failure. But they demonstrate that we must not allow defeatism to win. Actors at the local, regional and global levels *can* strengthen existing guardrails—and establish new ones—to slow crises and limit their most extreme impacts on communities. These examples show that humanitarian catastrophe is a result of choices, not an inevitable outcome. If we are to reduce the scale of global humanitarian need, we must start by incentivizing actors with power to make the right choices.

## EXAMPLE 1

**A UN-brokered six-month-long truce in Yemen led to the longest period of relative calm in the lives of Yemenis since the beginning of war in 2014.**

The three months following the declaration of a truce witnessed a **drop** in fatalities due to conflict and political violence by around 86%, compared to the three months preceding it, and conflict-related fatalities fell to the lowest levels in eight years (**ACLED**). The agreement allowed shipments to **resume** through the northern ports of Yemen, easing the rise of fuel costs for civilians living in Houthi-controlled areas. The agreement also allowed commercial flights to resume through Sana'a International Airport, allowing Yemenis to seek medical treatment abroad through this airport for the first time in six years. However, after being extended twice, parties failed to renew the truce, leading to its expiration on October 2, 2022.



**FATALITIES DUE TO CONFLICT  
AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE  
DROPPED BY AROUND 86%  
IN THE THREE MONTHS  
FOLLOWING THE DECLARATION  
OF A TRUCE IN YEMEN**

**TOP RIGHT:** Classrooms are being built for children in Qataba District, Al Dhale'e Governorate in Yemen.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Asriya Abdo Hassan lives in a displacement camp in southern Yemen with her husband and 9-month-old twins who suffered from malnutrition. Photo funded by the European Union.

**EXAMPLE 2****Investment in coastal shelter systems in Bangladesh saved thousands of lives.**

When Cyclone Sitrang made landfall in Bangladesh in October 2022, it killed at least 24 people. But its impact would have been even worse if the World Bank Group and the Government of Bangladesh had not partnered to build resilience in coastal areas. The World Bank-Government of Bangladesh project runs until June 2023 and enables **14 million** people to have access to shelters if a cyclone hits. Establishing such shelters meant that **hundreds of thousands** of people could evacuate as Sitrang was inbound. Before such resilience and protection projects, the death toll from cyclones in Bangladesh often **numbered** in the thousands.

Such country- and local-level guardrails must be complemented with global steps to tackle the threat of climate change. There are signs that these steps are being taken. In November 2022, the United States and China, the world's two biggest emitters of greenhouse gases, **agreed to resume** climate talks. During the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27), wealthy pollution-producing countries **agreed** to establish a global fund to compensate vulnerable countries for the adverse effects of climate change. These promises must lead to action in order to form guardrails against humanitarian crisis.

**EXAMPLE 3****Agreement to export grain from Ukraine.**

During the first months of the war in Ukraine, the Russian navy imposed a blockade on Ukraine's Black Sea ports, which trapped **20 million** tons of grain. With Ukraine accounting for 9% of global exports of wheat, the blockade led to massive disruptions in global food supplies, especially to Watchlist countries. It directly contributed to the catastrophe unfolding in Somalia, given the country typically imports 90% of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine. Between January and March 2022, UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Food Price Index **increased** by about 15%, reaching a record 159.7 points. The "Black Sea Grain Initiative," brokered by the UN in August 2022, allowed grain shipments to resume, and by end of November 2022, more than **12 million tons** of food had been exported from Ukrainian Black Sea ports, helping to **bring down** food prices from their April peak. Almost **20%** of these exports went to low-income and lower-middle-income countries, including seven Watchlist countries.

**12M+**

**TONS OF FOOD WERE EXPORTED FROM UKRAINIAN BLACK SEA PORTS AFTER THE "BLACK SEA GRAIN INITIATIVE," WHICH HELPED BRING DOWN FOOD PRICES.**

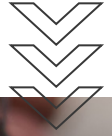
**BEFORE SUCH RESILIENCE AND PROTECTION PROJECTS, THE DEATH TOLL FROM CYCLONES IN BANGLADESH OFTEN NUMBERED IN THE THOUSANDS**



Storm clouds gather over Kutupalong refugee camp, which is home to some 700,000 Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar.



# NEEDS, DISPLACEMENT AND FOOD INSECURITY ARE ALL GROWING GLOBALLY, BUT THEIR IMPACTS ARE FAR FROM EQUAL



Based on our analysis of crises globally in 2022, we expect three key facts to shape crisis response in 2023:

## FACT 1

**Unprecedented levels of humanitarian need, displacement and food insecurity at the global level are concentrated within Watchlist countries.**

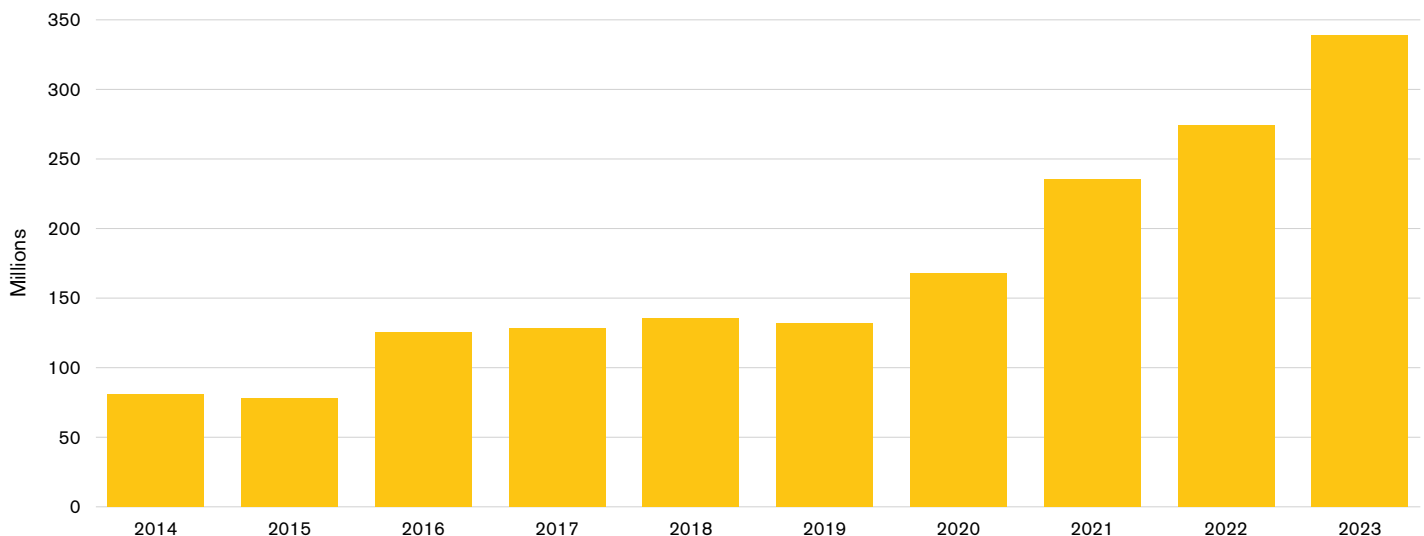
This set of 20 countries is home to 13% of the global population and accounts for just 1.6% of global GDP. Of all reporting in top global publications during 2022, less than 1% was dedicated to the crises in Watchlist countries.<sup>1</sup> Yet they represent:

» **90% of the record 339.2 million people identified globally as being in humanitarian need.** That is to say, of the people identified in the UN's [Global Humanitarian Overview](#) for 2023 as needing humanitarian or protection assistance, 304 million are in need because of the crises in Watchlist countries—whether they remain in that country or have fled to another country to find safety.



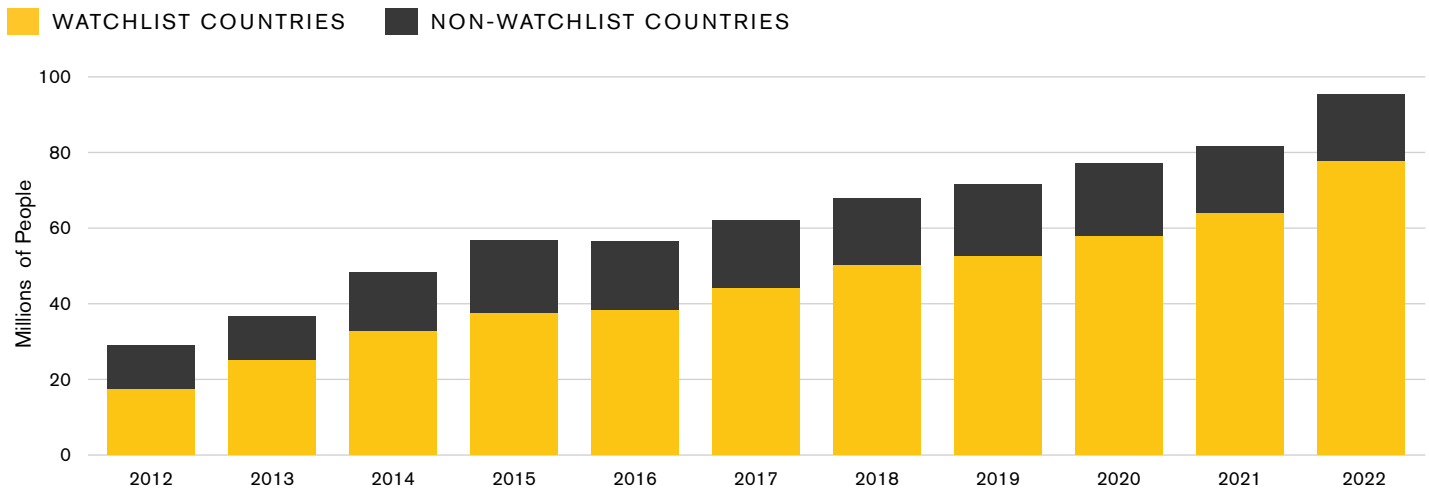
Ghadeer, 3, eats PlumpyNut, a nutrient-dense paste used to treat severe acute malnutrition. Photo funded by the European Union.

## NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED WORLDWIDE



1. Calculated using analysis from Meltwater of 2022 coverage of the humanitarian crises in Watchlist countries in global publications that reach more than 4.2 million people per month.

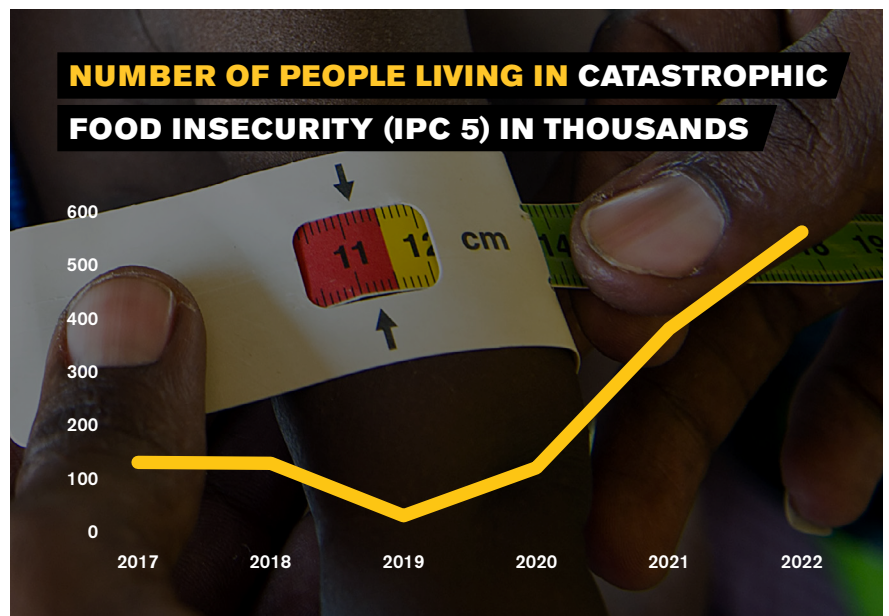
## FORCED DISPLACEMENT OVER TIME



» **81% of people globally who are forcibly displaced.** Using UNHCR global data released in mid-2022, Watchlist countries account for 77 million of the 95 million people forced to flee their homes within their country of origin or across an international border, and for 100% of the rise since the end of 2021, when 81 million people were displaced. In fact, the number of people originally living in non-Watchlist countries who fled across an international border or within their country of origin decreased in 2022, as compared to 2021.

» **100% of the global population who faced catastrophic food insecurity at some point in 2022.** Catastrophic food insecurity refers to the most severe level of food insecurity as described on the [Integrated Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#) scale, which runs from IPC 1 (lowest) to IPC 5 (highest). Food insecurity has peaked at different times around the world, but using the highest figure reached per country at any point in 2022, more than 560,000 people experienced (or were projected to experience) catastrophic food insecurity at some point in 2022. All of them are in just six Watchlist countries (around half in Somalia and the remainder in Afghanistan, South Sudan, Haiti, Burkina Faso and Yemen). These figures exclude Ethiopia, where [FEWS NET](#) says IPC 5 is present but there is no data to confirm the numbers affected. There are five levels of food insecurity, with catastrophe (IPC 5) the most extreme. At this stage of food insecurity, people are starving to death every day, more than half of all families cannot afford enough food and people's weakened bodies cannot fight off diseases like diarrhea, measles and malaria. Children are at particular risk and often die at double the rates of adults.

» **80% of the global population who faced (or were projected to face) crisis (IPC 3) or worse levels of food insecurity in 2022.** More than 137 million people in Watchlist countries experienced (or were projected to experience) crisis or worse levels of food insecurity at some point in 2022, four times the figure for non-Watchlist countries. At crisis levels of food insecurity, people are forced to make impossible decisions about how to survive: skipping meals, pulling children out of school to work and more. IPC 3+ numbers have been increasing in Watchlist countries while decreasing elsewhere. These numbers also exclude Ethiopia, making the trends in Watchlist countries even more drastic in reality than the data can represent.



Combined data from IPC tracking tool and latest IPC country assessments.

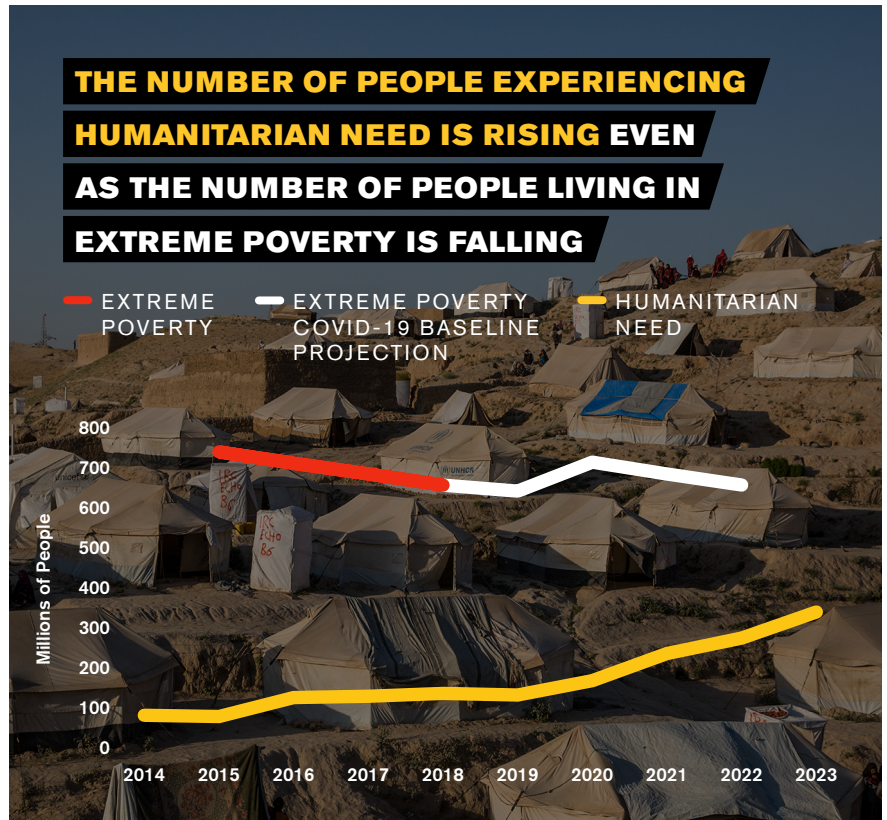




The fact that Watchlist countries account for such a small percentage of the world's population yet so much of its displacement, humanitarian need and food insecurity is the key to addressing an important paradox. Some measures of human development show real progress over the past decade. Living standards and life expectancy are rising and, until the economic impacts of the pandemic hit, extreme poverty had been falling. Yet both humanitarian need and forced displacement grew.

When looking at Watchlist countries, it is clear that **armed conflict, the climate crisis and economic turmoil** are pushing a growing minority of the world's population into ever deeper crisis at the same time that, elsewhere, economic development has been lifting record numbers of people out of poverty (though this trend has been set back by the COVID-19 pandemic). These two facts are true at the same time, and they point to a simple, deep inequity: progress for the many is leaving the few behind to fall deeper into crisis.

It is as striking that countries accounting for 13% of the global population carry such a disproportionate share of the humanitarian burden as it is that the richest 10% of humanity own **76%** of its wealth. These two facts should be met with comparable shame and outrage—and action. The scale of humanitarian need, forced displacement and food insecurity present in the world cannot be addressed until guardrails start to be strengthened to mitigate the impacts of the crises in the 20 Watchlist countries.



Number of people living in extreme poverty, i.e., under \$1.90 per day, and humanitarian need per year. Source: UN and Global Humanitarian Overviews.

**13% OF THE GLOBAL POPULATION CARRY A DISPROPORTIONATE SHARE OF THE HUMANITARIAN BURDEN WHILE THE RICHEST 10% OF HUMANITY OWN 76% OF ITS WEALTH**



Amina Seid, 24, cooks outside her home in the Torotorow IDP camp in Somalia.

**FACT 2**

**As needs grow at an unprecedented pace, humanitarian organizations are expected to scale up their response. Instead, they are falling further behind under the twin threats of inaction from donors and hostile action from parties to conflicts.**

Humanitarian action is only ever supposed to be a stopgap. The IRC and other agencies stand ready to respond to crises where governments are unable or unwilling to ensure their citizens' needs are met. However, 2022 has illustrated key ways in which humanitarian action is under threat.

» **There is a growing gap between needs and funding.** Unmet funding requirements for humanitarian responses globally in 2022 totaled over \$27 billion as of November 2022, \$24 billion more than the funding gap in 2012 (FIS). Donors are failing to respond proportionately as humanitarian—and thus funding—needs grow. Of the 17 Watchlist countries that had Humanitarian Response Plans from the start of 2022, just six (Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen) had received half of what they needed for the year as of late 2022 (FIS). This trend may

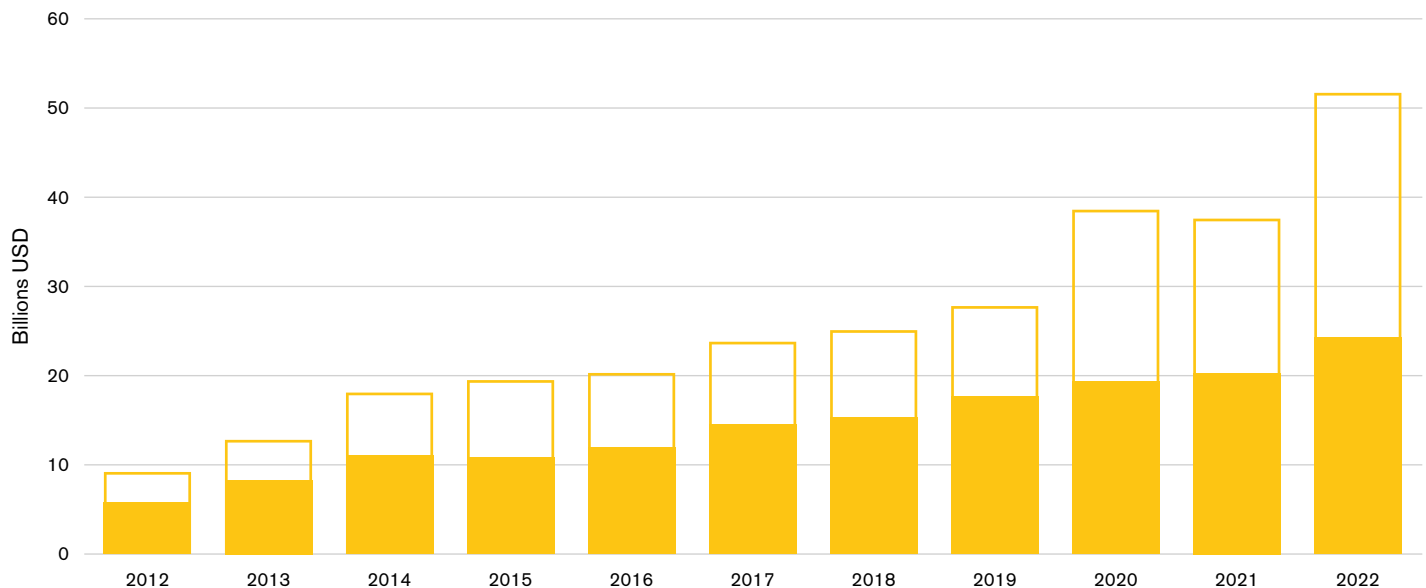
worsen as the size of Humanitarian Response Plans grows. In 2019, the Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen was the first ever to surpass \$4 billion in funding requirements. Since then, Afghanistan and Syria have also passed this threshold. As the funding needs become daunting and unmanageable, they risk breeding further inaction from donors. And the result is that crisis-affected communities cannot access the services they need to survive, recover and rebuild their lives.

» **Crisis-affected communities' ability to access the services they need, and humanitarian actors' ability to reach them, is under threat.** IRC frontline staff from every region represented by the Watchlist highlighted humanitarian access constraints as a critical, often growing concern, and these qualitative insights are supported by data from **INFORM**. Of the 109 million people affected by crises where there are "extreme" access constraints (scoring the maximum score of five out of five), nearly all (98.9%) are in Watchlist countries. As a result, communities are forced to go without the services they depend on, humanitarian personnel face greater threats to their safety and the overall cost of delivering aid increases.

**A DECADE AGO, HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS WERE UNDERFUNDED BY \$3 BILLION. IN 2022, THE GAP HAD GROWN TO A STAGGERING \$27 BILLION IN UNDERFUNDING**

**GAP BETWEEN FUNDING AND NEED IN BILLIONS USD**

□ TOTAL REQUIREMENT    ■ FUNDED



Data from the [Financial Tracking Service of OCHA](#)



**FACT 3**
**Women, girls and LGBTQI+ communities face particular threats during crises.**

Events in Watchlist countries illustrate how armed conflict, economic turmoil and climate change—and their interaction—impact the most vulnerable communities in a society, particularly women, girls and LGBTQI+ communities, that layer on top of the impacts on the general population:

- » **Armed conflict:** Rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls continue to be used as a weapon of war in conflict-affected areas. Men and boys can also be targets of sexual violence, particularly in detention. Displacement affects women's access to sources of income, especially if they depend on land and livestock, and puts women at greater risk of all forms of gender-based violence, when compared to women of the host community. Without regular access to income, displaced women, children and LGBTQI+ populations face heightened risk of exploitation and limited options to safely meet their basic needs. Conflict, moreover, disrupts women's access to essential reproductive health services. Of the 12 countries globally that score worst for women's security, inclusion and access to justice (as measured by the Women, Peace and Security Index), 75% are on the Watchlist.
- » **Climate change:** An estimated **80%** of the people displaced by climate change are women and girls, reflecting the reality that women are particularly likely to depend on livelihoods threatened by climate change, especially agriculture. Extreme weather events also lead women to travel to far and unfamiliar areas, increasing their risk of facing gender-based violence, including sexual violence, abuse, harassment and human trafficking. Gender inequalities also deny women equal access to the resources—information, means of transport, relief and assistance—they would use to improve their wellbeing and recover. The economic effects of extreme weather events, moreover, push girls to early and forced marriage and divert funding away from reproductive and sexual health services that tend to be deprioritized in settings where crises compound. The economic effects of climatic shocks can also contribute to girls dropping out of school, exposing them to greater risks to their safety in the immediate term and undermining their long-term economic opportunities.

- » **Economic turmoil:** Conflict and climate change hit sectors that employ women the hardest, exacerbating the effects of economic shocks on women. In Watchlist countries, 44% of those working in agriculture are women. As food becomes increasingly unavailable and unaffordable, women with caring responsibilities typically bear the burden of providing for their children facing acute malnutrition. Female-led households in Afghanistan, for example, spend a higher portion of their income on food, and as of May 2022, 82% of female-headed households in Afghanistan are food insecure—32 percentage points more than male-headed households.

LGBTQI+ communities continue to face violence and discrimination by state and nonstate actors in conflict situations because of actual or perceived gender identity and sexual orientation. Sexual and gender-based violence against men, women, and non-binary LGBTQI+ is particularly prevalent and underestimated in countries where same-sex relations are criminalized (which include **12 Watchlist countries**). Even when LGBTQI+ people reach physical safety from armed conflict, stigma and social exclusion associated with being victims of sexual and gender-based violence present obstacles to accessing critical services. IRC staff members report that healthcare services are not usually safe or inclusive for LGBTQI+ populations, considering their unique needs. LGBTQI+ Syrians in Lebanon, for example, are less likely to seek medical care than other patients due to these inequities.

**AS OF MAY 2022, 82% OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN AFGHANISTAN ARE FOOD INSECURE—32 PERCENTAGE POINTS MORE THAN MALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS**

**80% OF THE PEOPLE DISPLACED BY CLIMATE CHANGE ARE WOMEN**



15-year-old Melissa Tissere is displaced from her home due to the conflict in Bangui, Central African Republic.

# ARMED CONFLICT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECONOMIC TURMOIL THREATEN TO FURTHER ACCELERATE HUMANITARIAN CRISES



## Conflict, climate change and economic turmoil are the three key accelerators of humanitarian crisis in Watchlist countries in 2022.

They have a twin impact: (1) exposing individuals and communities to greater shocks and (2) weakening the systems and infrastructure they depend on to withstand such shocks. These three accelerators consequently feed off themselves—and one another—to drive vicious cycles of deepening crisis.

Somalia illustrates how the accelerators interact with each other. The country has been on the Watchlist for the past decade but only this year has it risen to the top of the list, as climate change and economic turmoil have further deepened the crisis. While these two global shocks are key to understanding why Somalia is at the top of the Watchlist this year, the country would have been better able to withstand them were it not for decades of chronic armed conflict that destroyed and weakened many of the systems and infrastructure that protect communities in other countries from crisis. Without the damage wrought to guardrails by the underlying conflict, Somalia might not have been on Watchlist 2023 at all.



### KEY ACCELERATOR 1

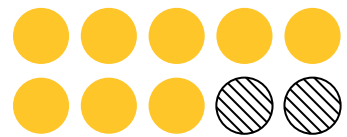


#### Armed conflict and the way it is conducted continue to weaken the guardrails against humanitarian catastrophe.

The 20 countries on Watchlist 2023 are, once again, a chilling illustration of the close association between conflict and humanitarian crisis. On average, they have experienced armed conflict for eight of the last 10 years. Watchlist countries account for a disproportionate number of conflicts globally. In 2021, these 20 countries that are home to just 13% of the global population accounted for 89% of the 14,735 civilian fatalities recorded by Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). They saw 63% of the 54 conflicts documented by UCDP

that year, including all five conflicts that saw at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in the year.

Given that conflicts drive **80%** of humanitarian need, it is unsurprising that humanitarian need and conflict are both focused in the same place. But the impact of conflict goes beyond just increasing needs at the individual or community level. Systemically, it also destroys the guardrails that provide communities some level of protection from crisis.



## 8/10

On average, Watchlist countries have experienced armed conflict for eight of the last 10 years

TOP RIGHT: Owliyo Mohamed with her 12-month-old baby in the Daryel Shabellow displacement camp in Somalia.  
BOTTOM RIGHT: Temporary shelters staggered throughout the Daryel Shabellow displacement camp in Somalia.



If we are to understand why humanitarian needs are growing and the guardrails against crisis are being weakened, we need to understand three key trends in the conflicts affecting Watchlist countries:

» **Conflicts are increasing in both duration and spread, within countries and across borders, destroying the systems and services on which communities depend.**

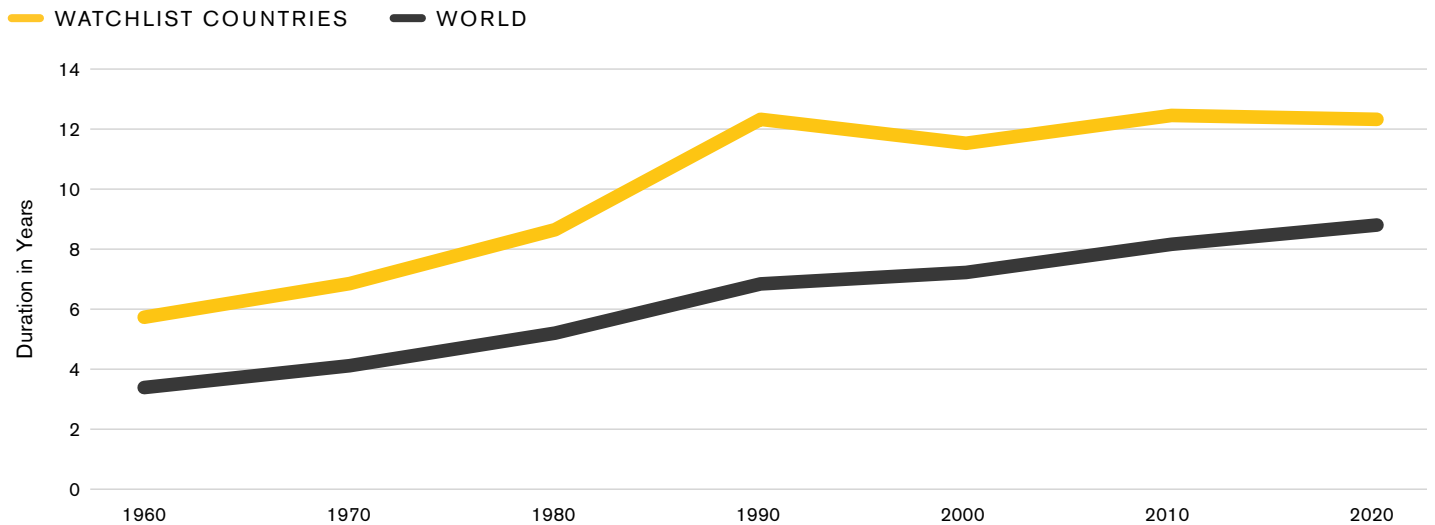
The most common form of conflict in the world today is intrastate armed conflict. And the average length of these conflicts is growing, reaching nine years on average globally in 2021 and 12 years in Watchlist countries. This is fueled in part by a large number of internationalized intrastate conflicts, where at least one foreign country contributes troops in support of one of the parties to the conflict. The internationalization of intrastate conflict tends to make conflicts **deadlier and last longer**. Additionally, conflicts in Watchlist countries are spreading both within their borders (as in Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria) and across them (as in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin). The number of countries experiencing two or more conflicts at the same time rose to 15 in 2021, up from two countries just a decade ago. Twelve of these countries are on the Watchlist. The festering and spreading of conflicts in Watchlist countries over time destroys people's livelihoods and lives, the systems and infrastructure of water, healthcare and education that they depend on and the social safety nets that help them survive.

**IN 2021, THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF INTRASTATE ARMED CONFLICT GREW TO 9 YEARS GLOBALLY AND 12 YEARS IN WATCHLIST COUNTRIES**



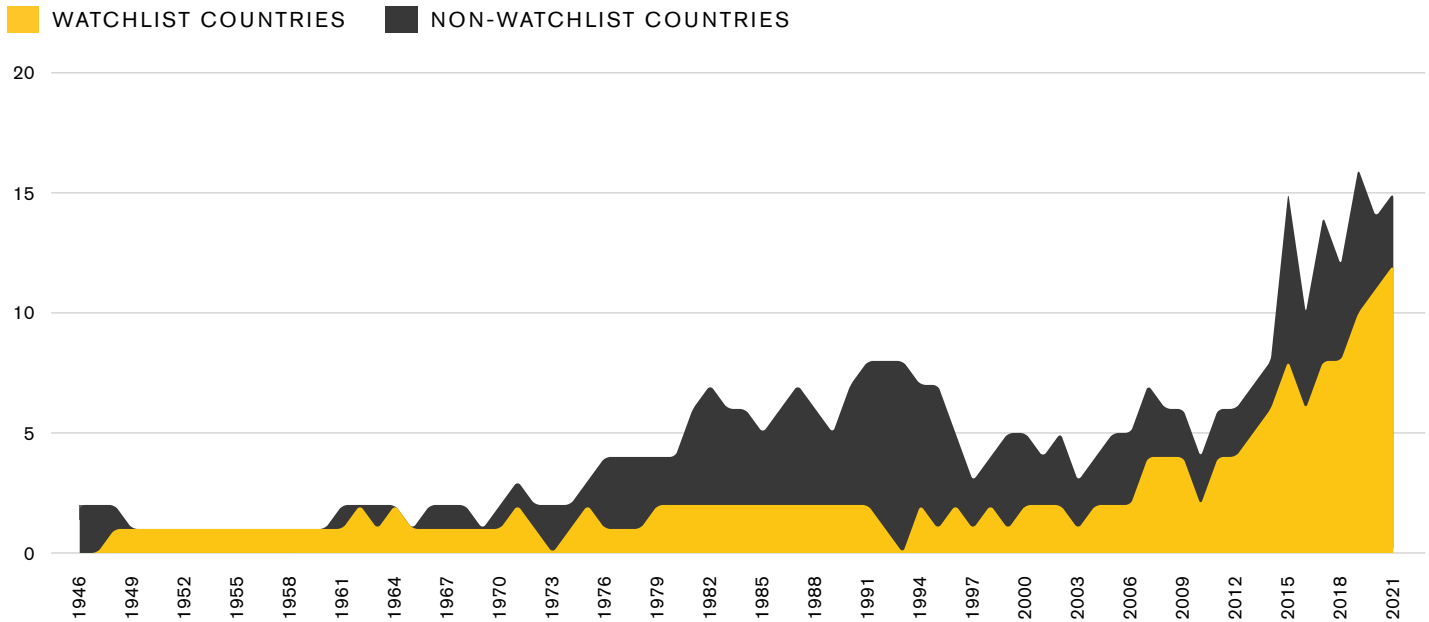
A residential building destroyed by a missile attack in Mykolaiv, Ukraine.

**AVERAGE DURATION OF CONFLICT IN YEARS**



Data from UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset v 22.1

## NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WITH TWO OR MORE CONFLICTS AT THE SAME TIME PER YEAR



Data from UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset v 22.1

» **States are not just failing to put in place guardrails to prevent and address conflict; in some cases, they are endangering their own citizens.** States have the primary responsibility to provide safety for their citizens and, in many Watchlist countries, they are failing to do so. There are cases where, through war or otherwise, state capacity has been weakened and nonstate actors strengthened to the point that the security forces cannot live up to this responsibility. But what we are seeing in some Watchlist countries is that states—and the actors they employ—can foment conflict to gain control of resources, territory and populations, often with near-complete impunity, regardless of the lives destroyed and the long-term damage to the systems and infrastructure on which communities rely.

» **The gridlock arising from geopolitical fragmentation is leading powers at both the regional and global levels to weaken guardrails that would mitigate the impact of conflict.** Diplomatic solutions to conflicts—as well as global challenges like climate change, pandemics and economic turmoil—are harder to find amid heightened geopolitical tensions. Instead of building a system that incentivizes peace, the UN Security Council is allowing impunity to embolden actors with power to start new conflicts, seek military solutions to existing ones or profit from allowing conflicts to fester and drag on. With multilateral institutions stalemated, efforts to support diplomatic solutions and implement international humanitarian law during war are failing to reduce the impact of the humanitarian crisis through the prohibition of attacks on civilian infrastructure and the promotion of humanitarian access during war, to list a few examples.

**STATES HAVE THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE SAFETY FOR THEIR CITIZENS AND, IN MANY WATCHLIST COUNTRIES, THEY ARE FAILING TO DO SO**







**KEY ACCELERATOR 2**



**2022 has shown that the role of climate change in accelerating the global humanitarian crisis is undeniable.**

Extreme weather events resulting from climate change have been a key accelerator of humanitarian need in many Watchlist countries in 2022. The longest period of poor rains ever recorded has brought catastrophic food insecurity to Somalia and Ethiopia. Massive flooding in Pakistan—in which climate change played an **important role**—has killed over **1,700** people and left over two million without a home. But the high-profile shocks are not the only impacts of climate change on Watchlist countries. IRC teams recount how climate change is degrading soil and reducing the length of rainy periods, leading to reduced food production and thus increased food insecurity even without an identifiable shock.

Watchlist countries bear little to no responsibility for climate change. They contributed just 1.9% of global CO2 emissions in 2019 (WBG) and emit just a fifth of the CO2 per capita when compared to global averages.

Climate change is undeniably a global trend, but there are three key reasons it is accelerating the humanitarian crises in Watchlist countries specifically.

**Reason 1: Inaction on the risks of global warming and extreme weather events by the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases exposes the countries least responsible for climate change to extreme climate risks.**

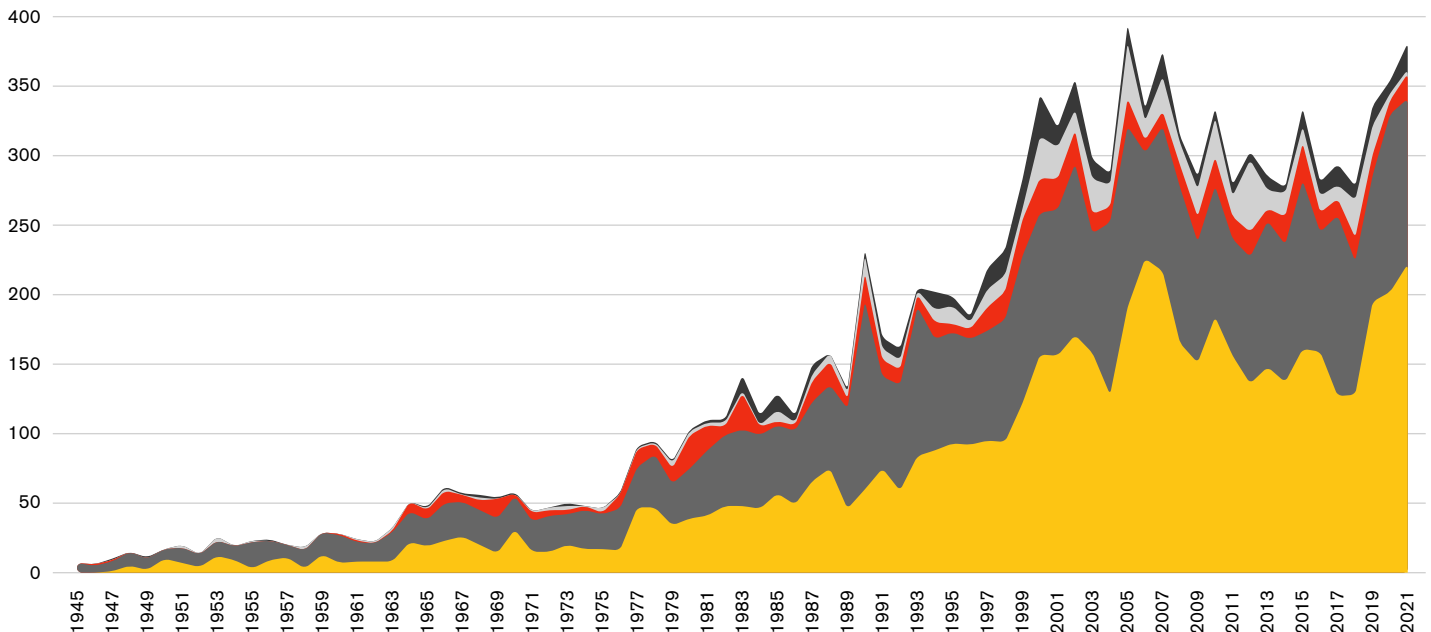
Global temperatures have already risen **1.1°C** since pre-industrial levels and, without urgent action, the world is on track to warm an average of **2.1° to 2.9°C** by 2100. Every fraction of a degree increase in average global temperatures means higher risks of extreme weather events like life-threatening heat waves, droughts and flooding. In 2015, the world's four largest emitters of greenhouse gases—China, the United States, the European Union and India—pledged to keep global warming well below 2.0° by 2100. Seven years later, the four emitters **are failing** to follow through on their promises, contributing to the humanitarian catastrophes unfurling in Watchlist and other countries that bear the least responsibility for climate change.



**EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS HAVE BEEN A KEY ACCELERATOR OF HUMANITARIAN NEED IN MANY WATCHLIST COUNTRIES**

**NATURAL SHOCKS ARE BECOMING MORE FREQUENT**

■ WILDFIRE ■ EXTREME TEMPERATURE ■ DROUGHT ■ STORM ■ FLOOD



Climate-related disasters are becoming more frequent. GHO

**ABOVE:** A man chops grass for his livestock to help them survive in Sindh, Pakistan. Flooding has destroyed his crops.



**Reason 2: Climate financing continues to lag behind the extreme effects of the climate catastrophes in Watchlist and other conflict-affected countries.**

There can be no action to mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis on Watchlist countries without funding. Yet the United States, the European Union and other developed countries fell short by tens of billions of dollars on a 2009 **pledge** to donate \$100 billion per year in climate financing by 2020. Moreover, climate financing per capita for conflict-affected countries was a **third** of what non-conflict affected countries received in 2020. Somalia, for example, received \$11 per capita in climate financing, half of the average for countries affected by climate change but not experiencing conflict. This demonstrates that not only is climate financing insufficient but it is distributed unfairly, leaving Watchlist countries unprepared as climate change accelerates crises.

**Reason 3: The world is failing to prepare Watchlist countries to adapt to climate change threats.**

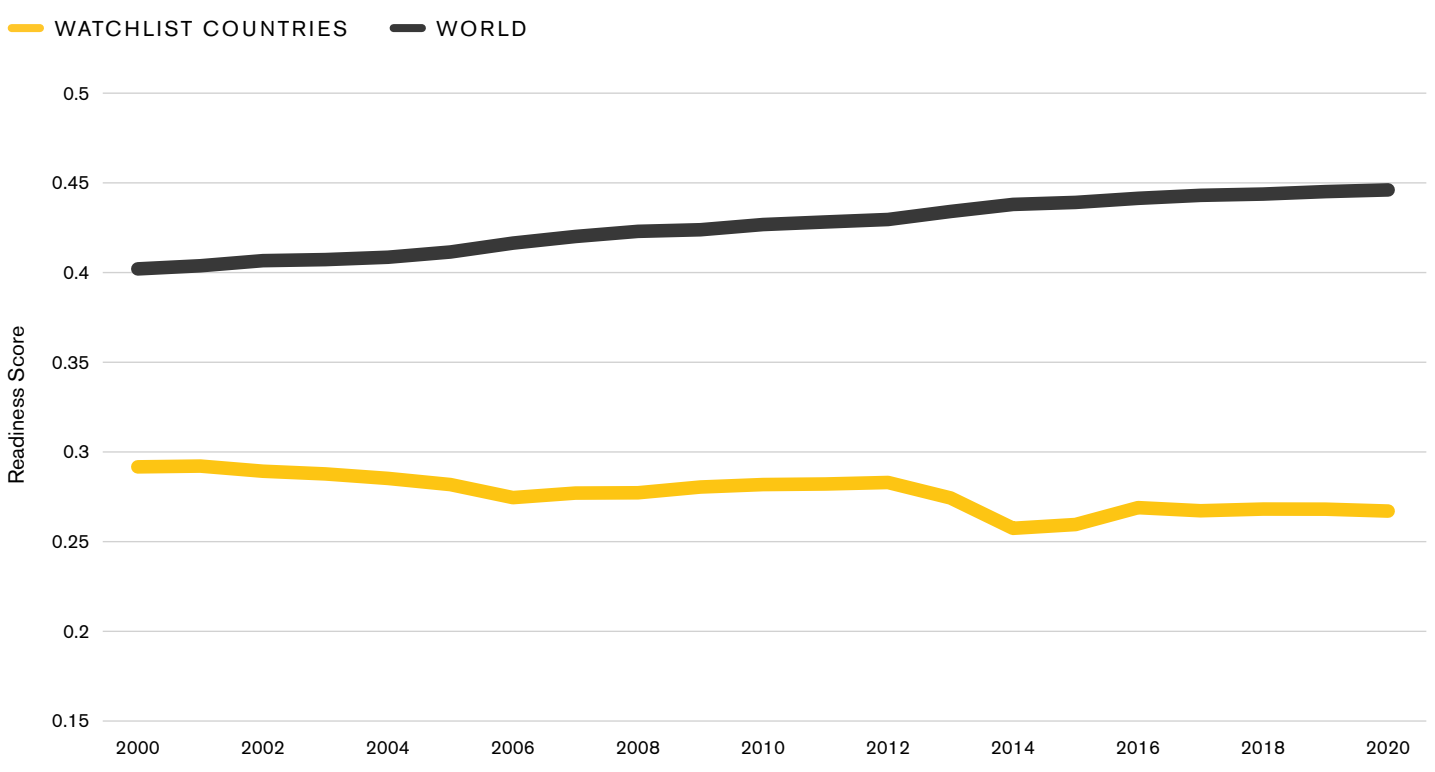
Whereas globally, most countries are steadily improving their economic, social and institutional **readiness** to improve resilience to climate change, the opposite is true in Watchlist countries. Watchlist countries are becoming even less able to withstand climate shocks including drought, floods and extreme heat events.

**DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FELL SHORT BY TENS OF BILLIONS OF DOLLARS ON A 2009 PLEDGE TO DONATE \$100 BILLION PER YEAR IN CLIMATE FINANCING BY 2020**



Women in Wa' aysad walk to collect water in the drought-affected Elele, Somali region of Ethiopia.

**AVERAGE READINESS TO RESPOND TO CLIMATE CHANGE**



The average readiness of most countries to respond to climate change is growing, but in Watchlist countries it is falling. Data from [ND-GAIN Readiness Scores](#)





**KEY ACCELERATOR 3**



**Economic turmoil rippling out from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the long-term impacts of COVID-19 is deepening food insecurity.**

2022 brought dramatic economic shocks that affected the whole world. Russia's invasion of Ukraine pushed food and fuel prices to record highs. For countries that were already experiencing food insecurity and conflict, the ability to import grain and fertilizers from Ukraine and Russia was a final guardrail against humanitarian catastrophe. Russia's blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea ports for months removed that final guardrail, pushing many Watchlist countries toward catastrophe. While Ukraine itself ranks 10 on the Watchlist, the resilience of governmental institutions, influx of aid, and sympathy from Ukraine's neighbors demonstrated in resettling displaced populations means it does not feature higher up the list. The war in Ukraine is thus an example of how a conflict in one country has dramatically accelerated crises far beyond its borders.

**Yet rather than cooperate to stabilize food costs, richer countries have enacted inward-looking monetary policies, ignoring the consequences these have for Watchlist**

**countries.** While raising the interest rates in rich countries helps alleviate the pressures of inflation, it depreciates weaker currencies and **pushes inflation rates** even higher for countries that are already experiencing currency fluctuations. Some countries responded to grain shortages by **limiting** their exports, further increasing prices for other countries.

**Moreover, many Watchlist countries are less able to produce food locally because of conflict and climate change.** Their resulting dependence on imports increases their vulnerability to global shocks, particularly given that the seven Watchlist countries with reliable wheat imports data imported 66% of their wheat from Russia and Ukraine—rising to more than **90%** for Somalia. As a result, Watchlist countries are seeing food price inflation at **39.7%**, double the average for non-Watchlist countries (19%) and making it even harder for people in Watchlist countries to afford to feed their families, even if food is available in markets. Venezuela and Lebanon, two Watchlist countries, have had inflation rates in the triple digits. So while the economic trends are global, Watchlist countries have faced a particular impact.

**THE WAR IN UKRAINE IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW A CONFLICT IN ONE COUNTRY HAS DRAMATICALLY ACCELERATED CRISES FAR BEYOND ITS BORDERS**



**FOOD PRICES REACHED RECORD LEVELS IN 2022 ACCORDING TO FAO**



Global food prices rose to record levels in 2022. **FAO**



# WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?



The Watchlist identifies growing humanitarian need and explains the reasons for it. The guardrails against crisis have been weakened. Wars are longer and more virulent; the climate crisis is a conflict multiplier and is causing economic pain today; and the economic shock waves from the COVID-19 pandemic and conflict in Ukraine are hitting the most vulnerable the hardest.

The erosion of guardrails meant to address these underlying issues means that humanitarian crises are spiraling. We are increasingly contending with runaway humanitarian crises where the humanitarian response is not a last resort for the few, but a lifeline for large swaths of countries' populations.

The IRC will respond by running critical programs for people caught up in crisis around the world and targeting the most vulnerable. We are also committed to using our voice to advocate for interventions that will help people survive, recover and gain control of their lives. In the context of the Watchlist, that means advocating for changes to strengthen the guardrails against crisis.

Aid as usual will not meet the moment. The nearly 340 million people who require aid in 2023 need more humanitarian funding for greater and better programs, but they also need and deserve more and different. While the challenges are big, solutions exist.



The international community should start to rebuild the guardrails against crisis in 2023 by setting ambitious goals to:

-  Break the cycle of crisis
-  Protect civilians in conflict
-  Manage shared global risks

**AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE, FROM THE MICRO TO THE MACRO**



**TOP RIGHT:** Barat, 57, builds a shovel to clear the snow off of their makeshift home in Kabul, Afghanistan.  
**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Amin Adamo, a coffee farmer, walks through his farm after it was destroyed by severe drought in Ethiopia.





## BREAK THE CYCLE OF CRISIS

→ **Guardrails are weakened because the international system treats every crisis as though it is short term and an exception.**

Breaking the cycle of crisis requires targeted interventions—starting by fixing the broken international response to the hunger crisis, investing in national responses to stop the slide from fragile to failed state and investing in the frontlines of humanitarian response.

Many Watchlist countries are stuck in a state of protracted crisis. In six countries (Afghanistan, Somalia, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen), critical humanitarian aid is required for half or more of the country's population in 2023. Humanitarians are no longer just a lifeline for the few, but expected to be the final guardrail to stop countries' descents from fragile to failed states. A failure to address underlying causes leaves donors funding far more costly emergency responses year after year. The world is contending with a record-high \$50 billion humanitarian appeal for 2023, surpassing one of the world's largest development programs, the World Bank's IDA program, funded at roughly \$31 billion per year.<sup>2</sup> As articulated by the Alliance of Small Island States at COP27, these contexts need "solidarity not charity" with equitable partnerships that treat them as allies in solving global challenges and support them with the tools for recovery.

**01**

### Reboot the global response to extreme hunger.

Food insecurity is a complex challenge, but the slide into famine is manmade, driven by international inaction as well as local circumstance. Deaths from famine and untreated malnutrition are preventable and unacceptable. Amid a once-in-a-generation hunger crisis, reforms to global responses could help save the lives of many of the record one million people at risk of starvation and two million children likely to die each year from malnutrition.

There is a mechanism to supercharge this effort, but it needs to be repurposed. The international community should start by reenergizing the Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on Preventing Famine to target the countries most at risk of famine.

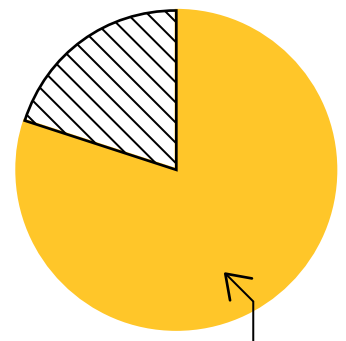


Eugenie is a nurse at an IRC-supported medical facility and survived Ebola in Mabalako, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The task force's mandate should be narrowed to target the countries identified by the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) and FAO as "highest concern" in their regular Hunger Hotspots analysis, mobilizing action well before a formal famine declaration. This year, that tier consists of six countries, all on the Watchlist: Somalia, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Yemen, northeast Nigeria and South Sudan. The task force's membership should also be expanded to include donors, international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to start to break down the humanitarian-development divide in these responses.

The international community should also aim to treat every child enduring acute malnutrition. A staggering **80%** of malnourished children are not getting treatment, leading to roughly two million deaths annually. Two decades ago, the United States launched the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). With bipartisan political leadership and a public health approach, PEPFAR has played a critical role in bringing the HIV epidemic to heel, saving **21 million** lives. A similar approach is needed now as 52 million children suffer from acute malnutrition. Fortunately, a proven solution exists in the form of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF), a nutrient-rich, peanut-based paste. But the delivery approach is inefficient and difficult to scale. A bifurcated system treats severe and moderate forms of malnutrition with different products, different supply chains and at different delivery points. The IRC's research and evidence show that a shift towards a simplified, combined protocol with one treatment product could turn the tide and save millions of children's lives.

**HUMANITARIANS ARE NO LONGER JUST A LIFELINE FOR THE FEW, BUT EXPECTED TO BE THE FINAL GUARDRAIL TO STOP ENTIRE COUNTRIES DESCENDING INTO CATASTROPHE**



# 80%

of malnourished children are not getting treatment, leading to roughly 2 million deaths annually

2. The International Development Association (IDA) supports the poorest developing countries in economic growth and IDA20 was just replenished for \$93 billion for 2022-2025, meaning an average of \$31 billion per year.

02

## Stop the slide from fragile to failed state.

By 2030, **two-thirds** of the extreme poor will live in fragile and conflict-affected states, including half in Watchlist countries alone.<sup>3</sup> **Four in five** fragile and conflict-affected states are off-track to achieve select targets of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Humanitarian aid is not enough. Parallel aid and service delivery systems are shortsighted. It is not enough to keep people alive; they should be supported with a path towards self-sufficiency and recovery. Conflict, climate change and economic shocks have left poor economies, weak governance and low state capacity. Governments are racking up debt to survive; **60%** of low-income developing countries are in debt distress or at high risk of it—a doubling since 2015. They are then cutting public services, subsidies, etc. to repay it, leaving people without sufficient social safety nets or access to health, education and other basic services. This is not just the way it is in developing countries—these contexts are getting worse and falling behind in global progress.

03

## Fund the frontlines with a people-first MDB strategy.

Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) are increasingly facing the need to operate in fragile and conflict-affected states where governments are often unable (or unwilling) to support all populations or donors are opposed to funding the authorities in power. So a new mindset is needed. While MDBs are accustomed to a government-first strategy, they should shift towards a people-first strategy that centers on communities in need.

MDBs should formalize a strategy for funding nongovernment organizations to better support areas without viable options for government programs, while still designing programs in ways that leave the door open to transitioning programs to governments in the future. This requires standard ways of working and criteria for when to directly support civil society. There are a growing number of ad hoc precedents in places like Yemen, South Sudan and Afghanistan where MDBs funded the UN or NGOs to provide basic services. Most recently, donors were unwilling to fund the new

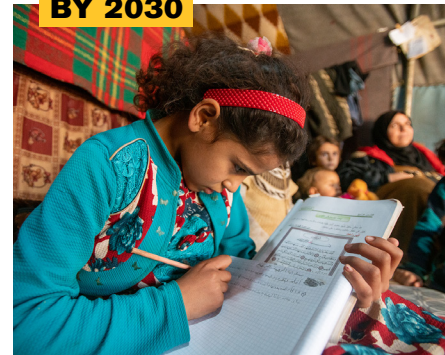
Given their domestic crises, these states are particularly reliant on foreign donor support to break the cycle of crisis with wider economic and development support. Donors should prioritize these settings by committing 50% of bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) to fragile and conflict-affected states—up from 27% currently. That shift would direct at least an additional \$25 billion per year to these contexts.<sup>4</sup> This funding should come in the form of greater grants and more favorable concessional financing and wider debt relief as the risk of a debt crisis rises. The top priority for the use of this additional funding should be restoring basic service delivery, like education systems, to support the **260 million** children out of school given **only 3%** of humanitarian aid currently supports education, as well as essential health, water and other services. Financing should be accompanied by policy commitments from recipient governments on critical issues like governance and anti-corruption measures to ensure these systems best serve their population.

authorities in Afghanistan after the shift in power in 2021, but remained committed to supporting the Afghan people. They successfully navigated this challenge by reconfiguring a World Bank-led trust fund to move all funds via the UN and NGOs to sustain the country's health system, education and large-scale livelihoods and agriculture programs.

Even in places with government programs, civil society can complement them; they can quickly scale up when disaster strikes (e.g., cash transfer programs) via shock-responsive strategies and target those most affected like displaced populations, women and girls and marginalized groups. Nongovernment organizations, particularly NGOs, often have a long-standing presence in these communities, trust and an understanding of intersecting needs and local dynamics. They can operate in ways that are effective, efficient and conflict sensitive. For instance, the IRC is **partnering with GAVI** to launch an ambitious effort across East Africa to reach “zero dose” children who have not received a single routine vaccine, often due to living in conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas or places with weak or nonexistent health systems.

# 2/3

**OF THE EXTREME POOR WILL LIVE IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED STATES, INCLUDING HALF IN WATCHLIST COUNTRIES ALONE, BY 2030**



10-year-old Heba in a Syrian displacement camp. Her school closed down after shelling made it unsafe to keep it open.

**DONORS SHOULD SHIFT TOWARDS A PEOPLE-FIRST STRATEGY THAT CENTERS ON COMMUNITIES IN NEED**



Zhwan Mall has seen an increase in his crops after being a part of a canal construction in Afghanistan.

3. IRC analysis of projections by the World Data Lab's [World Poverty Clock](#). The countries on Watchlist 2023 will be host to 46% of the world's extreme poor by 2030. This data excludes five countries with missing data: Myanmar, Lebanon, Syria, Ethiopia and Ukraine.

4. IRC analysis of [OECD](#) data of bilateral ODA in 2020 provided by members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) using the World Bank's [classification](#) of states as fragile or conflict-affected.



# PROTECT CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT



→ **Guardrails are weakened because the laws of war are disregarded with impunity. The world does not need new laws; it needs to assert and enforce existing ones.**

Adherence to the laws of war is being eroded. International humanitarian law is designed to spare civilians from the worst aspects of conflict. But across Watchlist countries, civilians are facing the indiscriminate use of force and even deliberate attacks. Parties to conflicts are even weaponizing critical aid, blocking it from reaching certain populations. Nearly **40 countries**, including every Watchlist country, are experiencing high constraints on humanitarian access. These acts are accelerating with impunity. The world does not need new rules or laws, but a re-invigorating commitment to implement existing ones. All UN member states have already signed onto the Geneva Conventions. It is time to work to restore the guardrails previously created and agreed upon.

## 01 Re-establish people's right to aid.

The denial of humanitarian access is happening in the dark. Humanitarian organizations operating on the ground are unable to raise alarm for fear of retaliation. Even the UN is constrained in its ability to speak out as access becomes politicized. Those restricting aid are not just nonstate actors, but also UN member states. As a result, the UN Security Council (UNSC) is gridlocked. There is an urgent need for someone to shed light on the weaponization of access and speak truth to power.

Establishing an independent organization, such as an Organization for the Promotion of Humanitarian Access (OPHA), could fill this gap and act as a watchdog group. It should be made up of global leaders and experienced humanitarian negotiators. It should produce an annual report on challenges and trends in humanitarian access, provide regular analysis and early warnings when access is deteriorating and make recommendations and



convene stakeholders to galvanize collective commitments on access. These efforts should seek to reassert the long-standing principles underpinning humanitarian work.

Given gridlock in the UNSC, the General Assembly (GA) and regional bodies should also play a greater role in supporting humanitarian affairs. An OPHA should encourage the UNSC, GA and relevant regional bodies to consider and take action on the most serious incidents from its reports, such as starvation as a weapon of war or attacks on healthcare or aid workers. The GA or UNSC could then establish independent fact-finding missions that investigate these instances, recommend ways forward and report their findings back to the GA and UNSC for further action. To keep attention on the importance of humanitarian access, individual UNSC member states should consider hosting regular Arria Formula meetings, informal meeting of UNSC members, to draw attention to access challenges and recommendations for improvement in regular country briefings.



**TOP RIGHT:** Fose Abdile fetches water at the water point in Kambe Kebele, Elele district, Somali Region.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** An IRC staff member provides PPE to protect a local health facility from Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**02**

## Tackle impunity for mass atrocities.

The most severe abuses of civilians require actions that transcend politics and polarization. Yet the UNSC is paralyzed, jeopardizing its credibility and setting dangerous precedents that will allow impunity to flourish.

UNSC permanent members should support the proposal from France and Mexico, backed by over 100 states, to suspend the veto in the UNSC in cases of mass atrocities. The five permanent members of the UNSC would voluntarily refrain from using their veto power in these instances. Implementing this commitment would require a clear, neutral way to identify cases that merit veto suspension. The determination of mass atrocities should be set by a new standing, independent panel in order to minimize the risk of politicization or disagreement over the applicability of veto suspension. A first order of business for this panel should be defining “mass atrocities.” Both

the French proposal and the UN Framework of Analysis for the Prevention of Atrocity Crimes have defined atrocities as including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Limiting the veto in these situations would be a critical first step to ease gridlock and start to depoliticize UNSC action on some of the worst humanitarian crises and conflicts.

When the UNSC falls short, the General Assembly should step up, starting by regularly enforcing Liechtenstein’s “veto initiative,” passed in 2022. It seeks to hold UNSC permanent members accountable and raise the political stakes when they use the veto by creating a standing mandate for the General Assembly to convene every time a veto is cast in the UNSC. During these convenings, the General Assembly should re-energize the “Uniting for Peace” mechanism, which was meant to enable it to step into gaps left by the UNSC. General Assembly measures could include mandating commissioning inquiries or removing countries from privileged UN roles.

**03**

## Empower women in peace and security efforts.

Efforts to prevent and resolve conflict should be accountable to those most affected in each context. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work for crisis settings. Adapting to the intersectional nature of conflict means shifting power and decision-making towards local groups and women in particular. Women have an outsized role to play in strengthening the guardrails for communities in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

That requires a focus on women at every stage of conflict—from efforts to prevent violence, move towards peace and support sustainable recovery. That necessitates greater funding to women-led organizations tackling issues at the heart of rising violence, including structural inequalities, a lack of social cohesion and resilience. The international community has been backsliding here. Peacebuilding efforts, whether

local, national or international processes, need to have women at the negotiating table to make these processes accountable to the wider population and thus more durable. Women made up only **19%** of participants in UN-led processes in 2021. Yet peace accords are **35%** more likely to last at least 15 years if women participate in them. All states should codify UNSC resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which urges actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives into conflict prevention and resolution into their own domestic legislation and national action plans. All of this must be underpinned by sustained funding for protection and empowerment programs, from gender-based violence responses to economic programs, to address the disproportionate impact on women during and after conflict.

# 19%

**OF PARTICIPANTS  
IN UN-LED PEACE  
PROCESSES IN 2021  
WERE WOMEN**



Loyce Tabu is a 'Listen Up' activist with Togoletta women's group in the Bidi Bidi refugee settlement in Uganda.



# CONFRONT SHARED GLOBAL RISKS

## Guardrails are being weakened because risks are increasingly global, yet resilience remains national.

Borderless crises define Watchlist 2023, most notably climate change, the lingering threat of the next pandemic and record levels of forced displacement. These crises extend beyond the capacity of any one country to manage—particularly states already in the midst of humanitarian crisis—and thus require greater international coordination and investment. Measures to mitigate these challenges are true global public goods. The success of global efforts to combat these challenges will hinge in large part on investments in Watchlist settings and innovative approaches. At a time of global polarization and fragmentation, these shared risks should be a space for greater unity and common interests.

**01**

### Break down the climate-humanitarian divide.

In all the talk of net zero, we cannot forget about the ground zero of climate disaster: fragile and conflict-affected states who are hit hardest today. The failure to proactively invest in climate change prevention and mitigation is leading to more need for adaptation. A failure to fund adaptation in the places hit hardest today leads to more cause for “loss and damage” payments for the damage that has now been done. Reparations come too late to address what communities needed in the first place.

While the climate crisis requires a global response, one size does not fit all. In these settings, we need to focus on better mapping of risks, innovation in climate resilience and coordinated funding that addresses the climate-humanitarian divide.

A better mapping of climate risks in humanitarian settings is needed to assess the slower onset, shadow crises that are emerging—the ways climate change destroys agriculture and livelihoods, worsens cyclical drought and erodes coping mechanisms.

If we can pinpoint risk more accurately, we can deploy resilience-building interventions in



advance, not just aid after the fact. Successful programs are already being piloted and should be brought to scale. This includes climate-resilient agriculture to support rural communities facing future recurring shocks, anticipatory cash programming, investments in seed security and a scaling up of community-based disaster-risk reduction such as early-warning systems.

Financing also needs to be better coordinated, breaking down the humanitarian-climate divide that leaves crisis settings falling through the cracks of international responses. Current climate finance is highly risk averse. Crisis settings are punished for their double exposure to conflict/fragility and climate change. UN Development Program (UNDP) research [finds](#) the more fragile a country is, the less climate finance it receives. Climate finance orients toward more stable settings with efforts at prevention and mitigation, while support for fragile and conflict-affected states is often reduced to short-term emergency aid. These states miss out on critical investments in longer-term resilience programs and climate adaptation, despite being at the knife's edge of climate change. Donors should rectify this imbalance by not only fulfilling their long-delayed promise of \$100 billion per year in climate financing to developing countries, but also committing to provide 50% of climate financing for adaptation to help states cope with the crises in front of them today. Lastly, donors should provide public pledges for funding the newly agreed upon “loss and damage” fund that is supposed to be in place by the next UN climate change conference in 2023.



**IF WE CAN  
PINPOINT RISK  
MORE ACCURATELY,  
WE CAN DEPLOY  
RESILIENCE-  
BUILDING  
INTERVENTIONS  
IN ADVANCE, NOT  
JUST AID AFTER  
THE FACT**

**TOP RIGHT:** Women walking to drier areas in the district Sanghar in Pakistan as the flood water surpasses the roads.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Amin Abduraman, a coffee farmer, holds the branches of a coffee tree destroyed by the severe drought in Ethiopia.

02

## Pandemic-proof the world.

COVID-19's devastating impacts have made clear that pandemics are not solely health issues. They are economic issues, security issues, social issues and deeply political issues. The world remains in danger if pandemics sit solely on the desks of health ministers and the World Health Organization (WHO). Prevention, preparedness and response require whole-of-society action which can only be mobilized from the highest levels of government and the international system.

In line with this finding, the Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response recommended a Global Health Threats Council that convenes at leader level. This multisectoral council would sustain political commitment to pandemic preparedness and response, identify gaps, monitor progress towards clear goals and

advise on the allocation of additional resources pooled through a new Pandemic Fund. With a small but diverse membership, the council would balance legitimacy, inclusion and effectiveness with the ultimate aim of holding countries and international bodies accountable for ending the current pandemic and preventing future ones.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also has a vital role to play given the economic shocks unleashed by COVID-19. In line with the panel's recommendation, the IMF should regularly assess its member countries' pandemic preparedness, including their economic response plans. This engagement could be modeled on the IMF and World Bank's existing monitoring through their Financial Sector Assessment Programs.



Hend Abu Dabour, an IRC nurse, prepares a COVID-19 vaccine at the IRC's clinic in Za'atari Camp in Jordan.

03

## Strike a new deal for the forcibly displaced.

Refugees and other people on the move are not the crisis—mismanaged responses to displacement are. The welcoming response to many Ukrainians fleeing to Europe this year should be the norm, not the exception. Yet the majority of the world's refugees are hosted in low- and middle-income states, which are among those least equipped to support large refugee populations. A record level of forced displacement and the protracted nature of it merits a step change in support for these populations and those hosting them, who are providing a global public good.

This requires greater support to both those displaced and their hosts. Host communities are often the first and primary frontline responders during a displacement crisis. International financial institutions and major donors should respond with more ambitious aid and beyond-aid solutions. This should include significantly scaling up the World Bank's IDA Window for Host Communities and Refugees (WHR) and the Global Concessional Financing Facility for states that commit to welcoming policies for

refugees like access to work, education, health services and documentation. Regional MDBs should follow suit.

This crisis also requires dedicated strategies from donors in response to the internally displaced people (IDP) crises, which are too often forgotten despite the fact that there are twice as many IDPs as refugees globally. Like refugee crises, IDP movements can overwhelm local systems, become protracted and often result in parallel humanitarian responses rather than a scale up of the state's response. While refugees often face legal barriers to basic services, those internally displaced are often hosted in areas with active conflict and fragility, meaning there are extremely limited services and development in host communities that are often pushed to the brink by the sudden arrival of IDPs. The result is limited access to jobs, children left out of school and a dependency on aid. Additional financing and policy guidance is required to target these populations that are at risk of falling through the cracks of state responses.

**HOST COMMUNITIES ARE OFTEN THE FIRST AND PRIMARY FRONTLINE RESPONDERS DURING A DISPLACEMENT CRISIS**







# 2023 WATCHLIST

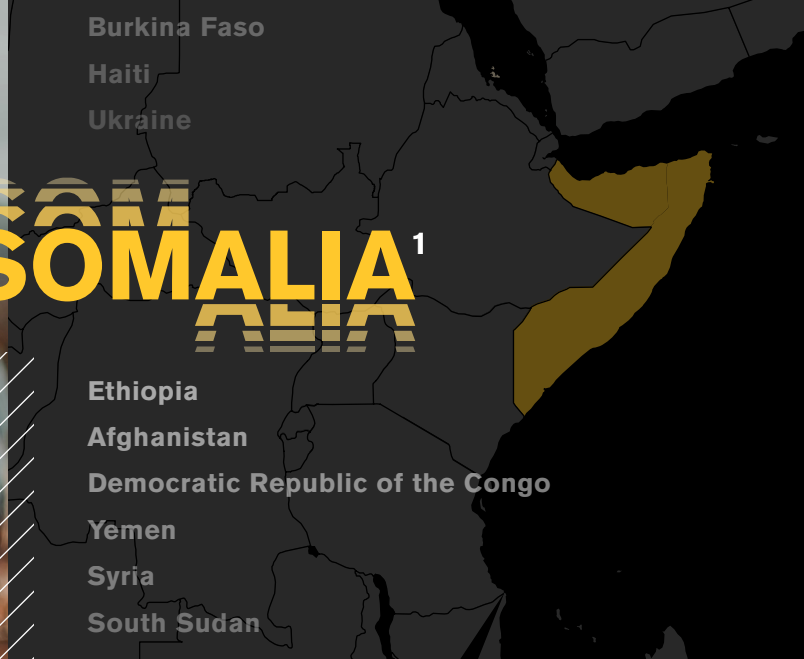


**COUNTRY PROFILES**

**LEFT:** Animal carcasses in Elele, Somali Region.

**RIGHT:** 4-year-old Asiana sits on the bricks that were once her home in Afghanistan before the 5.9 magnitude earthquake reduced it to rubble.





**CATASTROPHIC FOOD CRISIS  
AS RECORD DROUGHT FOLLOWS  
DECADES OF CONFLICT**

**A devastating drought pushes Somalia to the top of the Watchlist for the first time ever, reflecting how three decades of conflict have devastated the country’s resilience to new shocks.**

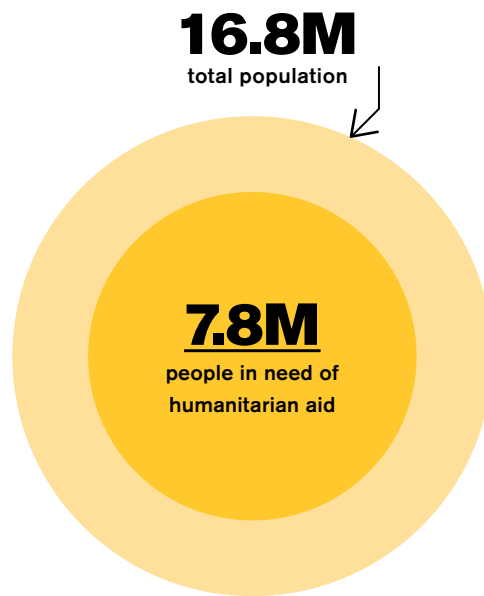
Over **200,000** Somalis are currently experiencing catastrophic (IPC 5) food insecurity, where people are starving to death each day and children’s weakened bodies are particularly at risk from common diseases like malaria and diarrhea. By mid-2023, that number will more than triple and over eight million Somalis—nearly half of the population—will be living through crisis levels of food insecurity or worse (IPC 3+). The immediate trigger is a record drought: the country is currently experiencing a record fifth consecutive failed rainy season and rains in early 2023 **may also** be poor. But this is no “natural disaster.” Manmade climate change has increased the frequency and severity of droughts, decades of conflict have significantly eroded Somalia’s ability to respond to new shocks and the combined damage to Somalia’s domestic food production have made the country dangerously reliant on imported grains—specifically from Ukraine and Russia.



**Abdirashid Adan Mohamed**  
Medical Officer,  
Somalia

“Aside from a protracted civil conflict, Somalia is experiencing its worst drought in 40 years,” explained Abdirashid Mohamed, an IRC medical officer in Somalia. “The drought has caused massive displacement, localized famine, epidemic disease outbreaks and malnutrition. All of this is happening against the backdrop of a deteriorating social safety net and a frail healthcare system. My team is working hard to provide critical health services to vulnerable communities.”

**KEY DATA**



**8.3M**

people facing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity in 2023

**727K**

people projected to face catastrophic food insecurity (IPC 5) in 2023

**3.0M**

people internally displaced at the end of 2022

**ABOVE:** Amina Sayid, 24, says that food and water are scarce, even in the Torotorow IDP camp in Somalia.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. Hundreds of thousands of people's lives are at risk as catastrophic food insecurity deepens following an unprecedented fifth consecutive failed rainy season—and a sixth may follow in early 2023.** Droughts occur periodically in East Africa but manmade climate change likely explains the duration and severity of the current crisis, which has devastated crop production and made it nearly impossible for herders to find food for their animals. At least **3 million** livestock have died since the start of the drought in 2021. Nearly **8.3 million** people are projected to experience crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity by mid-2023, with over 700,000 facing the worst, catastrophic levels of food insecurity (IPC 5), where people are starving to death every day. With poor rains set to persist into 2023, even more Somalis will be unable to access enough food and many have little option but to leave their homes to seek humanitarian assistance in urban centers or across the border in Kenya and Ethiopia. At least **20,000** Somalis crossed into Kenya in 2022 and another **66,000** could take the same route by April 2023. In mid-2022, famine was predicted to strike areas of Somalia by the end of the year. Regardless of the exact timing of a formal famine declaration, a catastrophe is already underway and any formal declaration will be too late to prevent mass loss of life.

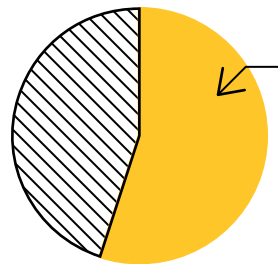
**2. High global food prices are making it even harder for people to feed their families.** As the country's domestic food production has been decimated by the climate crisis and protracted conflict, the country has become dangerously reliant on imported food, with over **90%** of Somalia's wheat supplies coming from Russia and Ukraine. Now, record-high increases in the prices of staple crops on the global market have made it even harder for many Somalis to afford enough food.

**3. Armed conflict will remain the key factor putting Somalis at risk.** The regional drought and global economic ripple effects from Ukraine are having a devastating impact in Somalia because of the country's experience of more than three decades of conflict. Other countries have been able to withstand similar shocks, but years of war have destroyed the systems and infrastructure that would have provided a guardrail against climate and economic disaster. Somalia now produces **less than half** as much food as it did before it fell into decades of conflict. Rather than cooperating to mitigate the impacts of the drought, parties to the conflict have instead escalated it: in the third quarter of 2022, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (**ACLED**) project documented the highest levels of conflict-related fatalities for five years. Internal displacements due to conflict nearly **doubled** between 2020 and 2021 (the last years for which data is recorded).

**4. Conflict dynamics disrupt humanitarian action, weakening a key guardrail against catastrophe.** Humanitarian actors have limited ability to enter and operate in areas controlled by the nonstate armed group Al Shabaab (**ACAPS**), although the group does allow residents of those areas to leave

to access aid elsewhere (**UNSC**), and an escalation in violence in late 2022 suggests conflict may continue to intensify in 2023. There are even reports of Al Shabaab **burning food deliveries** and destroying or poisoning water sources. Somalia scores four out of a maximum possible of five for humanitarian access constraints, according to **ACAPS**, underlining the severe constraints on efforts to address needs associated with the food insecurity catastrophe—which are not just delivering food, but include medical care, water and sanitary health services and more.

**5. Lack of funding is undermining the humanitarian response, even as needs grow.** Year-on-year underfunding of the humanitarian response in Somalia has hindered the ability of humanitarian actors to fully respond to urgent needs. The 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is only **55%** funded, with around \$1 billion still missing, despite the deepening food insecurity catastrophe. Sectors critical to an effective response to the crisis—particularly health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)—are funded just 60% and 28% respectively, weakening the overall effort to prevent massive loss of life. Longer-term resilience support is also critical, in addition to responding to the current crisis, given the inevitability of future climatic shocks.



## Only 55%

of the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is funded, with around \$1 billion still missing, despite the deepening, catastrophic food insecurity.

### THE IRC IN SOMALIA

The IRC has been operational in Somalia since 1981, where it currently supports communities in Galmudug, Southwest and Puntland states, as well as in the Banaadir (Mogadishu) region. The IRC's staff in Somalia are scaling up our programs to address the current drought and rising food insecurity, including expanding to new areas to meet severe needs. We provide health, nutrition, water and sanitation services; women's protection and empowerment; and cash assistance to drought-affected populations across the country. [Learn more](#) about the IRC's Somalia response.



**MULTIPLE CONFLICTS UNDERMINE RESPONSE TO FOOD CATASTROPHE**

**Prolonged drought in the southeast of the country, ongoing economic stresses and the impact of conflict in northern Ethiopia, Oromia and elsewhere will exacerbate growing needs.**

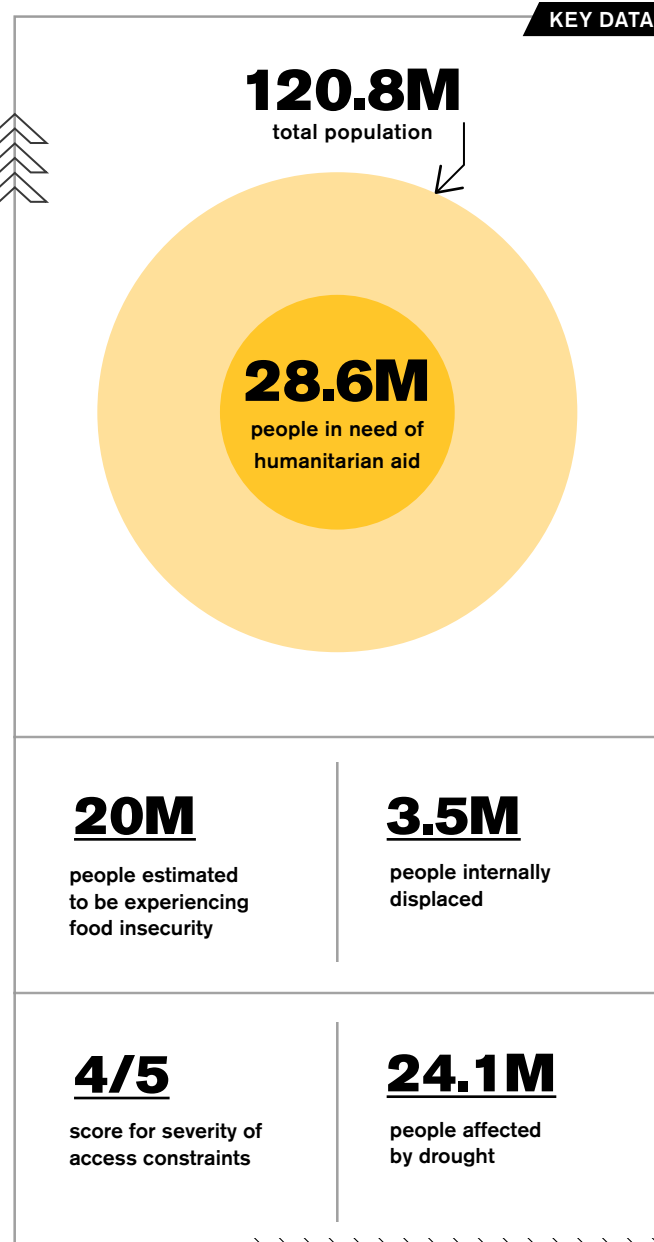
Ethiopia is heading towards its sixth consecutive failed rainy season—which threatens to prolong a drought that is already affecting **24.1 million** people. At the same time, Ethiopia is grappling with the impact of various conflicts across the country, particularly in the Oromia, Afar and Benishangul-Gumuz regions, which are hampering humanitarians’ ability to address food insecurity and crisis-affected communities’ other needs. Episodic fighting between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) throughout 2022 exacerbated humanitarian needs and risks to civilians in northern Ethiopia. A November 2022 peace deal between Addis Ababa and the TPLF holds the promise of reduced conflict and increased humanitarian assistance—if the deal holds.



**Bilan Mohamud**  
40-year-old mother  
in Ethiopia

“Before the drought, I used to have 10 cattle. But now, I only have one left,” said Bilan Mohamud, a 40-year-old mother living in Ethiopia. “Nine of my cattle died. If the situation continues like this, I may lose [my last cattle], too.”

**KEY DATA**



**ABOVE:** Sixty-year-old Abdi Hussen walked for five weeks with his eight children, 60 camels and 80 cattle because of the drought in Ethiopia.





## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

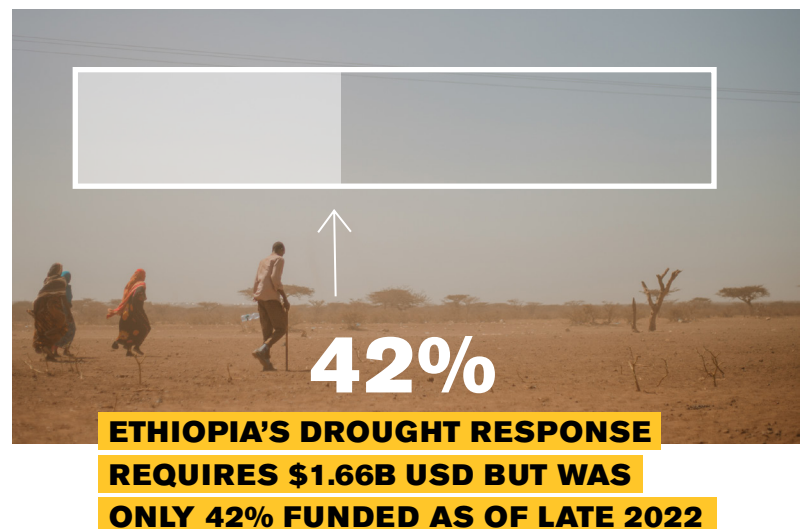
**1. People risk starving to death as parts of Ethiopia are already experiencing catastrophic food insecurity (IPC 5) and an unprecedented five consecutive failed rainy seasons.** The UN estimates that more than 20 million people are food insecure and need food assistance across the country, half of those due to drought, and **FEWS NET** has warned that IPC 5 is present in parts of the country. However, unlike other countries facing major food insecurity, humanitarian actors have not been able to reach an agreement with the government to carry out accurate food insecurity assessments that would give a more precise sense of both the current and future situation, hampering efforts to plan a response. Given the scale of the emergency in Ethiopia in 2022, food insecurity will certainly remain severe into 2023 and catastrophic conditions—where people are starving to death each day—could spread if aid is not immediately scaled up and if, as is possible, March to May rains in 2023 are also poor (**UN**). Limited access to safe drinking water due to the drought has also contributed to a cholera outbreak in Oromia that further increases the risks for people, particularly children, whose bodies have been weakened by insufficient food.

**2. Conflict across Ethiopia will drive increased needs, particularly if the Tigray peace deal does not hold.** A peace deal to end hostilities in the northern Tigray region was announced in November 2022, providing some hope for the more than 5.2 million people in the region in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. For now, it is unclear whether the peace deal will hold or humanitarian assistance will be able to ramp up quickly to meet the scale of the needs. Conflicts in other regions, particularly Oromia, Afar and Benishangul-Gumuz, are also driving up needs and disrupting humanitarian action. The armed group Al Shabaab—which has largely operated in neighboring Somalia—clashed with security forces in Ethiopia's Somali region in July 2022, which could add to the challenges facing Ethiopian authorities in 2023.

**3. The country's compounding crises have weakened the economy, making it even harder for the population to cope and afford enough food.** Ethiopian government resources are being strained by numerous crises: drought, conflict and the economic impacts of the war in Ukraine and global economic conditions, limiting the resources the government can deploy for addressing the growing food insecurity crisis. Moreover, inflation reached a high of 37.7% in May 2022, and while inflationary pressures have since **eased** to their lowest levels for a year, high food prices still persist. The drought has also eroded people's access to food and income, in part due to the high rate of livestock deaths, making it harder for families to afford enough food.

**4. Insufficient funding for the humanitarian response is preventing a proportionate response to the catastrophe threatening Ethiopia.** Ethiopia's drought response requires

\$1.66 billion but was only 42% funded as of late 2022, and UNICEF's appeal for children remains only 38% funded—far less than the responses in neighboring Somalia, whose humanitarian response plan is 55% funded, or Kenya, where the drought flash appeal is 51% funded). The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (**OCHA**) estimates that only 12% of people in drought-affected areas have been reached with health services, and less than 30% with WASH assistance—all of which are critical in avoiding mass deaths during a drought and a cholera outbreak.



## THE IRC IN ETHIOPIA

Since 2000, the IRC has provided a wide range of assistance for refugees living in camps and for Ethiopian communities throughout the country that have been affected by drought, flooding, conflict and COVID-19. In strong partnership with civil society, we distribute cash and basic emergency supplies, including for women and girls, and build and maintain safe water supply systems and sanitation facilities. The IRC also supports government partners and community workers in primary healthcare clinics, constructs classrooms and trains teachers and provides livelihoods-related training and job opportunities to youth and at-risk households. [Learn more](#) about the IRC's Ethiopia response.

**ABOVE:** The Somali region of Ethiopia is experiencing its worst drought in 40 years.



# AFGHANISTAN<sup>3</sup>

Burkina Faso  
Haiti  
Ukraine

Ethiopia  
Afghanistan  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Yemen  
Syria  
South Sudan

## ECONOMIC STAGNATION LEAVES MILLIONS IN NEED ONE YEAR AFTER POLITICAL TAKEOVER

**Afghanistan ranked number one on Watchlist 2022 and drops down for 2023 not because of an improvement in conditions but because of the severity of the situation in East Africa.**

Over a year since the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA, commonly known as the Taliban) took power, Afghans are feeling the devastating impacts of the economic collapse. Steps to avert the worst outcomes have been taken. Rapid increases in aid averted famine last winter and enabled nearly 10 million Afghans to access health and nutrition services. Sanctions relief has been instrumental in facilitating all these efforts. While vital for sustaining even low-growth projections, these steps cannot address the root causes of the crisis. Despite efforts to engage the IEA, a plan to address Afghanistan's economic collapse has not been agreed upon. With almost the entire population now living in poverty and preparing for another long winter, an escalation in humanitarian need is a risk in 2023.



**Mosina\***  
31-year-old mother in Afghanistan

"We are facing an economic crisis. [My husband] is a simple worker. There is no work every day," said Mosina, a 31-year-old mother in Afghanistan. "He works one day and then for 20 days there is no work at all."

\*A pseudonym is used for the client's protection.

### KEY DATA

**40.8M**

total population

**28.3M**

people in need of humanitarian aid

**18.9M**

people facing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity

**2.7M**

Afghans displaced across borders

**91%**

of household income spent on food

**170TH**

of 170 countries globally for women's inclusion, justice and security

**ABOVE:** Asia, 7, lost several family members in the earthquake that struck eastern Afghanistan in June 2022.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. Economic collapse is the main accelerator of the ongoing humanitarian crisis.** Ninety-seven percent of Afghanistan's population is at risk of poverty. Over half the population is reliant on humanitarian aid—a response that donors cannot sustain. Already, 91% of the average Afghan household's money is spent on food, forcing many to resort to crisis-coping strategies such as food rationing. With 75% of public spending subsidized by international aid, major gaps in state finances remain. Furthermore, with the IEA unwilling to make concessions on the conditions set for the release of its foreign reserves from the Afghan Fund, Afghanistan's central bank remains unable to play its role in macro economic management.

**97% OF AFGHANISTAN'S POPULATION IS AT RISK OF POVERTY**



**2. Growing poverty is likely to worsen the already looming food crisis.** Afghanistan enters the winter in 2022 with 18.9 million people facing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity, double the number from the summer of 2021. While food is available, decreased purchasing power means millions are unable to afford what they need to survive.

**3. The climate crisis contributes to and compounds the Afghan crisis.** Afghanistan is facing its third year of drought, and has also seen violent flooding across the country driven by above-average rainfall, melting Himalayan glaciers and poor management of water infrastructure. The situation may be exacerbated if the continuation of the La Niña effect leads to a predicted third failed wet season next year, which would hamper food production and continue to drive displacement.

**4. Afghan women and girls will continue to suffer disproportionately.** Government bans on women's secondary education, participation in political appointments and edicts on dress and travel requirements are contributing to an erasure of women in public life. Women-headed households are already at higher risk of gender-based violence, child marriage and exploitation and abuse as resources become scarce. Afghanistan ranks last globally for women's inclusion, justice and security according to Georgetown's Women, Peace, and Security Index.

**5. Health, education and livelihood services are unlikely to keep up with high levels of need.** In 2022, the IEA cut spending on social services by 81%, which—combined with the halt in most international development funding—has severely weakened the delivery of essential public services. While a World Bank-managed program, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), has allowed some services to resume, levels of development support to Afghanistan are set to decline, meaning services are unlikely to keep pace with rising needs.

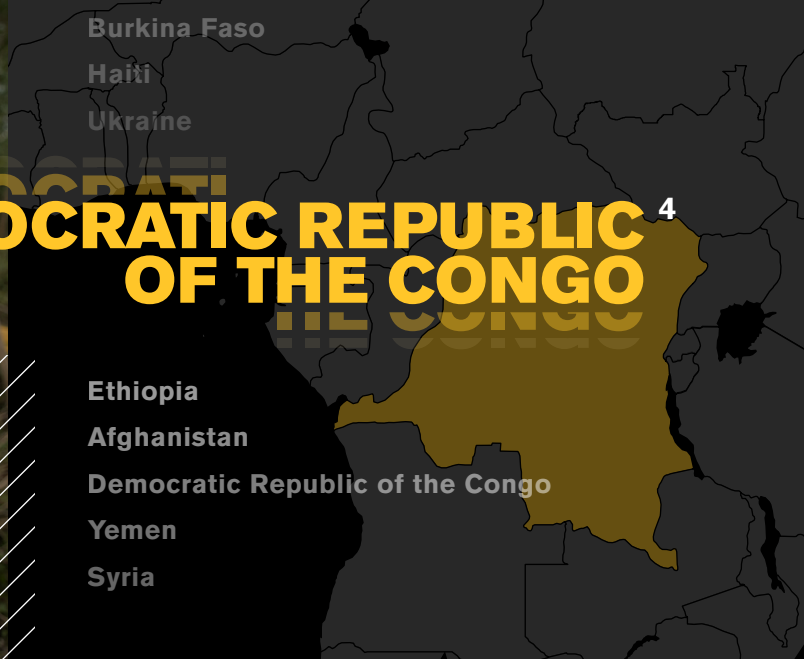


## THE IRC IN AFGHANISTAN

The IRC has worked in Afghanistan since 1988 in the health, education and emergency response sectors. In 2022, we scaled up our staff from 1,700 to 7,000. Ninety-five percent of our staff are Afghan, and 41% are women. We operate in 12 provinces, supporting 68 health facilities and running 30 mobile health teams across the country, which includes community-based education programs, family support centers, emergency response and economic recovery services. In the next year, we expect to reach 800,000 direct clients and four million indirect clients. [Learn more about IRC's response in Afghanistan.](#)

**TOP RIGHT:** Anasia and Nakhidima are two sisters sitting outside their home in Afghanistan after a 5.9 magnitude earthquake struck their remote district.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Mohammad Wali's family has built a makeshift home from mud, plastic and fabric in Kabul, Afghanistan.



**REGIONAL TENSIONS DRIVE  
RESURGENT CONFLICT IN THE EAST**

**The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains in the Watchlist top ten as escalating conflict in the east adds to economic challenges and disease outbreaks to drive massive needs and deepen the country's protracted crisis ahead of anticipated elections in 2023.**

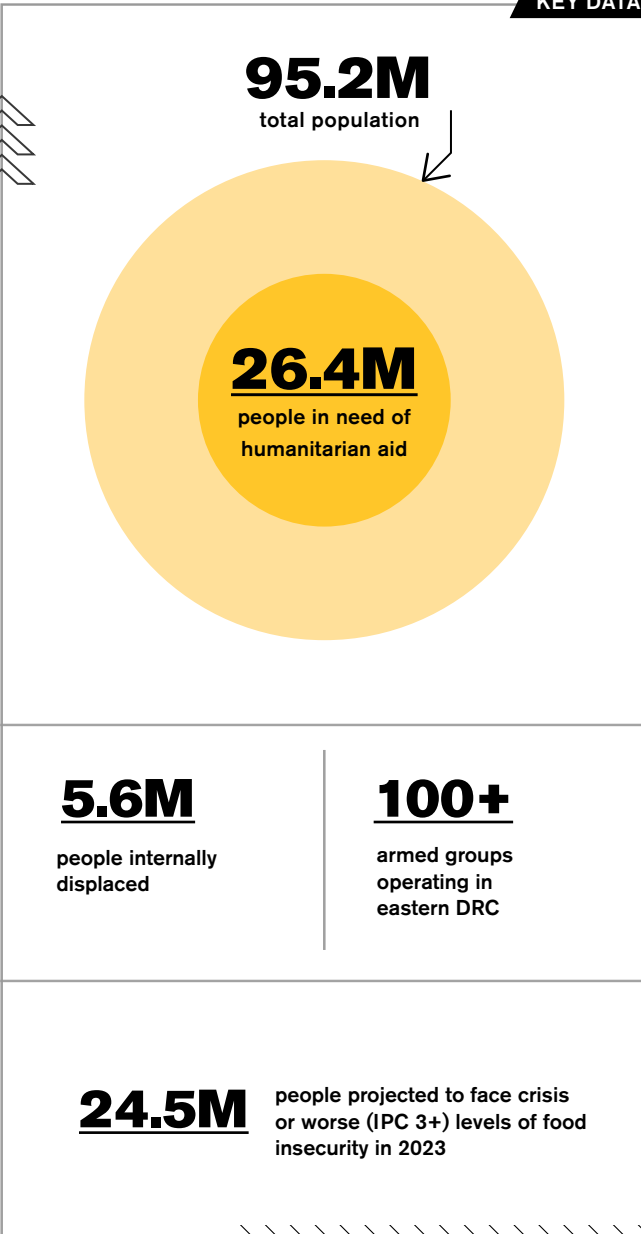
DRC was already experiencing one of the world's most complex and protracted crises even before the M23 armed group launched a new offensive in March 2022, a decade after it fought a major rebellion. The return of M23, which the DRC accuses Rwanda of supporting, is driving up displacement and disrupting humanitarian assistance. It also adds another regionalized risk on top of the ongoing conflict involving a complex array of groups across many parts of eastern DRC, challenging economic conditions and outbreaks of diseases like measles, malaria and Ebola. The combination of these crises drive up needs, displacement and food insecurity.



**Jocelyne Tsongo**  
IRC's Women's Protection and Empowerment Program Coordinator in the DRC

"For several months, there has been a resurgence of attacks by armed groups in eastern DRC, resulting in massive displacement of populations. Abuse of women and children—including rape, murder and emotional violence—have exploded," said IRC's Women's Protection and Empowerment Program Coordinator in the DRC Jocelyne Tsongo. "The IRC in the DRC and its local partners are braving many dangers to provide quality and timely humanitarian assistance to our clients in distress. However, the challenge of humanitarian access and scarce financial resources remain huge obstacles."

**KEY DATA**



**ABOVE:** Women in North Kivu, DRC participate in an IRC-supported livelihoods program for survivors of gender-based violence.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

### 1. Regional tensions threaten to drive even greater conflict and needs in 2023, particularly in eastern DRC.

Conflict remains the key driver of displacement and humanitarian need in eastern DRC, where more than **100** armed groups operate. Insecurity escalated in the Ituri province during 2022, displacing nearly **465,000** people, and also in North Kivu, where the revival of the M23 armed group after nearly a decade of dormancy has displaced at least **186,000** people since March 2022. In October, M23 seized the key towns of Rutshuru and Kiwanja, bringing them closer to the provincial capital of Goma. The reemergence of M23 is driving a regionalization of the conflict in eastern DRC. Kinshasa accuses Rwanda of supporting M23, and Angola has brokered talks between the DRC and Rwanda to try and calm tensions. Meanwhile, the East African Community has deployed a regional force tasked with stabilizing eastern DRC.

### 2. Political tensions are rising both as conflict grows in eastern DRC and as the country prepares for elections in 2023.

Influential local and national-level figures have often been accused of playing the role of "pompiers pyromanes," or pyromaniac firefighters, fomenting insecurity to reinforce their own political standing. With the DRC heading towards general elections in late 2023, domestic political tensions could contribute to a further escalation in fighting. The upsurge in violence in eastern DRC has also prompted protests against the UN peacekeeping force in eastern DRC (MONUSCO), causing the withdrawal of some troops from the area. Moreover, violence against civil society actors and NGOs may also increase ahead of the polls as different political actors try to mobilize support and control the narrative in the country.

### 3. Repeated major disease outbreaks highlight the persistent risks facing the population and an overstretched health system.

The country's chronically weak health system struggles to contain recurrent disease outbreaks of preventable or treatable diseases, such as cholera, malaria and measles. Repeated Ebola outbreaks (two were reported in 2022, in **Équateur** and **North Kivu**) and a resurgence of **bubonic plague** (confirmed in Ituri in April 2022) highlight the persistent health risks in DRC. Moreover, widespread corruption and ineffective community engagement efforts during previous outbreaks have led to distrust of government employees and health professionals that can make affected people less likely to seek treatment.

### 4. Food needs in DRC remain persistently high, and economic conditions are likely to deepen needs.

One in four Congolese is currently experiencing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity, where growing numbers of people are forced to sell off assets, pull their children out of school or make

other decisions that sacrifice their future to afford food today. Active conflict compounds food needs by disrupting agricultural activities while poor economic conditions make it harder for families to afford food. Food prices for many staple goods are currently higher than the two-year average while a significant increase in the price of gasoline is likely to drive up the price of transport and goods in 2023, further limiting access to food (**FEWS Net**).



Health workers put on full personal protective equipment before disinfecting a health facility in North Kivu, DRC during an Ebola outbreak.

## THE IRC IN DRC

The IRC has operated in DRC since 1996. We provide essential health services, including reproductive health services, as well as epidemic control, water and sanitation, education and support for survivors of violence. We work with communities on peacebuilding projects aimed at conflict reduction and economic recovery. In recent years, the IRC has launched emergency responses to contain Ebola, including the latest outbreak in eastern DRC. The IRC's response to COVID-19, Ebola and other health crises includes training health workers, rehabilitating hospitals and clinics, and providing essential medicine. [Learn more about the IRC's DRC response.](#)



**FAILED TRUCE THREATENS  
RENEWED CONFLICT AS  
ECONOMIC CRISIS DEEPENS**

**Yemen faces a deepening economic crisis in 2023 driven by the country's unresolved eight-year conflict.**

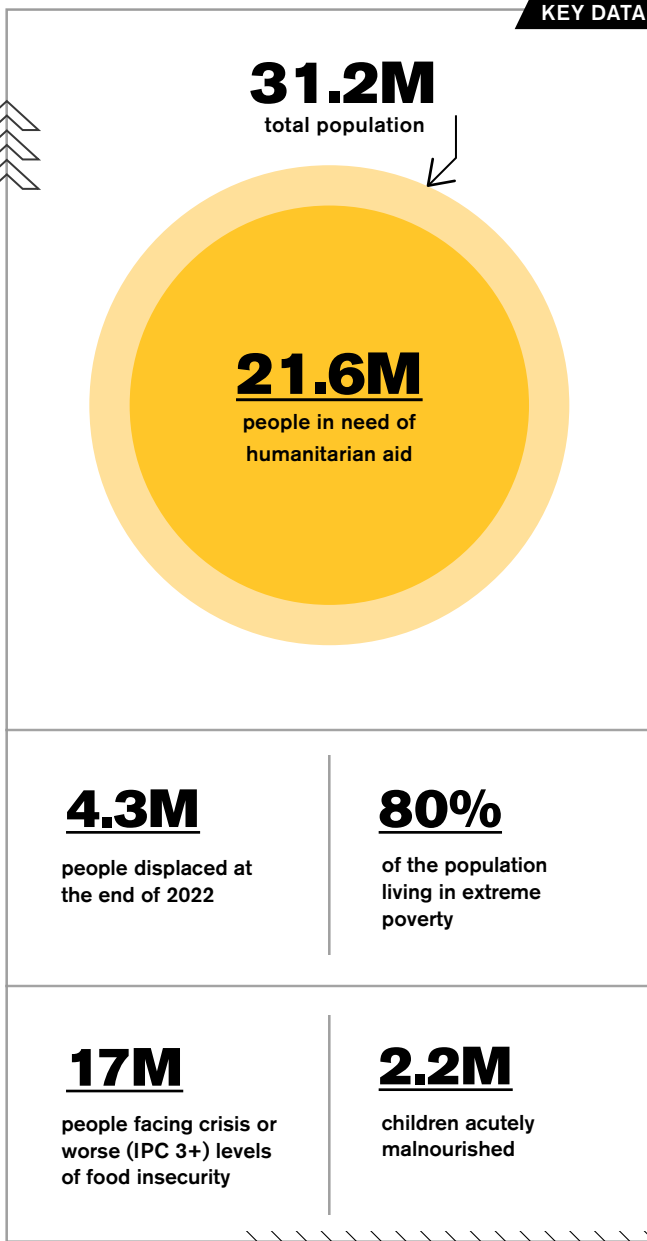
Yemen enters 2023 at risk of a return to wide-scale conflict. A UN-brokered ceasefire brought several months of significantly reduced levels of conflict between Ansar Allah (AA, commonly referred to as the “Houthis”) and forces aligned with the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG), but it collapsed in October 2022. The deal had also allowed commercial flights out of Sana’a International Airport to resume as well as fuel deliveries to increase to the northern areas controlled by AA. Tensions have endured between the IRG and the Southern Transitional Council (STC), particularly in Shabwah and Abyan governorates. The truce did little to reverse the consequences of eight years of major conflict—which, at times, has included economic warfare—since the Saudi and Emirati-led Coalition (SELC) intervened to support the IRG against AA, during which the conflict has progressively destroyed livelihoods and critical food and health systems. Insufficient humanitarian funding continues to hamper the aid response amid record levels of food insecurity, leaving the country in a highly vulnerable state heading into a possible new phase of conflict.



**Essam**  
25-year-old father  
in Yemen

“Every day you wake up and you find a new price. We are living in a war—where do we get the money to afford these prices?” asked Essam, a 25-year-old father in Yemen. “Sometimes I swear we stay without food because of the prices, which are increasing on a daily basis. One day we have food to eat, and one day we have to sleep on an empty stomach.”

**KEY DATA**



**ABOVE:** Bodor Ali Muhammad, 21, sits with her three daughters in Modhooor camp in Yemen. Photo funded by the European Union.

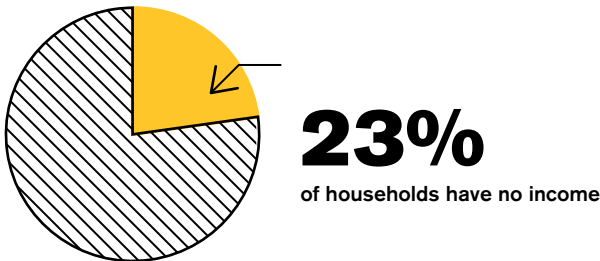


## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. Major conflict could resume in 2023 following the collapse of a UN-brokered truce.** The UN first brokered a truce in April 2022, and parties to the conflict extended it three times, reducing fighting to its lowest levels in eight years. But the truce **expired** in October 2022, putting the country at increased risk of a re-escalation of violence unless a longer ceasefire agreement is reached. Moreover, the parties to the conflict continue to constrain humanitarian access, leading to Yemen having the highest possible rating for humanitarian access constraints (5/5, indicating “extreme” constraints), according to **ACAPS**.

**2. Fighting between rival anti-AA factions in southern Yemen has intensified during 2022.** Despite the 2019 Riyadh Agreement between the Southern Transitional Council (STC) and the IRG, clashes between the two factions persist in southern Yemen. STC forces are expanding the areas under their control. More intense conflict may occur if the STC tries to push into oil-producing areas currently held by pro-IRG forces, which could lead to localized displacements and threats to the safety of civilians.

**3. The country’s economic collapse—driven by years of conflict and compounded by the war in Ukraine—will drive increased needs.** Families’ incomes have collapsed due to years of war, including **23%** of households with no income, highlighting the systemic impacts of a protracted conflict.



Moreover, the country’s **1.2 million** public employees have not regularly received their salaries—some at all—since 2016, further undermining critical public services. Meanwhile, currency fluctuation and limited fuel supplies have made both food and fuel prohibitively expensive. The Yemeni rial has **devalued** to historic lows against the dollar and euro while **80%** of the population lives below the poverty line. This means that even basic goods like food—much of which has to be imported—and services will remain unaffordable for many Yemenis.

**4. Food insecurity is currently at the worst levels in three years and likely to worsen given the economic turmoil.** Despite the truce, **17 million** people (53% of the assessed population) required food assistance by the end of 2022, with 6.1 million people facing emergency levels (IPC phase 4) of food insecurity, where urgent action is required to save lives. Meanwhile,

malnutrition rates among women and children are some of the highest in the world, with **1.3 million** pregnant or breastfeeding women and **2.2 million** children requiring treatment. Though Yemen had enough **wheat reserves** through October 2022, most people were unable to afford it. **Ninety percent** of food in Yemen has to be imported—42% from Ukraine and Russia—leaving the country exposed to high global food prices. As wheat runs out, food prices will rise, and it will become even harder for Yemenis to buy enough food to feed their families.

### MALNUTRITION RATES

Pregnant or breastfeeding women

**1.3M**

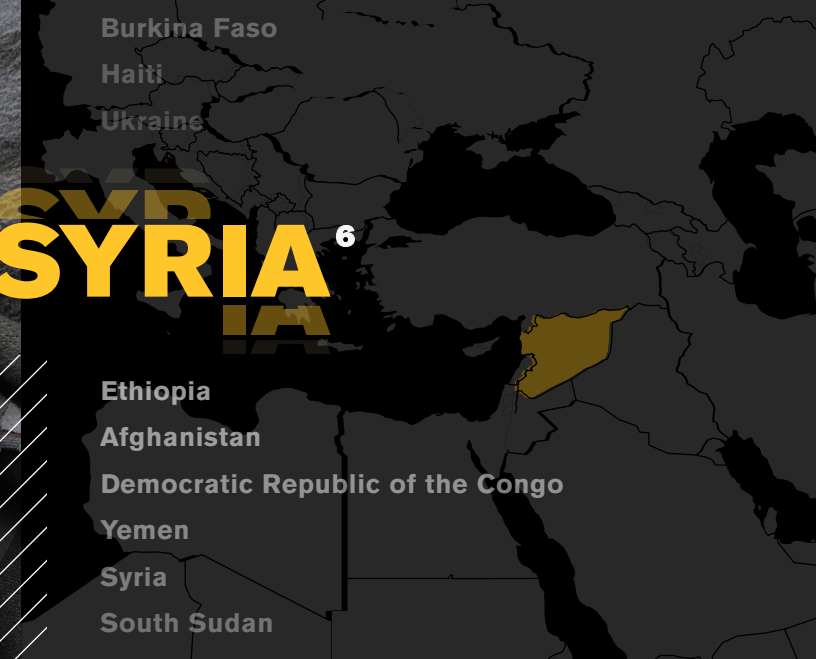
Children

**2.2M**

**5. Insufficient humanitarian funding has led to a failure to meet basic needs.** **21.6 million** people (69% of Yemenis) are in need of humanitarian assistance, up from 20.7 million in 2021, but the humanitarian response was only 54% funded in 2022. Funding shortages forced the **World Food Programme** to further reduce rations for 13 million Yemenis in June 2022. Despite the slight improvement in conditions brought about by the ceasefire, humanitarian action remains constrained by both road closures and funding constraints. **Forty percent** of school-aged children are not receiving an education, and one-third of households access water from unsafe sources, leading to an increased risk of the spread of water-borne illness.

## THE IRC IN YEMEN

The IRC has been working in Yemen since 2012 and rapidly scaled our programming in 2015 to address greater humanitarian needs caused by the conflict. While the ongoing conflict and restrictions of air and seaports create challenges to our operations, the IRC’s 348-person staff in Yemen and 648 paid volunteers have maintained access to affected populations and continue to provide critical healthcare, economic empowerment, women’s protection and empowerment and education programming. [Learn more about the IRC’s Yemen response.](#)



## CHOLERA OUTBREAK ILLUSTRATES THE DESTRUCTION WROUGHT BY YEARS OF WAR

**Years of war are driving a protracted crisis, have destroyed Syria's health system and left the country facing spiraling economic collapse.**

Though conflict levels in Syria were lower in 2022 than at the peak of the war, the level of violence in the country has been rising since the last quarter of 2021 (ACLED), reflecting a persistent risk of escalations in fighting in 2023. Meanwhile, the long-term consequences of more than a decade of conflict and continued crisis in neighboring Lebanon—as well as regional and global-level economic shocks—are driving down the value of the Syrian pound and thus increasing both food prices and, in turn, poverty. Additionally, Syria's already decimated health system will be strained further by the current cholera outbreak while, in northwest Syria, the potential end of the UN-backed cross-border aid mechanism could devastate the humanitarian response, worsening conditions for those who depend on it.



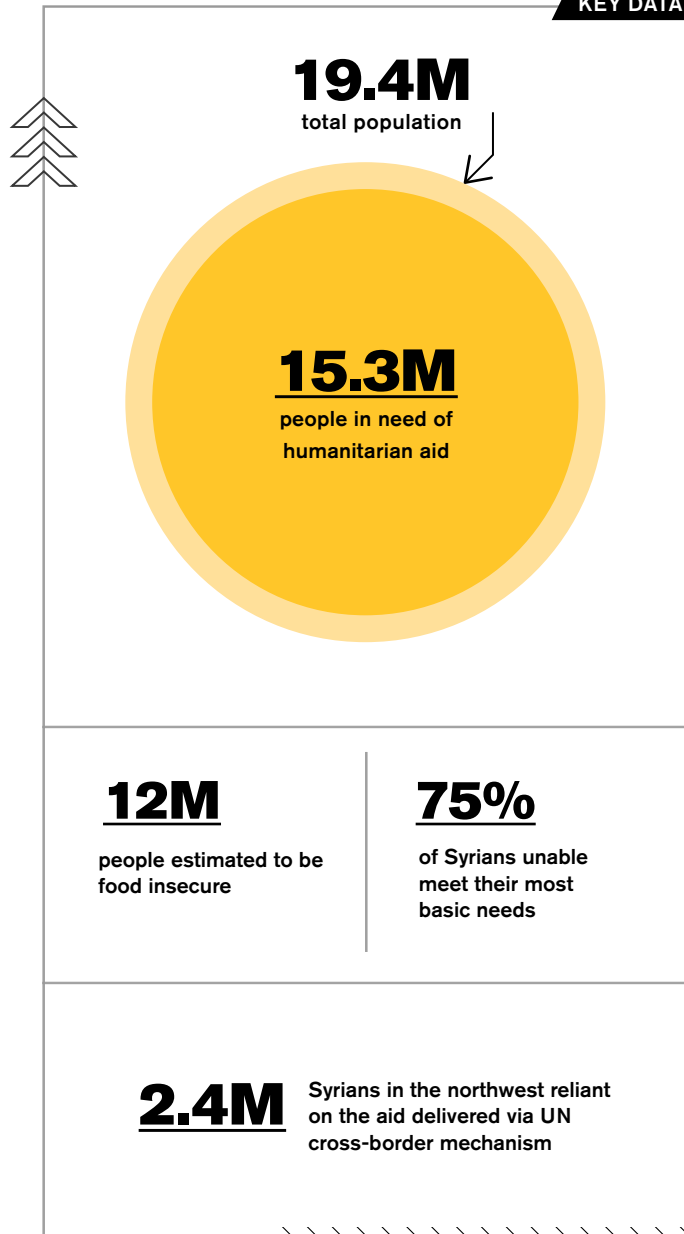
Lama\*  
33-year-old mother  
in Syria

"It has been four years since we left our village. We had built a house with two rooms and a kitchen. I'd lived there for ten days only, and then the airstrikes began and we had to flee," explained Lama, a 33-year-old mother in Syria. "I have never returned back to my house after that and I don't know what happened to it.... I am constantly worried about rain flooding the tent with my children inside."

\* A pseudonym is used for the client's protection.

**ABOVE:** An airstrike killed Um Mustafa's son and forced her to flee her home in Syria. Today she lives in an IDP camp in the western part of the country.

### KEY DATA





## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. Syria is facing an economic crisis that is driving up both food prices and poverty—90% of Syrians now live below the poverty line.** Over **75%** of Syrians already cannot meet their most basic needs, and given the Syrian pound depreciated by **25%** in the last year, prices of commodities and imported food will likely continue to grow into 2023.

**2. High conflict levels will continue to drive needs.**

While a ceasefire in the northwest has generally held, data from **ACLED** shows that airstrikes and shelling have increased since the start of 2022. Civilians continue to pay the highest price for hostilities and further escalations in conflict could force more people—many of them already displaced multiple times—to flee their homes once again. A series of deadly ground-based strikes and airstrikes **struck several camps** for internally displaced persons in Idlib in November 2022 killed at least seven civilians, including four children and wounded 27 others. Further, the potential for a new Turkish military operation in northeast Syria may lead to a considerable increase in humanitarian need, particularly an increase in forcible displacement in the northeast region.

**3. The first cholera outbreak in more than a decade is exposing the fragility of Syria’s healthcare and water systems due to years of war.** Over a decade of conflict has left a **third** of all hospitals and nearly a half of primary healthcare centers non-functional. Similar damage has been caused to water infrastructure—**47%** of Syrians rely on alternative and often unsafe water sources to meet or complement their water needs. These conditions have allowed a cholera outbreak to spread rapidly since August 2022, reaching **46,000** suspected cases by November 2022. The outbreak is likely to overstretch health services that already struggled to respond to COVID-19, making it even harder for people to access appropriate care for other diseases in the year ahead.

**4. Impasse at the UN Security Council threatens to cut off a critical lifeline for 2.4 million people in northwest Syria from early 2023.** Since 2014, the UN Security Council has authorized UN agencies to deliver aid from neighboring countries cross-border into Syria, providing critical coordination and supplies for NGOs. However, in July 2022 the Security Council could only agree to a six-month extension of the approval for a single crossing, Bab al-Hawa, even though **2.4 million** people in need of aid in opposition-controlled areas of northwest Syria depend on assistance received via that route. The failure to agree to a longer authorization reflects major tensions between UN Security Council (UNSC) members and means the humanitarian response in northwest Syria risks being devastated if the UNSC fails to renew authorization to use Bab al-Hawa in January 2023 in the middle of winter when needs will be particularly severe.



47%

**OF SYRIANS RELY ON ALTERNATIVE AND OFTEN UNSAFE WATER SOURCES TO MEET OR COMPLEMENT THEIR WATER NEEDS**

## THE IRC IN SYRIA

The IRC has been working in Syria since 2012, responding to needs in northwest and northeast Syria. The IRC promotes economic recovery with job training, apprenticeships and small business support. Our teams support early childhood development and provide counseling and protection services for women and children, particularly for survivors of violence. We support health facilities and mobile health teams with critical trauma services and primary, reproductive and mental health services. Our cholera response includes provision of essential supplies for cholera prevention, control and treatment; training of clinical staff and community health workers on case detection, management and referral; as well as health education and hygiene awareness through house-to-house visits. We also support Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. [Learn more about the IRC’s Syria response.](#)

ABOVE: A woman collects water in a displacement camp in northern Syria.



**RECORD FOOD INSECURITY  
AMID PERSISTENT CONFLICT,  
CLIMATE CHANGE AND  
POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY**

Despite a 2018 peace agreement that has reduced conflict levels, continued fighting, combined with major flooding and economic pressures, is driving record levels of food insecurity.

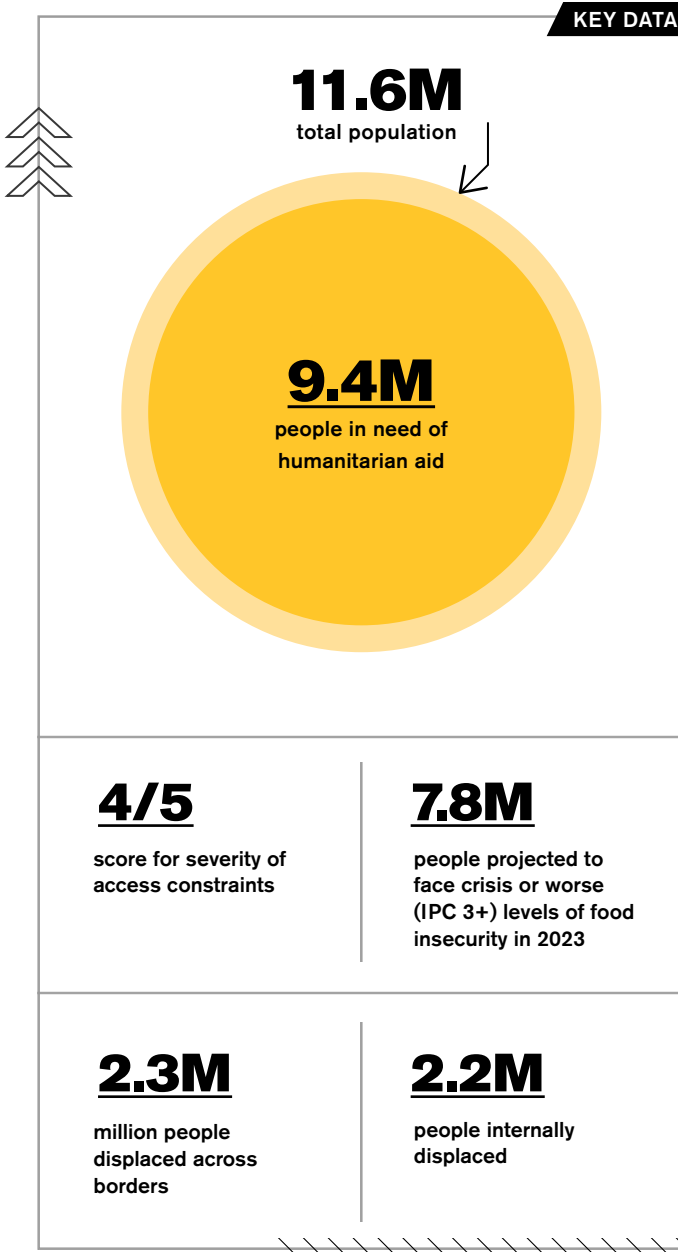
South Sudan is still living with the legacy of a civil war that, while formally ended by a 2018 peace deal, has major impacts to this day. The two main warring parties—Sudan People’s Liberation Movement led by President Salva Kiir Mayardit and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-In Opposition led by Vice-President Riek Machar have not returned to major conflict, but more localized conflicts remain widespread and the country is one of the most fragile in the world. Climate shocks including severe floods and droughts combined with economic stagnation have further contributed to record levels of food insecurity predicted in 2023.



**Abuk Deng**  
30-year-old mother  
in South Sudan

“Things in South Sudan are devastating. There is not one single year you could describe as a good year.... Even if someone cultivates something, the crops may grow but are then destroyed,” lamented Abuk Deng, a 30-year-old mother in South Sudan.

**KEY DATA**



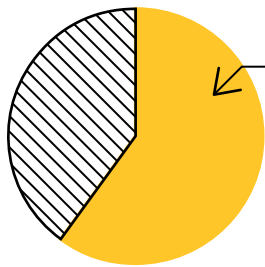
**ABOVE:** Sisters Muna and Khamis live with their mother in an IDP camp in South Sudan.





## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. More South Sudanese people than ever before—7.8 million—will face crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity in 2023**, up from **6.3 million** at the end of 2022. These rates of food insecurity will surpass those experienced during the peak of the civil war and will force three out of five people in the country to make decisions like skipping meals or selling their possessions just to cope. There will also be **43,000** people facing the worst, catastrophic levels of food insecurity (IPC 5) and 2.9 million just one step below that, where urgent action is required to save lives. Yet in 2022, the WFP suspended part of its food aid for **1.7 million** people due to funding shortages.



# 65%

of people projected to face crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity in 2023

**2. Persistent conflict across the country threatens civilians, including humanitarian actors.** Armed groups have proliferated in recent years, despite the 2018 peace deal, and many have weak command of their troops and little commitment to protecting civilians or facilitating humanitarian action. South Sudan consistently has the highest levels of violence against aid workers globally (**AWSD**), limiting the ability of aid to reach people in need. Moreover, the transitional government has failed to make progress on key issues, such as forming a single, united military, leading to the extension of the transitional period for another two years from mid-2022. Until such issues are resolved, there will be a persistent risk of the country falling back into even more significant conflict.

**3. Climate shocks, particularly severe floods and localized droughts, have also added to food insecurity by destroying crops and exacerbating disease outbreaks.** Over **900,000** people were affected by flooding in late 2022, which was accompanied by increased outbreaks of diseases like cholera and malaria. These floods came a year after even larger ones in 2021, underlining the persistent threat from flooding in a country that lacks infrastructure able to withstand such shocks, let alone to mitigate their impact.



# 900K+

**WERE AFFECTED BY FLOODING  
IN LATE 2022**

**4. Pressures from economic shocks, like the ripple effect of the war in Ukraine, and wider economic challenges facing the country will also contribute to food insecurity in 2023.** Despite high oil prices boosting South Sudan's GDP by more than 5% in 2021 and 2022 and projections that the GDP will grow by **5.6%** in 2023, the economy still faces major challenges following years of conflict-related contractions. **Ninety-five percent** of the state's revenues come from oil exports, but output has steadily decreased from around 350,000 barrels a day in 2013 to **150,000** in 2022. Additionally, the South Sudanese pound lost roughly **60%** of its value between mid-2021 and October 2022, reducing the country's purchasing power.

## THE IRC IN SOUTH SUDAN

The IRC started working in South Sudan in 1989. With more than 900 full-time staff members, the IRC in South Sudan provides critical primary and reproductive health and nutrition, environmental health, protection and economic recovery and resilience services to increasingly vulnerable internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees and host communities. The IRC in South Sudan partners with national and state authorities and local partners to strengthen health systems and support especially displaced populations to obtain durable solutions. [Learn more about the IRC's South Sudan response.](#)

ABOVE: The effects of flooding in the town of Ganyiel in South Sudan.



Burkina Faso  
Haiti  
Ukraine

# BURKINA FASO <sup>8</sup>

Ethiopia  
Afghanistan  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Yemen  
Syria

## MULTIPLE COUPS AND PROLIFERATING ARMED GROUPS DRIVE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

**Burkina Faso is now the epicenter of the crisis in the Sahel as nonstate armed groups expand, driving both high-level political instability and ever-deepening humanitarian needs.**

Burkina Faso's humanitarian crisis has deepened rapidly as nonstate armed groups, often affiliated with al-Qaeda or Islamic State, have intensified their attacks and expanded the geographical range of their activities. Tensions about how to address the rising insecurity have contributed to instability at the top of Burkina Faso's politics, as members of the armed forces twice seized power in 2022 alone. A growth in vigilante groups has also added to the violence. Plans to further expand such groups could add to conflict risks in 2023.



**Hamidou Cisse Amoudou**  
IRC's Base Manager in Djibo, Burkina Faso

"The security situation in Burkina Faso has been deteriorating fast," said Hamidou Cisse Amoudou, IRC's Base Manager in Djibo. "Several communities have been under blockade by armed groups for several months with regular water and food shortages driving these towns to famine conditions. For years on end, the conflict has continued unabated, and the climate crisis, the high inflation, and lack of access to land due to insecurity are all aggravating an already dire situation for millions of Burkinabè."

### KEY DATA



**22.1M**  
total population

**4.7M**  
people in need of humanitarian aid

**30%**

rise in food prices in early 2022

**1.7M**

million people internally displaced at the end of 2022

**3.5M**

million people projected to face crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity in 2023<sup>5</sup>

ABOVE: Portrait of a displaced woman in northern Burkina Faso. Photo: Giles Clarke/UNOCHA via Getty Images.

5. Forthcoming Cadre Harmonisé Analysis





## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. Needs are growing rapidly as nonstate armed groups increase their attacks in the country.** Armed groups have expanded their presence throughout 2022 and may now control as much as **40%** of the country's territory, mostly in the north and near the border with Mali. There is also a growing trend of armed vigilante groups becoming more active in conflict, contributing to a spiraling escalation. The Armed Conflict and Location Event Data (**ACLED**) project documented record levels of incidents of conflict/political violence as well as related fatalities in 2021, and 2022 surpassed those records—with more than 4,000 conflict-related fatalities as of November 2022, up from 2,374 in all of 2021. With conflict intensifying, it will continue to drive displacements and other needs. The number of people who are internally displaced leapt from **90,000** in 2019 to **1.7 million** in 2022. **4.7 million** people now need emergency aid, and the number of people in need grew a staggering 40% during 2022.

### NUMBER OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

2019

**90K**

2022

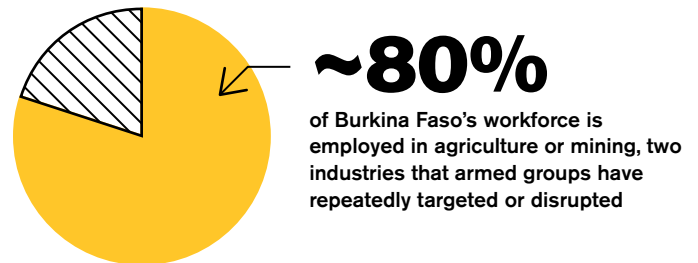
**1.7M**

**2. Humanitarian action is constrained by both conflict and lack of funding.** **ACAPS** scores Burkina Faso overall as a three out of five for the severity of humanitarian access constraints, indicating “high” constraints, but the situation varies considerably across the country. There are now tens of thousands of people living in towns in the north of the country who are effectively cut off by armed groups. Moreover, despite the growing humanitarian needs, just a **third** of funding required for the humanitarian response in 2022 has been received so far, indicating that many needs will remain unmet.

**3. Political uncertainty is adding both to wider insecurity and economic uncertainty.** Members of the military seized power twice in 2022, highlighting the fragility of state institutions. Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba was sworn in as president of the transitional government in March but Captain Ibrahim Traoré then dislodged him in September, citing Damiba's failure to curb armed group activity. Traoré has since launched a campaign to recruit **50,000** “civilian defense volunteers,” accelerating the growth of vigilante groups that have been implicated in driving higher levels of communal violence and insecurity, rather than helping to bring order. The United States also cut off **\$160 million** in aid to the Burkinabè government

and from January 1, 2023, will **expel** the country from a program that allows it duty-free access to U.S. markets on nearly 2,000 products—both moves that are likely to compound Burkina Faso's economic woes.

**4. Conflict-related disruption of livelihoods is combining with wider economic difficulties to drive deepening food insecurity.**



For example, little cultivation has happened around northern towns that are effectively besieged by armed groups. Compounding the situation, food inflation—influenced by both global prices and conflict-related disruption to local production and markets—has reached approximately 30%, which is among the highest rates in the world, further contributing to rising food insecurity. As a result, crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity are widespread across northern and eastern Burkina Faso and **FEWS NET** estimates that some households in besieged areas are seeing the worst, catastrophic levels of food insecurity (IPC 5). Some may be forced to leave their homes in early 2023 to try and find enough food.

## THE IRC IN BURKINA FASO

The IRC started working in Burkina Faso in 2019. The IRC's response in Burkina Faso started in Djibo, which hosts a large internally displaced population and is currently under siege by nonstate armed groups, severely affecting humanitarian access. The IRC's programs deliver clean water and sanitation services. The IRC has also established a primary healthcare program, which includes reproductive healthcare and community-based services devoted to childhood illnesses and disease prevention. [Learn more about the IRC'S Burkina Faso response.](#)



## SURGING GANG VIOLENCE ACCELERATES MULTIPLE CRISES

Haiti makes it into the Watchlist top 10 as political instability, gang violence, rising food insecurity, disease outbreaks and climate shocks drive rapid escalation of the humanitarian crisis.

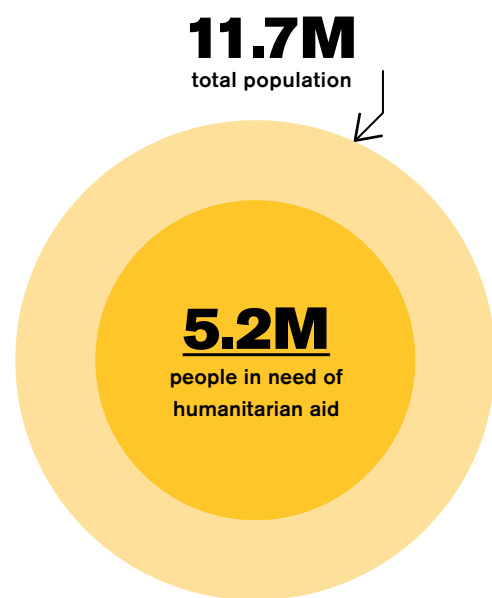
Political instability and gang violence have escalated rapidly since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021, trends that the government of his successor Ariel Henry have been unable to curb. Armed gangs regularly take control of fuel terminals and distribution routes, leading to frequent shortages of basic goods and fuel. Climate shocks compound the crisis as critical services are interrupted and livelihoods are destroyed. Food insecurity is rapidly increasing amid soaring food inflation, and the first cholera outbreak in three years is now underway as drinking water runs out and health services collapse. Compounding the risks of Haitians, humanitarian access is frequently constrained, hindering the ability of humanitarian workers to address the growing need.



**Viviana Ardila**  
IRC's Regional Safety and Security Director in Latin America

“Haiti stands at the precipice of a humanitarian crisis due to the extreme political instability, criminal activity and economic woes that are plaguing the country,” said Viviana Ardila, IRC's Regional Safety and Security Director. “Thousands more people have been forced to leave their homes in the last year. To address the Haiti crisis, we need to think holistically and regionally, including supporting Haitians across the arc of the crisis, whether in transit or trying to rebuild their lives.”

### KEY DATA



**30%**

food price inflation in 2022

**113,582**

people internally displaced at the end of 2022

**4.7M**

people facing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity

ABOVE: A woman and her son in the wake of a 7.2 magnitude earthquake in Haiti. Photo: Reginald Louissaint Jr./AFP via Getty Images.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. Gang violence will continue to disrupt people's livelihoods and the essential services they rely on.** Multiple gangs now control much of the capital Port-au-Prince. Haitians face major threats to their safety as kidnappings, rape and indiscriminate killings are all rising, leading to more than one thousand fatalities from January to July 2022.

### URBAN VIOLENCE ACCOUNTS FOR AROUND 85% OF THE 113,582 PEOPLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED IN HAITI

The national police also have limited ability to prevent gangs from taking control of critical facilities such as a major fuel terminal and routes to the capital's airport, disrupting essential flows of people and goods, making it even harder for Haitians to earn a living and meet their basic needs.

**2. For the first time ever, Haiti recorded at least 19,000 people facing the worst, catastrophic levels of food insecurity (IPC 5) in 2022, and high levels of food insecurity are projected to continue into 2023.** At IPC 5, more than half of families cannot afford enough food and people are in physical pain from their hunger. Nearly five million Haitians are facing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity, where they have to skip meals or make other impossible decisions to survive. Compounding the impacts of criminal violence and widespread poverty, food inflation is among the highest in the world at around 30%. Haiti imports 70% of its cereals which is likely to drive food prices even higher in the coming year due to the vulnerability to shocks in the global food and fuel markets.

**3. Cholera cases are likely to keep growing as Haiti faces its first outbreak in more than three years.** At least 47 cases and 35 deaths were reported as of October 2022, but 1,700 suspected cases, half of them children, may drive figures up. Recent climate shocks and the ongoing infrastructure damage from the earthquake in 2021, in combination with existing conditions, make disease outbreaks more likely among a population with low coping capacity, notably due to the shortage of drinking water.

**4. Humanitarian actors and other service providers will continue to face disruptions to their work in 2023, preventing critical aid from reaching those most affected.** Nearly half of all Haitians need some form of humanitarian assistance, a number that is likely to grow as humanitarian

agencies and service providers face massive disruptions. Continued armed violence will pose a security and logistic risk for humanitarians and other service providers. Fuel blockades have also affected health facilities' ability to deliver services—particularly during the ongoing cholera outbreak—as many hospitals rely on diesel generators.



~50%

**OF ALL HAITIANS NEED SOME FORM OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, A NUMBER THAT IS LIKELY TO GROW**

## THE IRC IN HAITI

While the IRC is not currently present in Haiti, we have a history of supporting the country since 2010, working with a strong network of civil society organizations to respond to the needs of communities. After the earthquake that devastated the country in August 2021, the IRC launched an emergency response, providing funding and support to local organizations that were implementing activities to address priority needs. Additionally, the IRC serves Haitians on the move throughout the arc of the crisis in countries where the IRC has a programmatic response, including Mexico.

**ABOVE:** Patients with cholera symptoms receive medical attention at Saint Antoine Hospital of Jeremie, southwestern Haiti. Photo: Hector Retamal/AFP via Getty Images.



**WAR IN UKRAINE SPARKS FASTEST, LARGEST DISPLACEMENT CRISIS IN DECADES**

The war in Ukraine has sparked the world’s “fastest, largest” displacement crisis in decades (UNHCR) and pushed the country into the Watchlist for the first time since 2017, though the speed and scale of the international response to the situation within Ukraine means it does not appear higher in the list.

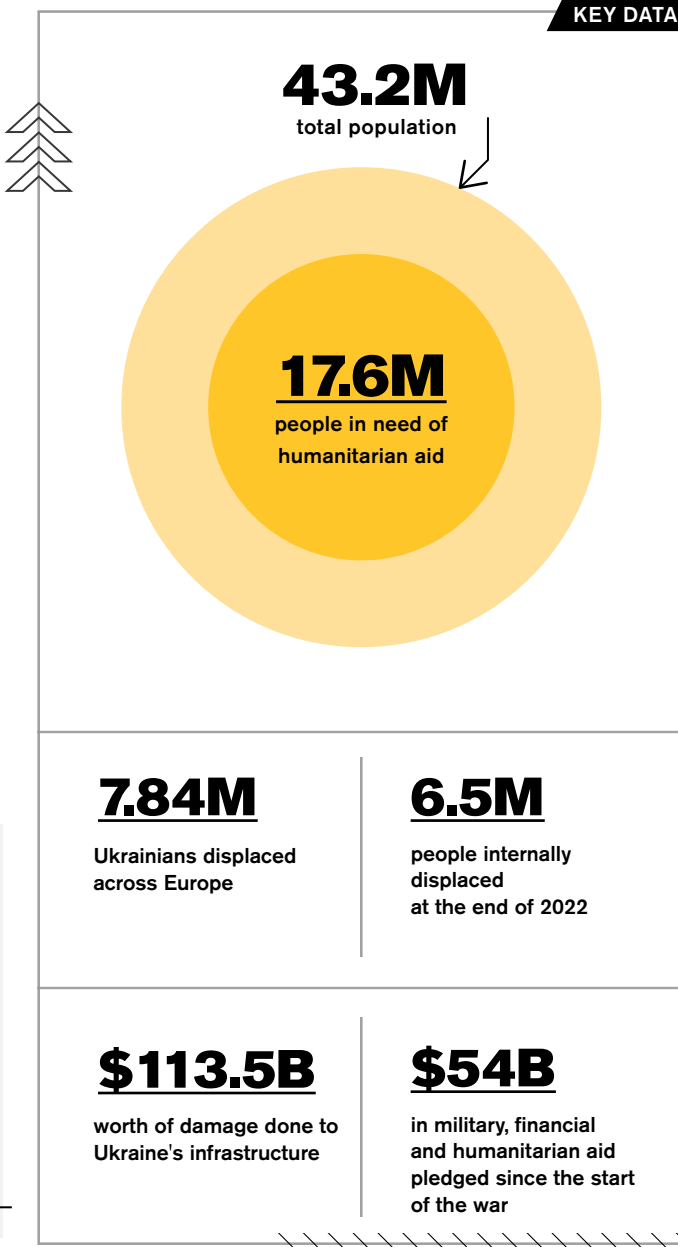
Russia deployed troops into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, significantly escalating ongoing hostilities between the two countries after Russia annexed the Crimea and intervened in the eastern Donbas region in 2014. While Russian forces initially advanced rapidly in the northeastern, southeastern and eastern regions of the country—causing record numbers of people to flee within and outside Ukraine—Ukrainian forces have since gone on the counteroffensive. Risks to civilians will persist as fighting remains intense. Indeed, Russian missile strikes have destroyed significant portions of Ukraine’s critical infrastructure, including power and water sources, leaving millions in need of essential services and at risk of illness as the conflict continues into 2023. The global economic impacts of the war in Ukraine are reflected in the rankings of affected countries, not in the ranking of Ukraine or this country’s profile.



**Maryna**  
Ukrainian mother

If the electricity is turned off, there will be nothing to heat the house and everything else,” explained Maryna, a mother of two in Ukraine. “I really hope that before winter, we will have time to cover the roof and insert windows. I think one room will be partly equipped [to live in].

**KEY DATA**



**ABOVE:** Iryna and her daughter stand near the Medyka border crossing point in Poland after fleeing Ukraine.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. Active conflict is likely to continue into 2023, with civilians facing increased risks.** [OHCHR](#) reports 16,784 civilian casualties, including more than 6,500 killed, since the war began in February 2022, though actual figures could be higher. Ukrainian forces are likely to continue their counteroffensives in eastern and south eastern parts of the country, putting increased pressure on Russian troops. Russia even withdrew from the largest city under its control, Kherson, in November 2022, just weeks after claiming to have annexed it. The use of air and missile strikes, including outside active conflict areas, puts civilians and civilian infrastructure at risk. Moreover, there are reports of torture, sexual violence and killings. ([HRW](#))

**2. Damage to Ukraine's critical infrastructure, including energy and water sources, deprived large parts of the population of essential services as winter neared.** Russian missiles have repeatedly struck Ukrainian energy infrastructure, potentially leaving millions of people—including in the capital [Kyiv](#)—without water, electricity and heating as winter loomed. Missile strikes damaged between **30–50%** of Ukraine's power grid, and the overall damage to infrastructure in Ukraine is estimated to be at least **\$113.5 billion**. Moreover, the destruction of water sources in particular has contributed to **16 million** people needing water, sanitation and hygiene assistance as damage to water and waste-water infrastructure increases the risk of water-borne illnesses among the population.



**16M**  
**ARE IN NEED OF WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE ASSISTANCE BECAUSE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF WATER SOURCES**

**3. Millions remain internally and externally displaced, and the continuation of the war is likely to fuel further population movements.** The war has created the fastest and largest displacement crisis in decades ([UNHCR](#)), with **7.8 million** refugees across Europe. Millions of displaced people eventually returned to Ukraine despite ongoing fighting, but active conflict

and the risk of missile strikes outside conflict zones prevented many from returning to their homes—leaving them among the **6.5 million** people internally displaced. So, as long as conflict persists, any re-escalations are likely to fuel additional displacements within Ukraine and to neighboring countries, including Poland, Moldova, Romania and Slovakia.

**4. The war has accelerated the contraction of Ukraine's economy, compounding existing needs, though the country is also receiving significant international assistance that will mitigate the impact of the crisis at least to some extent.** Ukraine's economy was predicted to shrink by almost **32%** by the end of 2022, highlighting the impacts of economic disruptions due to the war and large losses of the labor force due to displacement. The Ukrainian central bank also anticipated that inflation and unemployment would both reach **30%** by the end of 2022, highlighting the significant challenges facing the population remaining in the country. That said, the [Kiel Institute](#) tracked \$14 billion in humanitarian aid and \$39 billion in financial aid to Ukraine since the start of 2022, mostly from the United States and the European Union. In addition, the International Monetary Fund is expected to agree to additional funding to support Ukraine's economic recovery. So while the crisis in Ukraine has escalated rapidly following the Russian invasion, the scale and speed of international aid will help to mitigate its impacts, at least somewhat, relative to other Watchlist countries.

### THE IRC IN UKRAINE

The IRC launched an emergency response to the war in Ukraine in February 2022, working directly and with local partners to reach those most in need. In Ukraine, we are focusing our response in the conflict-affected areas in the east and southeast. We are distributing essential non-food items, providing cash assistance to the most vulnerable households, improving access to healthcare and providing a variety of tailor-made protection services, including safe spaces for women and children. Our emergency programs are also active on the ground in Poland and Moldova. Responding along the entire arc of the crisis, we are running activities targeting refugees from Ukraine in Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Czechia and Bulgaria, as well as in Germany, Italy, Greece and the United Kingdom. [Learn more](#) about the IRC's Ukraine response.



Burkina Faso  
Haiti  
Ukraine

# CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC UNRANKED

Ethiopia  
Afghanistan  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Yemen  
Syria

## RAMPANT ARMED GROUPS DRIVE VIOLENCE AND UNDERMINE RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

**Though the 2021 ceasefire ended fighting that briefly threatened the capital Bangui, armed groups continue to drive insecurity and humanitarian needs across the country.**

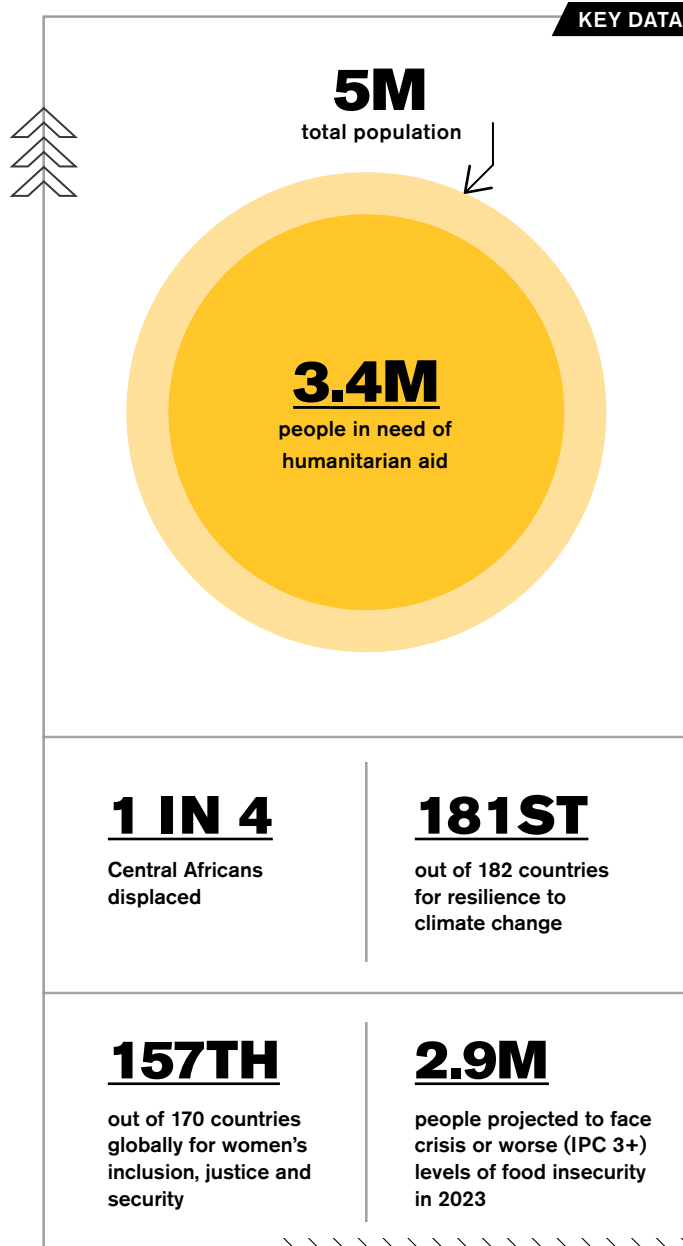
Conflict activity has generally stabilized since President Touadera announced a unilateral ceasefire in October 2021, just months after the opposition Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) alliance briefly threatened to attack the capital Bangui. However, the Central African Republic (CAR) remains beset by a complex array of state and nonstate armed groups which compete for control of both political power and natural resources, including transhumance routes used by herders. Climate change and natural shocks are worsening these points of tension. As a result, three out of every five people in the country need humanitarian assistance. Touadera's plans to alter the country's constitution have the potential to destabilize the precarious situation and spark renewed violence heading into 2023.



**Junior Nimbi**  
IRC's Senior Grants Manager in CAR

"The situation in CAR remains volatile following clashes between armed groups and the Central African Armed Forces," said Junior Nimbi, IRC's Senior Grants Manager in CAR. "Ongoing violence and the discovery of explosive devices have limited humanitarian assistance from reaching more communities in the region. The situation throughout the northwest considerably limits the freedom of the populations including their ability to obtain sufficient, nutritious food."

### KEY DATA



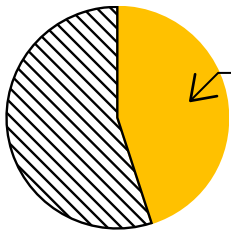
**ABOVE:** A woman in her shelter at one of several sites for displaced people in Kaga-Bandoro, Central African Republic.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. Political uncertainty may rise as President Touadera proposes altering the constitution to allow himself to seek a third term in office.** When the Constitutional Court annulled the commission that proposed these reforms, Touadera supporters staged countrywide protests in favor of constitutional reform. The recent removal of the Constitutional Court's President Danièle Darlan suggests that the current president may seek to overhaul the court's annulment and proceed with installing a new constitution. The move is likely to deepen political divisions and increase uncertainty in the state of the national government. Nonstate-armed groups could take advantage of the political situation while the contested government is distracted and increase violence near the Bangui area.

**2. Conflict will continue to drive humanitarian needs, particularly food insecurity.** 2022 saw over 950 fatalities, suggesting that the conflicts between state, nonstate and community forces continue despite the 2021 ceasefire. Conflict also drove food insecurity as civilians are increasingly unable to access fields for cultivating or forests for hunting due to the threat of attacks by armed groups. This has led to **over 2.9 million people** projected to be in crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity, which is more than 45% of the population.



**Over 45%**

of the population are projected to be in IPC 3+ levels of food insecurity

Already, **one in four** Central Africans is displaced, but rising clashes between herders and farmers, growing nonstate armed group activity and intercommunal violence is likely to trigger more displacement in the next year. Moreover, the scarcity of water and pasture resources in the Lake Chad and Sahel regions are driving many herders to CAR, resulting in increased clashes between them and farmers already in the country. These unregulated transhumance movements are likely to increase pressure on natural resources and trigger displacement.

**3. CAR is exposed to flooding and to other natural shocks but is the second-most vulnerable country in the world to the impacts of climate change.** CAR is ranked **181 out of 182** countries in the Notre Dame GAIN Index for its resilience to climate change, above only Chad. Flooding in June 2022 affected over **100,000** people and heavily restricted access to Vakaga and Haute-Kotto prefectures. As a result, the whole country, particularly the border areas with the two Congo states and camps for internally displaced people, is highly susceptible to water-borne diseases like cholera, in addition to diseases like malaria, meningitis and monkeypox.

**4. Armed groups target women and girls with impunity.** Members of armed groups have used rape as a weapon of war, especially since violence erupted in 2012, yet no member of armed groups has been tried for these crimes. Persistent violence thus presents major risks for women and girls, both inside and outside their homes, and compounds the marginalization of women and girls. As a result, CAR is ranked **157 out of 170** on the Women, Peace and Security Index, which measures justice, inclusion and security of women in their communities. Access to education is already limited for girls, as 25% of women in CAR have completed primary school, and the rate of female literacy is half the male rate.



**Only 25%**

**OF WOMEN IN CAR HAVE COMPLETED PRIMARY SCHOOL AND THE RATE OF FEMALE LITERACY IS HALF THE RATE OF MALES**

### THE IRC IN CAR

The IRC has been operating in the Central African Republic since 2006. We aid conflict-affected and internally displaced communities through emergency relief, food distributions, healthcare, psychosocial support to women survivors of violence and the building and restoration of clean water sources. We also support children's well-being by building and supporting schools and safe spaces for children to learn and play. [Learn more](#) about the IRC's Central African Republic response.

**ABOVE:** Natasha Dobi, 25, participates in an IRC-led workshop for members of a women's association in Ngoutere, Central African Republic.



## STALLED POLITICAL TRANSITION RISKS RENEWED VIOLENCE AND UNMET NEEDS

**Persistent conflict and instability have left Chad the country least able globally to withstand climate change and second-lowest for human development, and needs could grow as the country enters a critical phase of its political transition.**

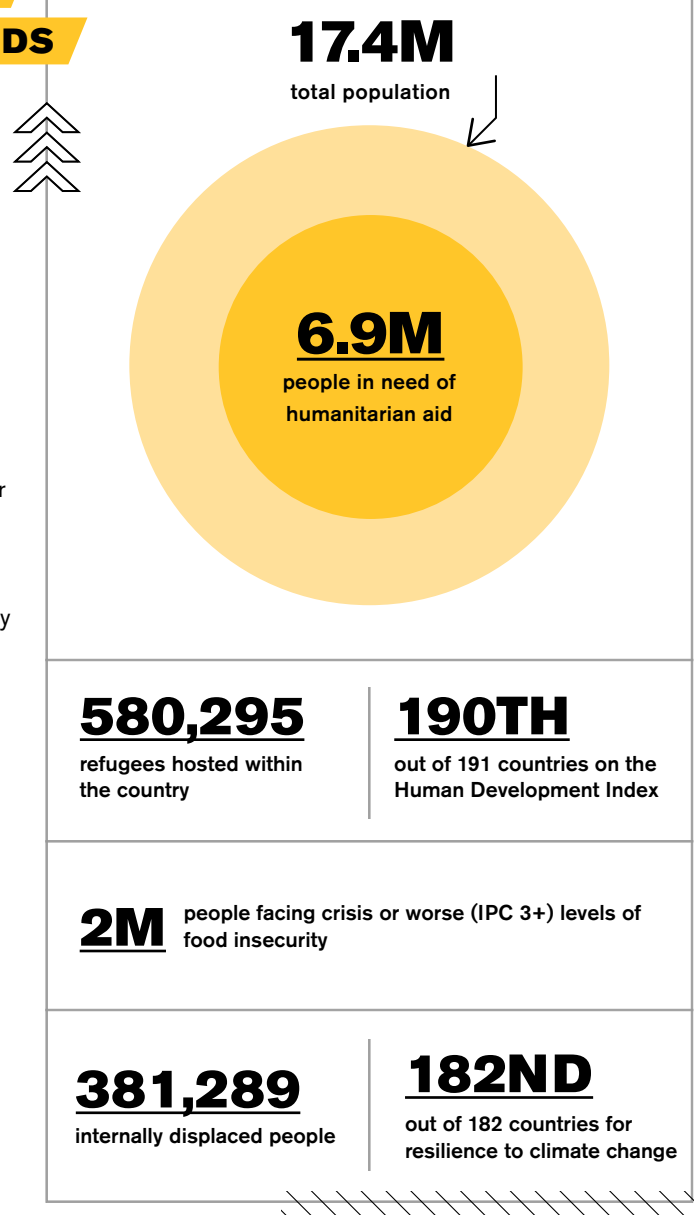
Chad enters 2023 in a precarious position. Following the death of the longtime ruler Idriss Déby, a Transitional Military Council (TMC) led by the late president's son Mahamat Déby was established in April 2021 pledging to follow an 18-month transition to the return of constitutional order and civilian rule. 2022 began with steps toward reconciliation with armed rebel groups in the country, culminating in an August 2022 ceasefire agreement that granted opposition and military groups the opportunity to participate in the future government. However, several major armed opposition groups, civilian movements such as Wakit Tama and key political parties were notably excluded from the agreement, and this dialogue does not affect the persistent conflict in the Lake Chad Basin. In October 2022, these groups launched street protests, which were violently repressed by the military. In addition to the delicate political transition the country is going through, Chad is also contending with the spillover of violence in the Lake Chad Basin into the country's Lac province.



**Valéry Lidam**  
IRC's Emergency Project Manager in Chad

"The various crises we are experiencing in Chad are manifestations of underlying tensions linked to a high rate of poverty, youth unemployment and a lack of governance that marginalizes some sections of society," said Valéry Lidam, IRC's Emergency Project Manager in Chad. "For several years, Chad has been preoccupied with the management of health crises and climate change. Currently, more than 1 million people are affected by record flooding. For people whose main resources are livestock and agriculture, this is a catastrophe."

### KEY DATA



ABOVE: Two women sit at an IRC health center in Chad.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. Poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition are all on the rise in the country.** This is in part due to internal instability and climate change, and compounded by global factors such as the conflict in Ukraine. In total **more than 2 million** people in the country are experiencing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity. If global food and fuel prices remain elevated through 2023, then urgent action will be required to stop these numbers from continuing to rise.

**2. Climate shocks add to food insecurity in a country that has limited readiness to withstand the climate crisis.** The country ranks last on the **Notre Dame GAIN Index** of climate vulnerability. The effects of the climate crisis can already be seen on the country's food production as poor harvests in 2022 made the country more reliant on food imports. Chad was then doubly affected by the war in Ukraine, since it led to higher prices of both imported food and fertilizer. Local farmers were not able to afford enough fertilizer, and as a result, food production has been further undermined. Meanwhile, the flooding in late 2022 that affected **more than 1 million** people is an illustration of the persistent risk from floods in the country, particularly during the rainy season from May to October.

### CHAD RANKS LAST ON THE NOTRE DAME GAIN INDEX OF CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

**3. The effects of growing conflict in the Lake Chad region are overflowing into Chad.** Conflict involving both Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS) in the Lake Chad Basin region has been ongoing for over a decade, disrupting local communities' access to livelihoods, particularly farming land, and driving displacement. In addition to experiencing its own instability, Chad is a major host country for refugees in the region, hosting more than **580,000 refugees** displaced from neighboring countries, such as Sudan and the Central African Republic, which are also on the Watchlist.

**4. Tensions around Chad's transition from military rule could disrupt humanitarian action and, if the process collapses, lead to new needs.** Elections originally scheduled for the end of 2022 were postponed to late 2024, raising tensions with opposition parties, civil society leaders and armed opposition groups. Movement restrictions imposed in response to protests have, at times, disrupted humanitarian actions. If the transition proceeds well, and Mahamat Déby uses 2023 to cement the August 2022 ceasefire, reengage nonstate armed groups in ceasefire negotiations and reassure citizens that he still intends to follow

through on a return to constitutional order, Chad may be able to start to address the myriad factors accelerating need in the country. Conversely, any sign that the political transition is reversing course risks a return to major political and civil unrest and even armed conflict between the government and armed opposition groups, which could drive major new needs in the country.



**MORE THAN 2 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRY ARE EXPERIENCING CRISIS OR WORSE (IPC 3+) LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY**



### THE IRC IN CHAD

The IRC has delivered vital humanitarian programming in Chad since 2004 in response to the refugee crisis from neighboring Darfur. Today the IRC works across the country to deliver integrated interventions in health, including reproductive health, nutrition and water and sanitation; women's protection and empowerment, with a focus on fighting against gender-based violence; and economic recovery, with an emphasis on cash transfer and income-generating activities. [Learn more about the IRC's response in Chad.](#)

ABOVE: A child with acute malnutrition eats a nutrient-dense paste at an IRC health center in Chad.



## ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISES INCAPACITATE PUBLIC SERVICES

**Hundreds of thousands of people will face crisis levels of food insecurity in 2023 as Lebanon’s combined economic and political crises have worsened.**

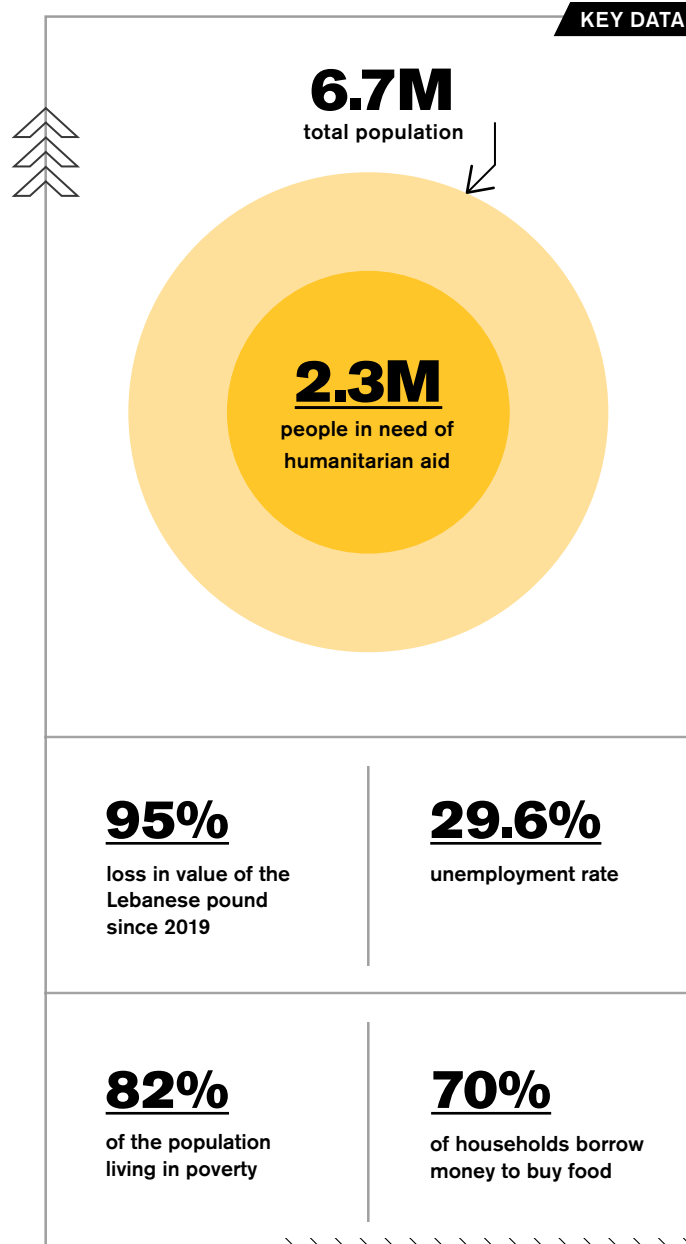
A combined political and economic crisis has pushed hundreds of thousands of people into crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity and severely limited the essential functions of the Lebanese state, including its ability to deliver basic services—highlighted by the spread of cholera for the first time in decades. At least some of those facing food insecurity are experiencing emergency (IPC 4) levels, where urgent action is needed to save lives. The current situation is rooted in years of poor governance and widespread corruption, waste and unsustainable financial policies, which have been worsened by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 Beirut port explosion. Now, the political impasse that has left the country with neither a head of state nor an appointed cabinet, is preventing needed reforms. As a result of these crises, 2.3 million people will need humanitarian assistance in 2023.



**Christy El Khoury**  
 IRC’s Early Childhood Development Coordinator in Lebanon

“The collapse of Lebanon’s economy, soaring inflation and political instability have resulted in significant challenges in all aspects of life for families in Lebanon,” explained Christy El Khoury, the IRC’s Early Childhood Development Coordinator in Lebanon. “Lebanese and refugee communities continue to search for hope and stability through their daily routine. We strive, every day, to help people in need access their basic rights, be resilient and better cope with crises.”

### KEY DATA



**ABOVE:** Syrian refugees stand in a displacement camp in Lebanon full of makeshift tents that are unable to withstand the severe winter storms.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

### 1. The economic crisis is crippling Lebanon's infrastructure.

Significant gaps in government funding have left essential services such as water, electricity and health particularly degraded, even on the brink of collapse. Most Lebanese households have access to electricity for just **a few hours** a day while high global fuel prices increase the cost of using private generators. Healthcare has been particularly affected by the economic crisis, which has led to **triple-digit price increases**, acute shortages of medical supplies and a significant reduction in medical personnel, as **40%** of the country's doctors have emigrated.

### 2. Lebanon's first cholera outbreak since 1993 is spreading fast.

This is due to the collapse of drinking water and waste-water treatment infrastructure as a result of the economic and political crises. There have been **over 1,400** suspected cases across the country, highlighting the significant impacts of the economic turmoil on public health and illustrating the wide impacts of the economic and political crises.

### 3. Economic turmoil has pushed hundreds of thousands of people into food insecurity.

Mounting debt, **triple-digit inflation** and a **95%** loss in value of the Lebanese pound since 2019 offer a bleak outlook for the coming year. Poverty rates have risen year-on-year to an estimated **82%** of the population in 2021, while more than **29%** of the country is unemployed, **nearly triple** the unemployment rate in 2018/19. Hundreds of thousands of people are likely already experiencing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) food insecurity, including some at emergency (IPC 4) levels, where immediate action is required to save lives—and these numbers are expected to grow in 2023. The situation is even more severe for Syrian refugee households, who are experiencing even higher rates of food insecurity. With no end to the political and economic crises, the humanitarian situation promises to worsen through 2023.

### 4. Prolonged political crises could stymie economic reforms.

The departure of President Michel Aoun in October 2022 has left a void in the country's highest office. At the same time, a caretaker Prime Minister-designate has failed to form a cabinet since May 2022, resulting in the **first instance** of Lebanon being without both a head of state and a cabinet simultaneously. Should the country see long delays over appointing President Aoun's successor, there will be little chance of resolving the country's economic crisis and so it may face renewed social unrest from a politically weary population. Moreover, political instability risks further politicization of the roughly **1.5 million** Syrian refugees in Lebanon—one quarter of the country's population—and rising pressure for returns to Syria, as they increasingly become a scapegoat for the country's economic woes. Already in 2022, hundreds of refugees have been returned to Syria, with rights groups raising concerns over the voluntariness of the repatriations.



**40%** OF THE COUNTRY'S DOCTORS HAVE EMIGRATED

## THE IRC IN LEBANON

Since 2012, the IRC has been providing cash assistance, legal services, education, training and economic support for refugees and local communities. Protection for affected communities, including the elderly and people with disabilities, is another key program for the IRC in Lebanon. After the Beirut port explosion in 2020, the IRC launched an emergency response to provide immediate cash, protection and economic assistance to those impacted by the blast. In response to the cholera outbreak in northern Lebanon, the IRC is supporting primary healthcare centers and the capacities of healthcare workers. Additionally, the IRC is implementing risk communication and community engagement activities and sensitizing communities on early health-seeking behaviors, awareness raising, health promotion, prevention of cholera and distribution of hygiene kits. [Learn more](#) about the IRC's response in Lebanon.

ABOVE: Syrian refugees in Lebanon wait to be seen by a doctor at a mobile medical clinic. Photo: Jane Barlow/PA Images via Getty Images.



Burkina Faso  
Haiti  
Ukraine

# MALI

UNRANKED

Ethiopia  
Afghanistan  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Yemen  
Syria

## RISING INSECURITY AMID AN UNCERTAIN POLITICAL TRANSITION THREATENS AID

**Mali remains on the Watchlist as increasing violence by armed groups and climate pressures drive displacement and exacerbate humanitarian needs.**

Mali has experienced two coups within the last three years, and its relations with both regional and donor countries have deteriorated, weakening cooperation to combat the armed groups that are spreading across the Sahel as well as economic development. Elections delayed since 2022 are due to happen in 2024, which may increase political tensions and related instability during 2023. Further, conflict activity is rising—both involving nonstate armed groups, particularly between the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), and along communal lines—between farmers and herders. Climate-induced displacement is exacerbating competition for resources, adding to intercommunal conflict across the country.



**Bangali Doumbia**  
IRC's Deputy Director of Programs in Mali

"The military-political crisis that has been raging in Mali since March 2012 continues to affect the vast majority of Malian people, particularly through the reduction in their access to basic social services," explained Bangali Doumbia, the IRC's Deputy Director of Programs in Mali. "Populations in the northern and central regions of Mali are particularly vulnerable to the strong expansion of rebel groups."

### KEY DATA

**21.5M**

total population

**9M**

people in need of humanitarian aid

**1.2M**

people project to face crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity in 2023<sup>6</sup>

**1.3M**

people displaced since 2012

**1,766**

schools closed due to insecurity, affecting 530,000 children

**170TH**

out of 182 countries for resilience to climate change

ABOVE: A mother holds her baby in her flooded village on the outskirts of Bamako, Mali. Photo: Michele Cattani/AFP via Getty Images.

6. Forthcoming Cadre Harmonise Analysis



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

### 1. Growing nonstate armed group activity poses

**a continued threat to civilians.** A sharp increase in confrontations between the ISGS and the JNIM since March 2022 has deepened insecurity in Mali. These clashes and other incidents of violence caused almost **4,500** fatalities in the first eleven months of 2022, almost triple the number in 2021. While the violence is most pronounced in northern areas, throughout late 2022, more incidents have also been reported near the capital of Bamako, suggesting armed groups are expanding their reach in southern Mali. More recently, the deployment of Russian military contractors under the Wagner Group has contributed to militarizing the Malian response to armed group activity, further increasing the threat to civilians.

**2. Economic challenges may grow as donors limit their support to Mali after the military seized power again in 2021.** Colonel Assimi Goita, who staged Mali's second coup in two years in 2021, postponed the general election that had been due to take place in February 2022, leading to tensions with both the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) bloc and donor states. France already suspended all funding for Mali due to the delays to the political transition. Any further adjustments to the current timeline for elections could see other international donors or ECOWAS also cutting off Mali, which would further threaten development in a country that already ranks **186** of 191 countries on the UN's Human Development Index.

**3. Climate change is increasing the frequency of new shocks and driving displacement, providing fertile ground for violence.** Mali ranks **170 out of 182** countries on the Notre Dame GAIN index for resilience to climate change. **80%** of people's livelihoods rely on agriculture, which is a sector particularly vulnerable to the impacts of floods—to which the country is particularly prone, and which climate change is making more frequent. Climate change is also increasing the frequency of droughts, which alter people's access to natural resources, mainly water and land, and so drive societal changes. For example, reduced access to water has led some farmer and herder communities to relocate, leading to resource competition and significant clashes over land usage that often play out along ethno-religious lines. More than **1.3 million** people have fled their homes between 2012 and 2022, and climate shocks are also likely to drive food insecurity. **1.2 million** people are expected to be food insecure by August 2023.

**4. Increasing insecurity is hampering civilians' access to services, particularly healthcare and education.** Conflict has already put **one out of five** health centers in northern and central Mali out of service and forced **1,776** schools to close. People who have been forced to flee their homes, particularly those now residing in Ménaka, Gao, and Ansongo, often lack

sufficient infrastructure to cover their food, health and shelter needs. Compounding this, humanitarian access also remains significantly constrained, particularly in the north. As of November 2022, there have already been **116** incidents affecting the safety of humanitarian workers, including 40 abductions, highlighting the enduring risks for humanitarians.



**1.2 MILLION PEOPLE ARE EXPECTED TO BE FOOD INSECURE BY AUGUST 2023**



## THE IRC IN MALI

Since 2012, the IRC has provided critical assistance to more than two million Malians displaced by conflict and facing severe food shortages in the areas of health-nutrition, economic recovery and development, education, water-hygiene and sanitation, protection and governance. To help the country recover, the IRC is focusing our efforts in the regions of Ménaka, Gao, Douentza, Mopti and Nara by providing emergency relief; supporting village savings and loan associations; providing water, hygiene, and sanitation services as well as health services. [Learn more about IRC's response in Mali.](#)

**ABOVE:** An aerial view showing part of a village in Mali where heavy rains flooded several villages located alongside the Niger River. Photo: Michele Cattani/AFP via Getty Images.



**EXPANDING CONFLICT DRIVES CIVILIAN HARM AND POVERTY**

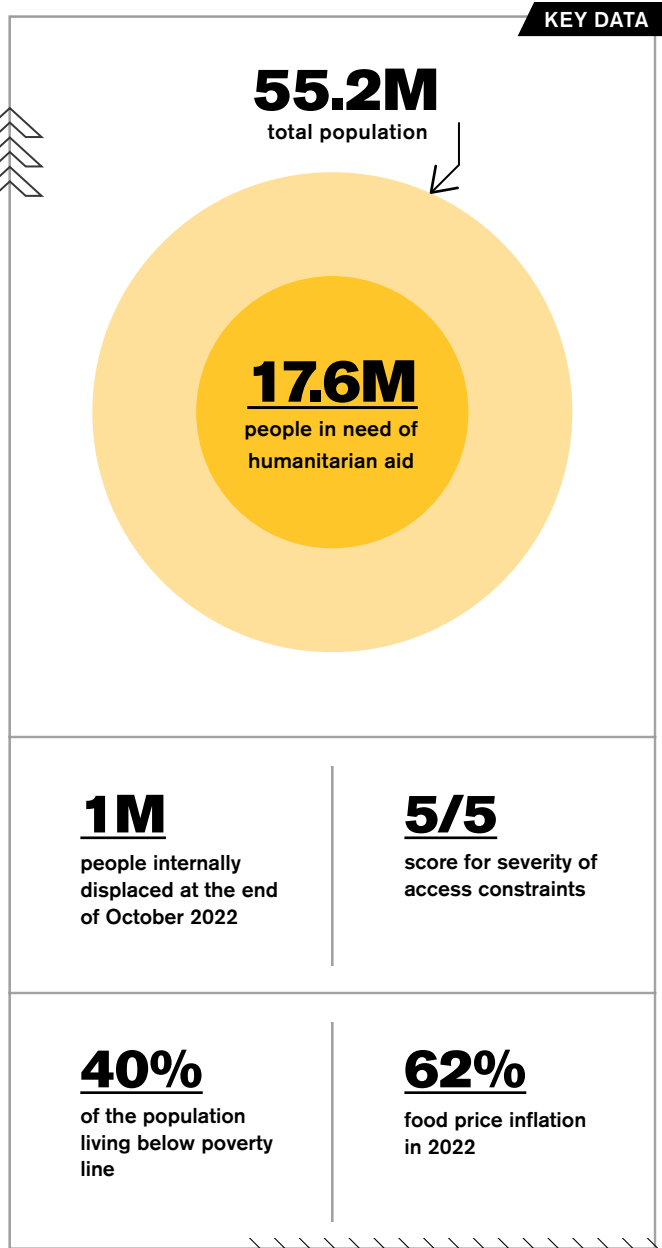
**Myanmar remains on the Watchlist as conflict increasingly impacts civilians, debilitates public services and drives poverty.**

Nearly two years after the Tatmadaw military authorities took power in Myanmar, a wide array of opposition groups continue both protests and armed attacks against the military government. The conflict may accelerate and expand into new fronts ahead of elections—officially due before August 2023—as historic grievances from ethnic armed organizations return to the fore and the military government’s authority is increasingly tested. Meanwhile, rapidly increasing poverty, a severely damaged economy and collapsing public services will continue to drive high levels of humanitarian need, while extreme constraints on humanitarian access will hinder NGOs’ ability to fill the gaps.



**Haja Kakay**  
IRC’s Women’s Protection and Empowerment Coordinator in Myanmar

The unrest in Myanmar has led to disrupted livelihoods, devaluation of the Myanmar kyat and increased food insecurity. The economic and political crisis is projected to have driven almost half the population into poverty,” said Haja Kakay, IRC’s Women’s Protection and Empowerment Coordinator in Myanmar. “The crisis has been especially hard on women and girls in the form of forced marriage, a higher number of women living in extreme poverty and fewer women in the labor force.



**ABOVE:** Sayed\* worked as a security guard for the IRC in Myanmar until he was forced to flee to Bangladesh. \*A pseudonym is used for the client’s protection.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. Conflict between the military government and opposition groups is likely to drive high rates of civilian harm.** The first six months of 2022 saw more incidents of violence against civilians by state forces than any other country in the world. With elections officially set to occur before August 2023 when the military government's emergency decree expires, disputes over electoral legitimacy are likely to be a flashpoint for further escalation from both sides. Whether elections occur or not, significant rates of civilian harm remain highly likely.

**2. Conflict could escalate as ethnic armed organizations shift tactics.** There are numerous ethnic armed organizations involved in the conflict in Myanmar, and any shift in individual groups' tactics—or new alliances between groups—can have a major impact on the ground. For example, a two-year informal ceasefire between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army began to collapse in 2022, with the Arakan Army expressing increasingly open support for anti-government forces. Having rejected the Tatmadaw's offer of peace talks in June, the Arakan Army looks set to expand further, which would lead to greater conflict and displacements. Elsewhere, other ethnic armed opposition groups, especially in the southeast, have been emboldened and are now increasing their calls for federalism or even regional secession. As conflict grows, so will displacements, humanitarian need and threats to the safety of civilians, particularly women and girls.

**3. Stalled economic growth will add to poverty and food insecurity.** The economy contracted 18% in 2021 before rebounding just 3% in 2022. As a result, 40% of people in Myanmar were living below the poverty line by mid-2022, double the amount in March 2020. The value of the kyat remains low, which—combined with high prices on global markets—is making it even harder for people to afford enough food for their families. 2022 saw a 62% year-on-year increase in food prices, which is likely to continue into 2023. With inflation also set to rise a further 8.5% in 2023, poverty and food insecurity show no sign of abating.

**4. Ongoing collapse of basic services is making civil society services ever more critical, yet extreme humanitarian access constraints limit scale-up of service delivery.** Regular attacks on doctors, hospitals and clinics throughout both 2021 and 2022 have left a health system already in freefall unable to cope with rising needs throughout 2022, increasing reliance on humanitarian programming. However, access constraints including bureaucratic controls, conflict and attacks on aid workers continue to restrict services essential to millions; Myanmar has the highest possible score for access constraints (5/5, indicating “extreme” constraints) according

to ACAPS. 14.4 million people, including 5 million children, required humanitarian assistance throughout 2022. With the collapse of public services, constraints on humanitarian action and proliferating conflict, the number of those in need of assistance will rise to 17.6 million in 2023.



**THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN NEED OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE WILL RISE FROM 14.4 MILLION IN 2022 TO 17.6 MILLION IN 2023**

## THE IRC IN MYANMAR

The IRC began work in Myanmar in 2008, providing humanitarian relief in response to Cyclone Nargis. Since then, the IRC has expanded its work to support communities affected by conflict and disaster and provides services directly and in partnership with local organizations and service providers. Our response includes healthcare, water and sanitation, protection, Women's Protection and Empowerment, and support for basic needs. We focus on reaching communities in even the most remote parts of the country. [Learn more about the IRC's response in Myanmar.](#)

**ABOVE:** Karen and Burmese refugees who have fled conflict in Myanmar and settled in temporary shelters along the Moei river bank on the Thai-Myanmar border. Photo: Guillaume Payen/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images.



## CLIMATE SHOCKS AND ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS DRIVE HUNGER AND DISPLACEMENT

**Niger continues to face a complex humanitarian emergency compounded by conflict, violence against civilians by armed groups and climate shocks in 2023.**

Rising nonstate armed group activity has driven a deepening crisis in Niger since 2014. The country has two main areas of insecurity: the western border area with Mali and Burkina Faso and, in the southeastern Diffa region, at the borders with Chad and Nigeria in the Lake Chad Basin. The growing violence near Mali and Burkina Faso reflects broader insecurity across the central Sahel region and has produced greater dangers for civilians, who are increasingly directly targeted by nonstate armed actors. Moreover, this insecurity is disrupting agricultural activities and—along with climate shocks, particularly flooding—driving up food insecurity at an unprecedented scale.

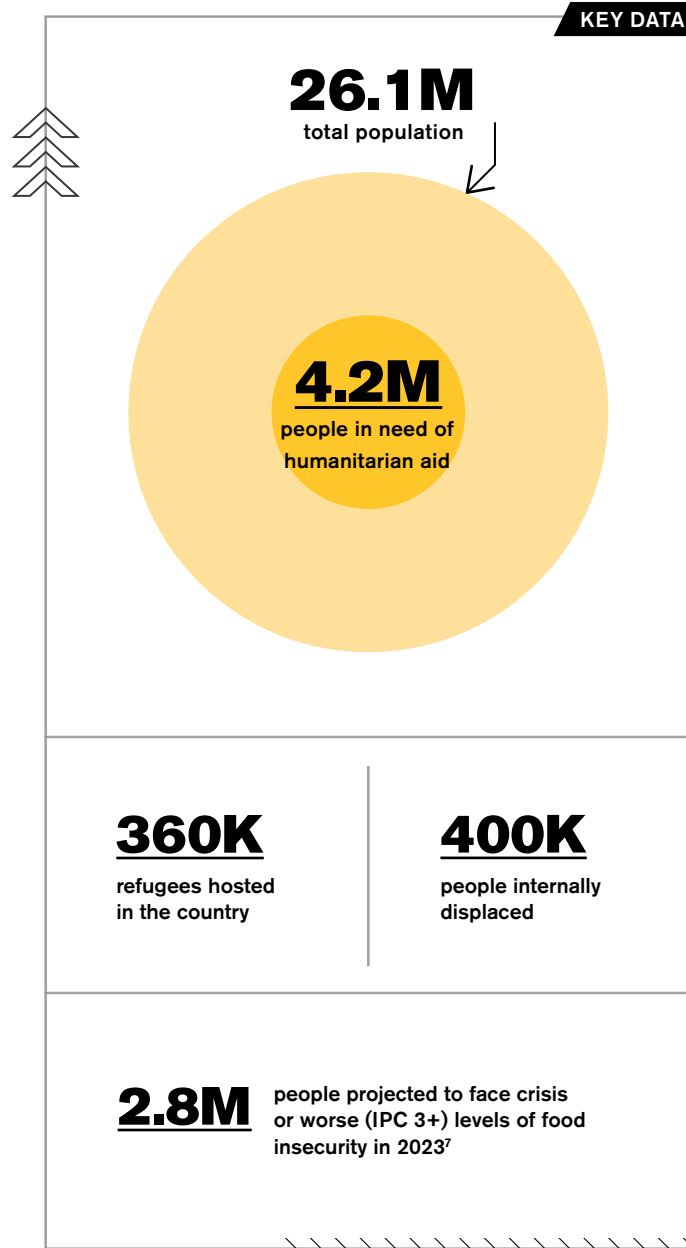


**Lewa Adam**  
IRC's Emergency Coordinator in Niger

“In Niger, the humanitarian situation is very worrying this year with several crises, particularly those related to food insecurity, floods and the security situation. The need for humanitarian assistance is enormous despite the mobilization of aid,” said Lewa Adam, IRC’s Emergency Coordinator in Niger. “Humanitarian actors must focus more on prevention by taking more interest in climate change issues and developing initiatives within the framework of the nexus.”



### KEY DATA



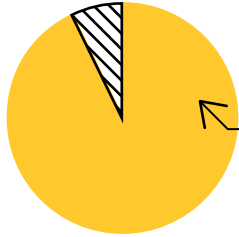
**ABOVE:** Maryama Alhaji Kiari, 15, sits with her friends in a school in the Diffa region of Niger.

7. Forthcoming Cadre Harmonise Analysis



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

### 1. Displacement is growing as conflict persists.



Almost 400,000 Nigeriens are already internally displaced,

**93%**

due to conflict and violence.

The number of IDPs rose by roughly 20% in 2022 compared to the previous year, continuing an upward trend since 2020. Additionally, displaced Nigeriens who try to return home after being displaced by conflict often find they cannot access basic services. Niger also receives refugees fleeing its conflict-affected neighbors. As of mid-2022, the country hosted approximately 300,000 people who had fled violence in neighboring countries, mainly Nigeria and Mali, an increase of 45% over the past three years. The combined needs of internally displaced, refugees and returnees are likely to overstretch existing resources into next year, making living conditions significantly worse.

**2. Conflict will remain the key factor driving food insecurity in 2023, though climate shocks will exacerbate the crisis.** The humanitarian community forecast in early 2022 that 4.4 million people could face crisis levels of food insecurity or worse (IPC 3+) later in the year. Prompt humanitarian food assistance helped bring these numbers down. Crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity will remain high into 2023, affecting 2.8 million people in June to August. The key accelerator of food insecurity in 2022 has been conflict, which prevents farmers from accessing their land to sow and reap crops. Climate shocks such as floods and localized droughts then add food insecurity by destroying crops and limiting harvests. The 327,343 people estimated to have been affected by floods in 2022 face even greater risks of food insecurity in the near term.

**3. Both ongoing conflict and government policies may limit efforts by humanitarians to address the growing needs.** Niger experiences “high” constraints on humanitarian access according to ACAPS, with ongoing insecurity a key concern. Additionally, NGOs are currently negotiating with the government to ensure that its efforts to strengthen alignment between NGOs’ work and national policies and to increase transparency around NGO activities in Niger do not undermine the neutrality, independence or speed of humanitarian action.



**327,343 PEOPLE ESTIMATED TO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY FLOODS IN 2022 FACE EVEN GREATER RISKS OF FOOD INSECURITY IN THE NEAR TERM**

## THE IRC IN NIGER

The IRC started working in Niger in 2013. IRC operates in the Diffa, Tillabéri, Maradi and Agadez regions and plays a leading role in the rapid response mechanism. The IRC’s services include cash distribution, seed distributions to farmers, support to health centers so that children are protected from malnutrition and support to schools to improve children’s literacy. The IRC also builds and rehabilitates water supply infrastructure and provides protection programs for women and children. [Learn more about IRC’s Niger response.](#)

ABOVE: Kelou Kiari feeds her son Bidi in Niger where he has received malnutrition support through the IRC.



Burkina Faso  
Haiti  
Ukraine

# NIGERIA UNRANKED

Ethiopia  
Afghanistan  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Yemen  
Syria

## RUN-UP TO ELECTIONS THREATENS INCREASED VIOLENCE

**Nigeria remains on the Watchlist as a series of conflicts spread across the country in the run-up to general elections and both attacks on civilians and levels of hunger surge.**

As Nigeria prepares for general elections in the first months of 2023, it is already beset by insecurity across several regions, including long-running conflict in the northeast, criminal activity by communal militia groups and bandits in the northwest and beyond—as well as a secessionist movement in the south. The election could deepen political tensions and see local armed groups increasing their activities, potentially leading to greater communal conflict, particularly between farmers and herders. At the same time, climate change and flooding are deepening the crises in the country, leaving 8.3 million people in humanitarian need and 19.5 million experiencing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity in mid-2022.



**Olukunbi Olarewaju**  
IRC's Senior Manager of Economic Recovery and Development in Nigeria

“Rising inflation and climate change—evidenced by widespread flooding—exacerbate an already dire humanitarian situation caused by insurgencies in the Northeast and Northwest regions of Nigeria,” said Olukunbi Olarewaju, IRC's Senior Economic Recovery and Development Manager in Nigeria. “The need for external support to salvage populations at risk of economic hardship, food insecurity and disease has become more critical than ever.”

### KEY DATA

**216.7M**

total population

**8.3M**

people in need of humanitarian aid

**37%**

of children under five stunted from malnutrition

**4/5**

score for severity of access constraints

**19.5M**

people facing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity

ABOVE: Naima\* and her family live in northeast Nigeria where many children suffer from severe acute malnutrition. \*A pseudonym is used for the client's protection.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

### 1. Levels of violence will remain high in the northeast, driving the largest humanitarian crisis in the country.

Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS) are the two main armed groups that carry out attacks in the region. They have struck both in the heart of government-held so-called "garrison towns" in the northeast and also, increasingly, near the capital Abuja. The violence has displaced more than **2.1 million** people and reduced access to farmlands and livelihoods, adding to food insecurity—and yet the ability of humanitarian actors to respond is severely constrained, particularly in the areas of ISWAP/JAS control. Moreover, with Nigerian security forces focused elsewhere in 2023, violence and—thus needs—in the northeast may start to rise.

**2. Food insecurity is growing as severe flooding compounds the impacts of conflict.** The number of Nigerians facing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity reached **19.5 million** in mid-2022, driven by both persistent insecurity and the impacts of climate change. Nigeria saw its worst flooding since 2012 during the second half of 2022, affecting some **2.5 million** people, including over 3,000 killed or injured and 1.3 million displaced. Extensive damage to farmland threatens to worsen food insecurity.

# 19.5M

**NIGERIANS FACED CRISIS OR WORSE (IPC 3+) LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY IN MID-2022**



Bilkisu Ahmed prepares a meal at her home in Maiduguri, Borno, Nigeria, where she's learning how to keep and maintain a home garden.

**3. The northwest is seeing a spiraling pattern of banditry and vigilantism driving up violence and leaving households increasingly vulnerable.** Early 2022 saw a **45% increase** in the number of armed group attacks on civilians, including kidnap for ransom and robberies. The Nigerian police force has struggled to respond, leading to both a rise in local communities forming vigilante groups that then become part of the spiraling insecurity and the military being spread ever more thinly. As a result, over **450,000** people had been displaced in the northwest at the start of 2022, and women and girls face particular threats to their safety amid the violence.

**4. Political tensions in the run-up to the general election risk adding to the insecurity.** At a minimum, Nigerian security forces will be further stretched as they respond to insecurity in multiple parts of the country, including criminal kidnappings. Protests and rallies are also likely to grow ahead of and during the election. Previous elections have also been preceded by increased violence between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt states across central Nigeria as some candidates have sought to exploit communal tensions over land and other resources to mobilize support. More people died in farmer-herder violence in the first half of 2018 than in the northeast (**Crisis Group**), and there is a risk of similar violence in 2023 if candidates manipulate such issues again.

## THE IRC IN NIGERIA

The IRC began responding in Nigeria following severe flooding in 2012. Since then, the IRC has expanded its operations across northeast Nigeria's Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states working largely at the local government area levels, as well responding to emergencies in the Zamfara state (northwest Nigeria) and the Kogi state (north central Nigeria). The IRC transitioned from emergency to humanitarian response in 2014, and by 2017 established full operations across the BAY states. The IRC's programming approach is integrated multisectoral programming in health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation and protection for women, men, girls and boys who are internally displaced and in host communities. [Learn more](#) about the IRC's response in Nigeria.



**MASSIVE FLOODING AND ECONOMIC INSTABILITY DRIVE UP HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND FOOD INSECURITY**

**Pakistan re-enters the Watchlist as it faces heightened economic and political instability following massive flooding that destroyed crops across the country.**

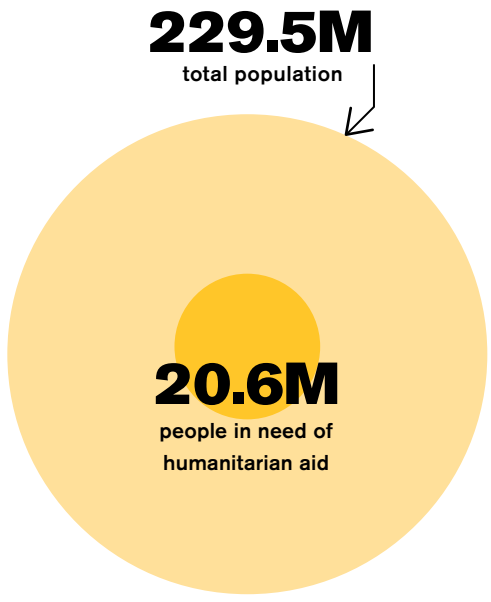
Humanitarian needs rose in Pakistan in 2022 as it coped with the worst flooding since 2010, an economic crisis fueled by ongoing political tensions and a debt crisis. Pakistan is particularly vulnerable to climate shocks, including heat waves and flooding, but has little capacity to invest in preventative infrastructure. Flooding caused almost **\$40 billion** of damages in 2022 and, with a majority of crop fields destroyed, next year's harvests are expected to fall significantly—compounding food insecurity. The scheduled general election in 2023 is likely to exacerbate existing political tensions and could see an increase in violence across the country, particularly after former Prime Minister Imran Khan was shot at a rally in November.



**Shabnam Baloch**  
IRC's Country Director in Pakistan

"In 2022, Pakistan experienced devastating droughts and floods that destroyed assets, lives and livelihoods on a massive scale. First, a severe heatwave saw temperatures rise continuously above 45°C, resulting in crop losses, power outages and forest fires. Then came the unprecedented monsoon rains—the heaviest and most concentrated ever recorded," said Shabnam Baloch, the IRC's Country Director in Pakistan. "The reconstruction and rehabilitation from the floods needs to be climate-resilient, inclusive and people-centric."

**KEY DATA**



**4.7M**  
people facing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity

**146TH**  
out of 182 countries for resilience to climate change

**161ST** out of 191 countries on the Human Development Index

**ABOVE:** A family sits by the roadside in a temporary shelter in Sindh province of Pakistan after severe flooding.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. Heatwaves and flooding highlight Pakistan's high vulnerability to climate shocks.** April and May 2022 were the country's hottest months in **61** years, with temperatures in the Sindh province reaching **48° C**. The heatwave led to water shortages in Punjab and Sindh, the two major crop-producing provinces, in May. The country then experienced over **700%** above average rainfall in July and September 2022, leading to flooding that affected over **33 million** people. If next year sees a similar cycle of increased temperatures and rain, it will strain already-overstretched national resources and deepen humanitarian need. In April 2022, before the impact of the heatwaves and flooding, **4.7 million people** (2% of the population) were facing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity. The flooding has reduced food production and damaged the economy, so food insecurity will likely worsen in 2023.

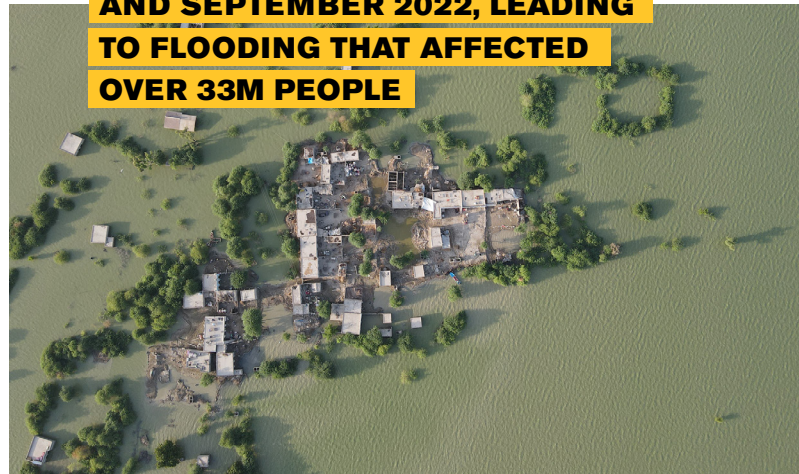
**2. Economic uncertainty is exacerbating poverty levels as basic goods remain increasingly out of reach for many.** The record flooding destroyed almost **half** of crops grown in Sindh and over **50%** of Pakistan's overall cotton crops, lowering the incomes of 1.6 million farmers in the country both in 2022 and into 2023. Even prior to the floods, Pakistan was already experiencing economic instability. The rupee **depreciated** to an all-time low against the dollar in July, and inflation rose to **27.3%** in August—the highest since 1975—after the government cut subsidies to secure debt relief from the IMF, and is predicted to stay high at **18%** in 2023. Pakistan also imports **75%** of its oil from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC+), so the body's decision to cut oil production is likely to drive up prices for fuel. High food and fuel prices are likely in 2023 and, with earning capacity reduced by flooding and economic instability, more people will face poverty and humanitarian need.



A man walks through a flood-affected area in Pakistan. In September, flooding displaced 7 to 10 million people.

# 700%

**ABOVE AVERAGE RAINFALL IN JULY AND SEPTEMBER 2022, LEADING TO FLOODING THAT AFFECTED OVER 33M PEOPLE**



An aerial view showing the deadly flooding in Pakistan that submerged a third of the country.

**3. Political tensions severely reduce the government's capacity to respond to growing needs following the floods.** Prime Minister Imran Khan was ousted in 2022 and then banned from serving in public office later in the year. However, he still maintains significant popular support around the country and is expected to spearhead countrywide protests against the current government ahead of the 2023 general elections, which may lead to increased violence and clashes. Political unrest, as well as persistent insecurity in areas near the Afghan and Iranian borders—which host many of the nearly **3 million** Afghan refugees in Pakistan—may also cause disruption to humanitarian action at times.

## THE IRC IN PAKISTAN

The IRC has been working in Pakistan since 1980, providing emergency relief, healthcare, safety/protection, education, job training and other essential services to affected communities. We have expanded our services to all four provinces and territories of Pakistan. We have programming in health and education services including environmental health, economic wellbeing activities and engagement with the community on prevention measures. More recently, the IRC has been responding to the floods in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with partner organizations. [Learn more about the IRC's Pakistan response.](#)



**POLITICAL INSTABILITY, ECONOMIC CRISIS AND HEIGHTENED CONFLICT ACCELERATE NEEDS**

**Rising conflict, political instability and a deepening economic crisis are all driving humanitarian need.**

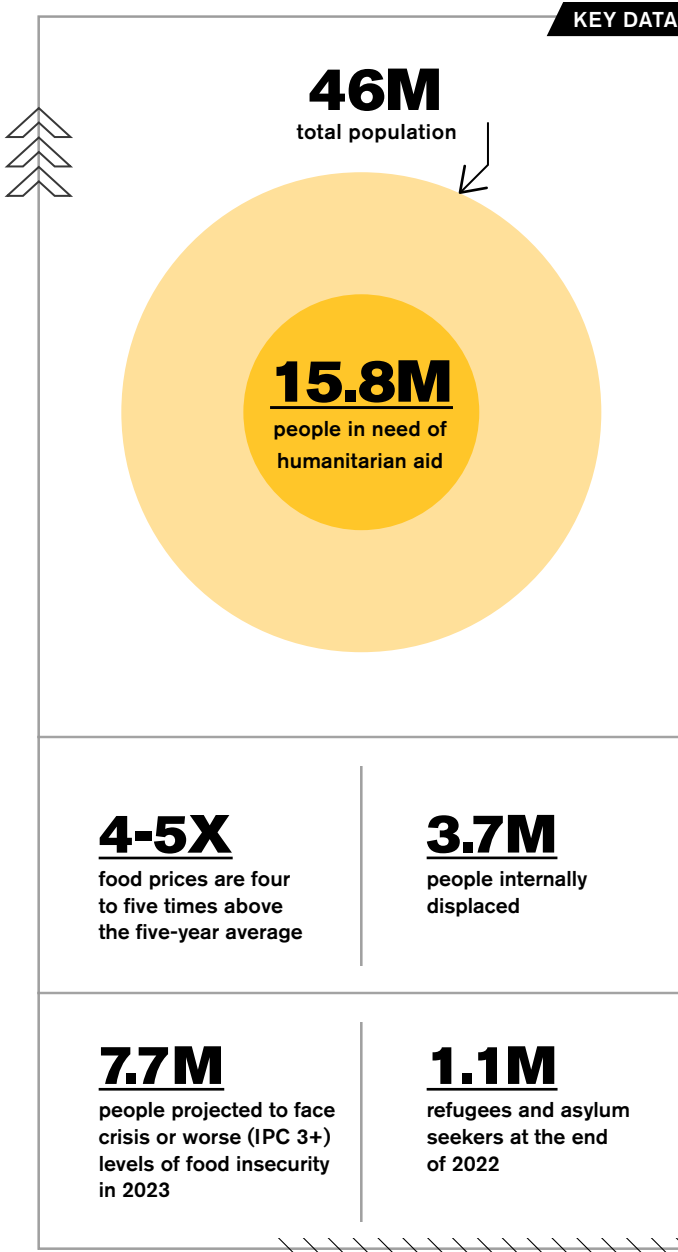
Sudan is seeing a significant increase in localized violence in some of its border regions amid political uncertainty, land disputes and conflicts in neighboring countries. The military took control of the government in October 2021, sparking protests. Conflict has also risen during 2022, often playing out along communal lines but influenced by the agendas of local influential and political figures, driving new displacements in Darfur and Blue Nile. Sudan's ongoing economic crisis will continue to drive poverty and food insecurity unless the political situation stabilizes, given that donors suspended debt relief programs and development funds after the military took power.



**Adil Hassan**  
IRC's Senior  
Emergency Response  
Coordinator in Sudan

"The continued political crisis, economic deterioration, internal conflict and various hazards will further exacerbate the situation in Sudan," said Adil Hassan, the IRC's Senior Emergency Response Coordinator in Sudan. "Throughout 2023, the outlined humanitarian risks will make vulnerable communities less resilient while generating new and more severe humanitarian needs."

**KEY DATA**



**ABOVE:** A Beja tribe woman in Port Sudan, Sudan. Photo: Eric Lafforgue/Art in All of Us/Corbis via Getty Images



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

### 1. Conflict, often along communal lines, is increasing and threatens further displacement and insecurity in border regions.

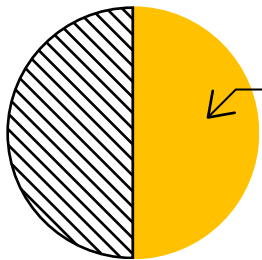
Intercommunal violence in Darfur, Kordofan and Kassala significantly increased in 2022 compared to 2021, and is likely to continue given the limited state authority in these border regions and unresolved local disputes over land and natural resources. The rise in violence in the Blue Nile state has already displaced **97,000** people since July 2022 while a similar situation displaced **21,000** people in West Kordofan in October. Continued political uncertainty could allow an increase in armed group activity.

### 2. Political uncertainty is likely to increase security concerns.

General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the current de-facto Sudanese head-of-state since taking power in October 2021, **announced** in July that he would withdraw from political talks and support the formation of a technocratic cabinet. However, given heightened public distrust of the military, protests against the army leadership will continue until an agreement is reached. If an agreement is not reached on the formation of a civilian government, the number of protests could grow. Further, negotiations on establishing a new cabinet may create divisions among opposition groups, opening space for the military to retain their control over economic and security institutions.

### 3. Climate change is increasing the frequency of shocks like flooding and drought and reducing food production.

Sudan is already experiencing substantially warmer and drier weather, with shorter rainy periods reducing crop production. **Half** of the Sudanese population lives in communities affected by dry spells. Moreover, erratic rainfall is also making flooding more likely, which in turn has a greater impact on communities given inadequate prevention and mitigation measures, including drainage systems.



# 50%

of the population live in communities affected by dry spells

### 4. Economic recovery is unlikely next year given a continued high inflation rate, extremely low foreign reserves and the international community's suspension of foreign debt relief programs.

Though the inflation rate is predicted to fall to **115.7%** in 2023 from **236.4%** in 2022, this still reflects very rapidly growing prices. Sudan imports **80%** of its wheat from Russia, so it has been particularly affected by the ripple effects from the war in Ukraine. Moreover, donors have suspended Sudan's debt removal program earlier this year, meaning an agreement to write off **\$14 billion** in debt and cancel \$9 billion more in the future is currently no longer going ahead. Cooperation between the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the current authorities also remains suspended. Against this backdrop, the economic crisis is likely to grow: food and transportation costs may rise further, and medicine, energy and imported goods will likely face shortages.

## IRC IN SUDAN

The IRC has a main office in Khartoum with three field offices in El-Gadarif, Blue Nile and South Kordofan states. In Sudan, the IRC supports people impacted by conflict and crisis, including women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, refugees, mixed populations and host communities. We provide an integrated health, nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) program that maintains basic service provision while actively working to increase local capacity to sustain the service provision.

The IRC also provides child protection services and comprehensive women and girls' protection and empowerment services including gender-based violence (GBV) survivors. [Learn more about the IRC's Sudan response.](#)



Haiti  
Ukraine

# VENEZUELA UNRANKED

Ethiopia  
Afghanistan  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Yemen  
Syria

## CONTINUED ECONOMIC HARDSHIP DRIVES HEALTH AND FOOD NEEDS

Venezuela remains on the Watchlist as the lingering effects of its economic collapse continue to drive migration and humanitarian need.

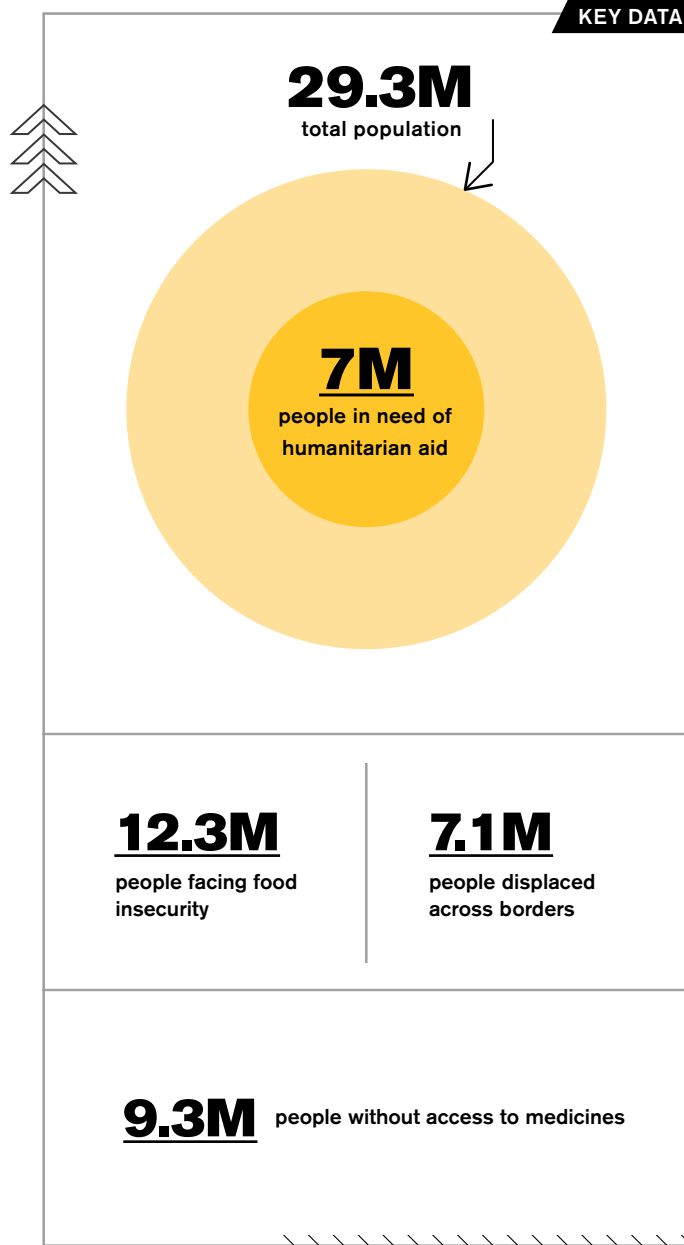
Venezuela's GDP shrank from **\$482** billion in 2014 to an estimated **\$106** billion in 2020, one of the steepest reductions in output in modern history without war. Migration spiked during the peak of the crisis (2016–2019) when the GDP shrank almost **20%** per year and inflation reached **1,000,000%** a year, erasing the livelihoods and savings of millions of Venezuelans. Unable to find or afford food and medicines, **7.1** million people have left the country since 2014. In the past year, the economy has slightly improved but **7** million Venezuelans remain in humanitarian need.



**Julio Rank Wright**  
IRC's Regional Vice  
President of Latin  
America

"The Venezuela crisis is a protracted challenge that is shaking the whole region, but as conflict continues to escalate around the world, competing priorities are draining the attention and support it gets," explained Julio Rank Wright, the IRC's Regional Vice President of Latin America. "We call on the international community to increase funding, collaboration and aid to support Venezuelans in their home country, as well as those in the process of rebuilding their lives in places like Colombia, Ecuador and Peru."

### KEY DATA



**ABOVE:** Paola holds Crixio, the youngest of six children. The family is part of the indigenous Wayuu community in Venezuela.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2023

**1. Economic conditions will continue to drive needs—including food insecurity—for many Venezuelans despite a slight economic recovery in 2022.** Venezuela's GDP grew by 10% in 2022, which helped alleviate shortages of basic goods, but such growth is insufficient to reverse years of economic hardship. As a result, food insecurity is likely to remain rampant in the country as essential goods, such as food and cooking gas, remain unaffordable for many Venezuelans. Food inflation decelerated from 1,585% in September 2021 to 131% in July 2022, but it is still the third highest food inflation rate in the world after Zimbabwe and Lebanon. As a result, 12.3 million people—two out of five Venezuelans—are estimated to be food insecure and 2.1 million are potentially severely food insecure.



# 3 out of every 4

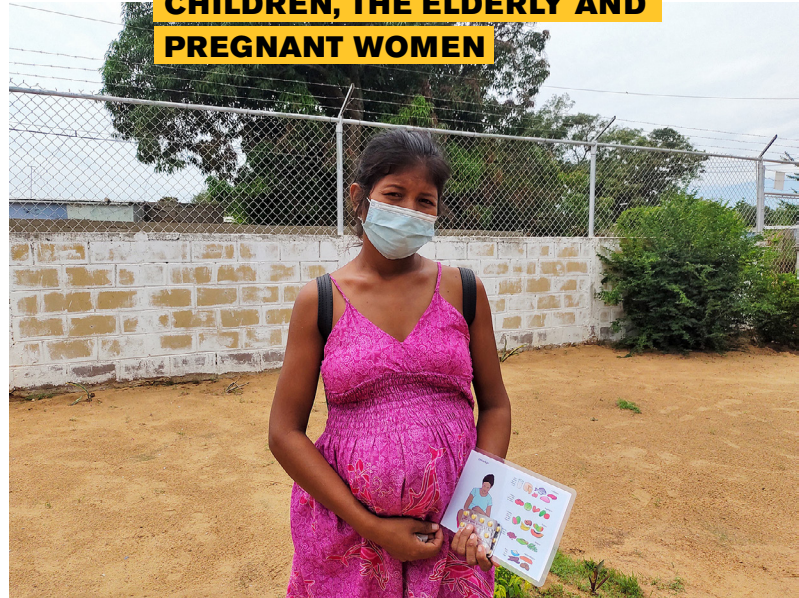
Venezuelans are currently living in extreme poverty, and many have chosen to migrate elsewhere in Latin America and towards the United States as an escape.

**2. Migration is set to continue in 2023, although at a slower pace.** Three out of four Venezuelans are currently living in extreme poverty, and many have chosen to migrate elsewhere in Latin America and towards the United States as an escape. Arrivals at neighboring countries have reportedly included malnourished children, pointing to the extreme conditions pushing people to leave. As many as 900,000 people say they intend to migrate if conditions do not improve soon.

**3. Health services are likely to remain severely strained for those most in need.** Lack of access to healthcare means that preventable and treatable diseases pose a significant threat to children, the elderly and pregnant women. Years of acute underinvestment and migration have left health and education facilities ill-equipped and understaffed. 8.4 million Venezuelans are estimated to be facing major difficulties in receiving medical care while medicines are inaccessible for 9.3 million.

**4. Humanitarian access is likely to remain difficult.** ACAPS assesses access restrictions in Venezuela as four out of five on their severity scale, indicating very high constraints. Impediments to independent humanitarian needs assessments will also keep hindering efficient aid for those in need.

**LACK OF ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE MEANS THAT PREVENTABLE AND TREATABLE DISEASES POSE A SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO CHILDREN, THE ELDERLY AND PREGNANT WOMEN**



Daisy, a member of the indigenous Wayuu community in Venezuela, after a check-up at an IRC health program.

## THE IRC IN VENEZUELA

With the Venezuelan crisis in its seventh year, the IRC is actively working to promote durable solutions, with an approach to bridge humanitarian needs with long-term development opportunities and sustained results. The IRC is currently working in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru—the main host countries for Venezuelans—as well as through local organizations in Venezuela.

Our work includes ensuring that government systems are strengthened to respond to multiple needs of both host populations and Venezuelans, while promoting their integration into their new communities. [Learn more about the IRC's Venezuela response.](#)



# METHODOLOGY



To compile the annual Watchlist, the IRC uses a multi-stage process of quantitative and qualitative analysis to identify the 20 countries that face the greatest risk of major deterioration in their humanitarian situation over the coming year, whether because of armed conflict, economic turmoil, climate crisis or other natural and human-driven shocks.

A detailed description of the analysis can be found [here](#). A brief overview of the process follows. If you have questions about the 2023 Emergency Watchlist or the IRC's other crisis analysis work, please contact: [crisis.analysis@rescue.org](mailto:crisis.analysis@rescue.org).

## STEP 1

### Initial “red flagging” exercise using 67 quantitative and qualitative variables

The IRC's Global Crisis Analysis team compiled 67 quantitative and qualitative variables from 13 different datasets, including **INFORM**, **Verisk Maplecroft**, the Danish Refugee Council, Council on Foreign Relations, **International Crisis Group**, Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED), and ACAPS. The team then identified the countries that were consistently flagged across these variables (e.g., they ranked in the top 25 countries or the source qualitatively identified the country as facing a major risk over the year ahead).

## STEP 2

### Validating initial analysis against insights from IRC and external experts

The Global Crisis Analysis team then validated this preliminary analysis by setting it alongside insights from both internal and external experts, gathered in two ways:

- » Each IRC regional office (Middle East and North Africa, East Africa, West Africa, Great Lakes Region, Latin America and Asia) completed a survey, highlighting the countries they saw as facing the greatest humanitarian risk over the year ahead on a 1–3 scale (3 being the greatest risk) and sharing qualitative insights on each country.
- » The Global Crisis Analysis team and regional offices collaborated to organize an online or in-person “regional roundtable” in each region, to bring together both IRC staff and external partners and other experts in and from the different regions.

These two elements allowed the IRC to bring insights from among the over 40,000 IRC staff and volunteers as well as from external experts, including staff from partner organizations, academics and researchers, diplomats and more. Their insights inform both the selection of the countries for the list and the thematic analysis presented at the front of this report.

**THE INSIGHTS FROM STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS INFORM BOTH THE SELECTION OF THE COUNTRIES FOR THE LIST AND THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS**



**ABOVE:** Rahima, an IRC volunteer, talks with Bagcher Nazari, 19, an English-speaking IRC staff member at the IRC tent in Lesvos, Greece.



**STEP 3**
**Combining insights from Step 1, Step 2 and elsewhere to develop the final Watchlist and Top Ten rankings**

The Global Crisis Analysis team then drew up a final, ranked shortlist of countries through a series of meetings allowing them to set qualitative and quantitative insights alongside one another. The key reference points for this stage were:

1. The rankings produced purely by Step 1
2. Quantitative rankings and qualitative inputs from both the surveys and roundtables in Step 2
3. Further data analysis of the quantitative variables used in Step 1, grouping them to develop scores for four key dimensions of risk:
  - » Likelihood of a human-driven shock occurring
  - » Likelihood of a natural shock occurring
  - » Existing pressures on the population
  - » Country response capacity

These four scores were then combined to produce alternative rankings.
4. Qualitative analysis by the IRC's Global Crisis Analysis team to identify the risk of further deterioration of humanitarian crisis in countries on the preliminary short list
5. The scale and severity of emergencies that had occurred in those countries during 2022, as measured by the IRC's Emergency Classification System
6. A dataset of macroeconomic variables compiled by the Global Crisis Analysis team to assess institutional and economic resilience
7. Humanitarian needs data from the Global Humanitarian Overview and country Humanitarian Needs Overviews, via the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Analysis of humanitarian access constraints from ACAPS, combined with the qualitative knowledge and expertise gained from a workshop on humanitarian access convened in Nairobi between the Global Crisis Analysis, Policy and Advocacy and Humanitarian Access teams of the IRC in October 2022.

**STEP 4**
**Drafting country sections and thematic analysis**

The thematic analysis in the first half of Watchlist 2023 and country profiles in the second half draw on the analysis from Steps 1–3 as well as data and analysis from the following sources:

- » Food insecurity data from Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC Info), the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) and the Food Security Prevention Network (RPCA)
- » Displacement data from the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)
- » Conflict data from ACLED and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)
- » The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (WPS) index of women's inclusion, justice and security
- » The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) index of countries' vulnerability and readiness to successfully adapt to climate change and other global challenges
- » Economic and financial data from UN OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group
- » The UN Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI)
- » Other open-source humanitarian, media and think-tank reporting
- » Food price inflation indexes from Trading Economics
- » Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Monthly Real Food Price Indices



Niman Arab is an emergency rapid response manager in the Somali Region of Ethiopia.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Watchlist team wishes to express its gratitude to the wide range of both IRC and non-IRC colleagues who have contributed to this year's Watchlist. This report is the culmination of research and analysis that touches on nearly every aspect of the International Rescue Committee's work, and countless teams and colleagues across the IRC have made invaluable contributions to the process.

We are particularly grateful to colleagues from the IRC's regional offices who partnered with us closely on this report, not least to organize roundtable events in each region, and to the colleagues and external experts who participated in those roundtables. These events were held under the "**Chatham House Rule**" so we are unable to thank the participants by name, but they include staff from partner organizations, community-based organizations, local academic and think-tank researchers and experts and more.

The insights shared during these events have added significantly to the analysis in this report. Thank you to the Open Society Foundations for their generous support that made the regional roundtable events possible and to Verisk Maplecroft, ACLED, Danish Refugee Council and others for providing access to their data.



An IRC legal team member provides free consultations to residents in a suburb of Dnipro in Ukraine.



Dr. Fatima Ibrahim Lawan oversees the IRC's malnutrition response in northeast Nigeria.





The International Rescue Committee (IRC) helps people whose lives have been shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and rebuild.

Founded in 1933 at the call of Albert Einstein, we now work in over 40 crisis-affected countries as well as communities throughout Europe and the Americas.

Ingenuity, fortitude and optimism remain at the heart of who we are. We deliver lasting impact by providing health care, helping children learn, and empowering individuals and communities to become self-reliant, always with a focus on the unique needs of women and girls.

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