

A young child with dark skin and short hair, wearing a light-colored, patterned dress, holds a white bowl. The child's expression is serious and direct. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. A green, wavy graphic element is at the top left, and a large, irregular green shape frames the text on the right.

# WHEN THERE IS NO FOOD ASSISTANCE

Breaking our promise to  
the world's most  
vulnerable children

POLICY REPORT

## ABBREVIATIONS

CFS	Committee on World Food Security
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
FFA	Food for Assets
FFW	Food for Work
GFD	General Food Distribution
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
MNCH	Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TSF	Targeted Supplementary Feeding
UN	United Nations
WFP	World Food Programme
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. We serve all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

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Cover photo caption: A girl in Kenya holds her empty bowl before her mother serves dinner.

All photos © World Vision



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Poor nutrition causes nearly half (45 per cent) of preventable deaths in children under 5 – 2.8 million children each year. One in six children – approximately 100 million – are underweight.



# Executive summary

World Vision believes that every child and their family have the right to enough nutritious food each day in order to live a healthy life and that all children should be protected against the causes and consequences of hunger and malnutrition. Each year 795 million people (one in nine) are chronically hungry.<sup>1</sup> Poor nutrition causes nearly half (45 per cent) of preventable deaths in children under 5 – 2.8 million children each year. One in six children – approximately 100 million – are underweight.<sup>2</sup>

National governments have the primary responsibility for meeting their citizens' food and nutrition needs, but when a government is unable to do so international food assistance<sup>3</sup> is a critical global safety net for the world's most vulnerable men, women and children. Food assistance alleviates immediate hunger and malnutrition and helps to address the root causes of hunger so that poor families and communities can become more resilient to future shocks and disasters.

Global funding shortages for food assistance and other humanitarian programmes are strong evidence of a global humanitarian system that is stretched beyond its limits. With one of the strongest El Niño events on record gaining strength and putting the lives and livelihoods of millions of already vulnerable women, men and children at increased risk,<sup>4</sup> this can only get worse.

National governments and the international community must act now to protect lives and livelihoods across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific. World Vision's early warning systems indicate that hunger and malnutrition are rising in El Niño affected areas. Eastern and Southern Africa have been particularly affected with UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Fund) estimating that more than 11 million children are at risk in these two regions alone.<sup>5</sup> Governments and the international community must act now to reduce further threats to food security, nutrition and livelihoods and urgently put the resources in place to minimise the immediate and long-term impacts of El Niño on vulnerable children, households and communities.

The heavy toll that the growing gap between humanitarian need and funding levels is taking on the world's most vulnerable men, women and children will only be exacerbated by the impacts of El Niño. Even before El Niño, food assistance funding shortages had a deep impact on World Vision's ability to meet the hunger and nutrition needs of highly vulnerable people. In 2013–2014, World Vision was contracted to provide food assistance to 10.3 million people in 35 countries. However, by the end of September 2014, World Vision only received enough resources to provide food assistance to 8 million people – meaning 2.3 million men, women and children identified by vulnerability

<sup>1</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), *State of Food Insecurity in the World* (Rome, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> World Vision (WV) defines food assistance as 'the set of instruments used to address the food needs of vulnerable people'. These instruments include: food in kind, local/regional procurement (of food), cash and vouchers (WV Food Assistance Strategy 2012–2016).

<sup>4</sup> FAO, '2015–2016 El Niño Early action and response for agriculture, food security and nutrition' (working draft, 12 November 2015).

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF, *El Niño's Impact on Children*, Briefing Note (November 2015).



assessments went without critical food and nutrition support. Sixty per cent – or almost 1.4 million – of those who did not receive the help they needed were children.

Programme impacts included:

- Health centres in Somalia and Niger did not have the supplemental food treatments for malnourished children. Mothers walked miles to the health centre only to learn that the food ration on which they were depending was not available.
- School meals in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Somalia were reduced or eliminated altogether. Vulnerable children arrived at school to discover they would not receive what is, for many, their only meal of the day. In some cases, children were forced to drop out of school to look for food or a source of income.
- Existing food rations in emergencies were cut in half, meaning an adult male refugee, already weakened and traumatised by violence in Somalia, received a food ration that is less than 1,350 calories – the

amount recommended by Canadian health professionals for a moderately active 2 to 3 year old.

In 2015, World Vision spoke with children and families living in Somalia, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger, who were promised much needed food assistance that didn't come. With the global El Niño event threatening to undermine already vulnerable children and communities, World Vision presents this report as a snapshot of experiences and views of people from three countries that regularly experience large-scale food and nutrition crises and are regular recipients of food assistance. These countries are characterised by weak governments, high levels of chronic poverty, recurrent human-made and natural disasters and often under-funded humanitarian appeals. Right now humanitarian requirements for the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa are barely halfway funded, yet due to rising food insecurity, malnutrition and displacement, needs are set to increase.<sup>6</sup>

The children and families World Vision spoke to were let down at multiple levels. Their community was unable to help them. Their governments failed them. And, at a time when they were at their most vulnerable, the international humanitarian community, whose *raison d'être* is to step up when all else fails, failed them as well. Because these children live in countries at the very bottom of the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), World Vision believes this report provides a window into the experiences of children and families in the many places around the world where hunger is commonplace and El Niño threatens to exacerbate the situation.

National and donor governments, the United Nations (UN) and humanitarian and development organisations need to listen, and they need to do more and do better. Too many

**60%**  
OR ALMOST  
**1.4 MILLION**  
OF THOSE WHO DID NOT RECEIVE  
THE HELP THEY NEEDED WERE  
**CHILDREN**



<sup>6</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Humanitarian Outlook for the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region* (October–December 2015).



# ENDING CHILD HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION OVER THE LONG-TERM

will require significant investments in national safety nets policy and programmes that improve the nutrition, education and resilience of the most vulnerable children.



are guilty of accepting a relentless cycle of hunger, poor nutrition and lack of education for the world's most vulnerable children. Too many have failed to act in support of the dreams and aspirations of these largely forgotten children – their dreams for a better future for themselves, their families and their communities.

In the face of the global El Niño and other crises, leaders at the regional, national and international levels have an unprecedented opportunity and responsibility to address the underlying causes of food insecurity and guarantee that the most vulnerable children and communities get a head start through an immediate, effective, global response to prevent loss of life and livelihoods. Only such a response can ensure that no one is left behind and that countries can meet their commitments outlined in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>7</sup> and secure a hunger-free world for children.

To ensure no one is left behind, World Vision recommends:

## 1. FIND NEW MONEY TO FUND EMERGENCIES.

The gap between humanitarian needs and available funding is the largest it has been in 10 years.<sup>8</sup> Breaks in global food assistance

pipelines due to funding shortages cannot remain an option; it simply deepens an existing emergency in the hope of mitigating the effects of another emergency, with the world's most vulnerable children paying the price.

## 2. PROTECT LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS.

Preventing poor nutrition in the first 1,000 days of a child's life (from conception to age 2) must be a priority as poor nutrition during this period can have lifelong, irreversible physical and cognitive consequences. Urgently needed are investments in health services, including targeted supplementary feeding programmes to both prevent and treat child undernutrition, social protection measures such as cash transfers and public work programmes, and livelihoods support.

## 3. BUILD LONG-TERM RESILIENCE.

A hunger-free world requires building household and community food security and resilience to phenomena like El Niño. This means greater investments in child-sensitive national safety net programmes, national disaster risk management and climate change adaptation policies and systems, and greater support for sustainable, profitable, agricultural livelihoods strategies for smallholder farmers.

<sup>7</sup> Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets adapted in September 2015 as a new universal agenda, which seeks to build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* [website] <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>> accessed 16 Nov 2015.

<sup>8</sup> OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview* (June 2015).

# Introduction

Gouba Tenigaba wakes up early in the morning, picks up her baby and begins the long walk to the local health clinic where she is enrolled in a World Vision Targeted Supplementary Feeding (TSF) programme in Niger. This programme provides Mrs Tenigaba with the special foods and health care she and her young child need to keep them healthy and well nourished. However, when she reaches the clinic she is told the food she was promised isn't available. For a woman with so little to begin with, this is devastating news. 'Travelling here to receive food means I leave my vegetable garden and work at home undone. It's very sad and demotivating to arrive and find out there is no food.' She must then turn around and make the long trek home with nothing in her hands to a home with little in her cupboard and an unattended garden that now means more to her and her family's food and nutrition security than ever. What Mrs Tenigaba has experienced is known as a food assistance 'pipeline break'.

Each year, millions of people are chronically hungry; at last count 795 million people around the world, or one in nine, regularly don't have enough nutritious food to eat each day.<sup>9</sup> Each year, poor nutrition is an underlying cause of 2.8 million (45 per cent) of deaths in children under 5, and one in six children in developing countries – roughly 100 million children – is underweight. Almost 100 million of the most vulnerable

global citizens require food assistance from the international community each year to ensure they have something to eat during a difficult time in their lives.<sup>10</sup> These circumstances vary from drought-induced crop failures, to families forced to flee from conflict with only the possessions they can carry, to the death or severe illness of the family breadwinner. While food assistance's role in alleviating acute, short-term hunger caused by natural and man-made disasters is well known, food assistance is also used to help food-insecure households meet immediate food and nutrition needs while supporting them to make resilience-building improvements in their farms, livelihoods and the natural environment. Meeting immediate food needs helps free vulnerable households from having to devote their time and energy to securing the most basic components of their diet and helps ensure they have the means to invest in making their farms more productive and household meals more nutritious, while sending their children to school and accessing health care.

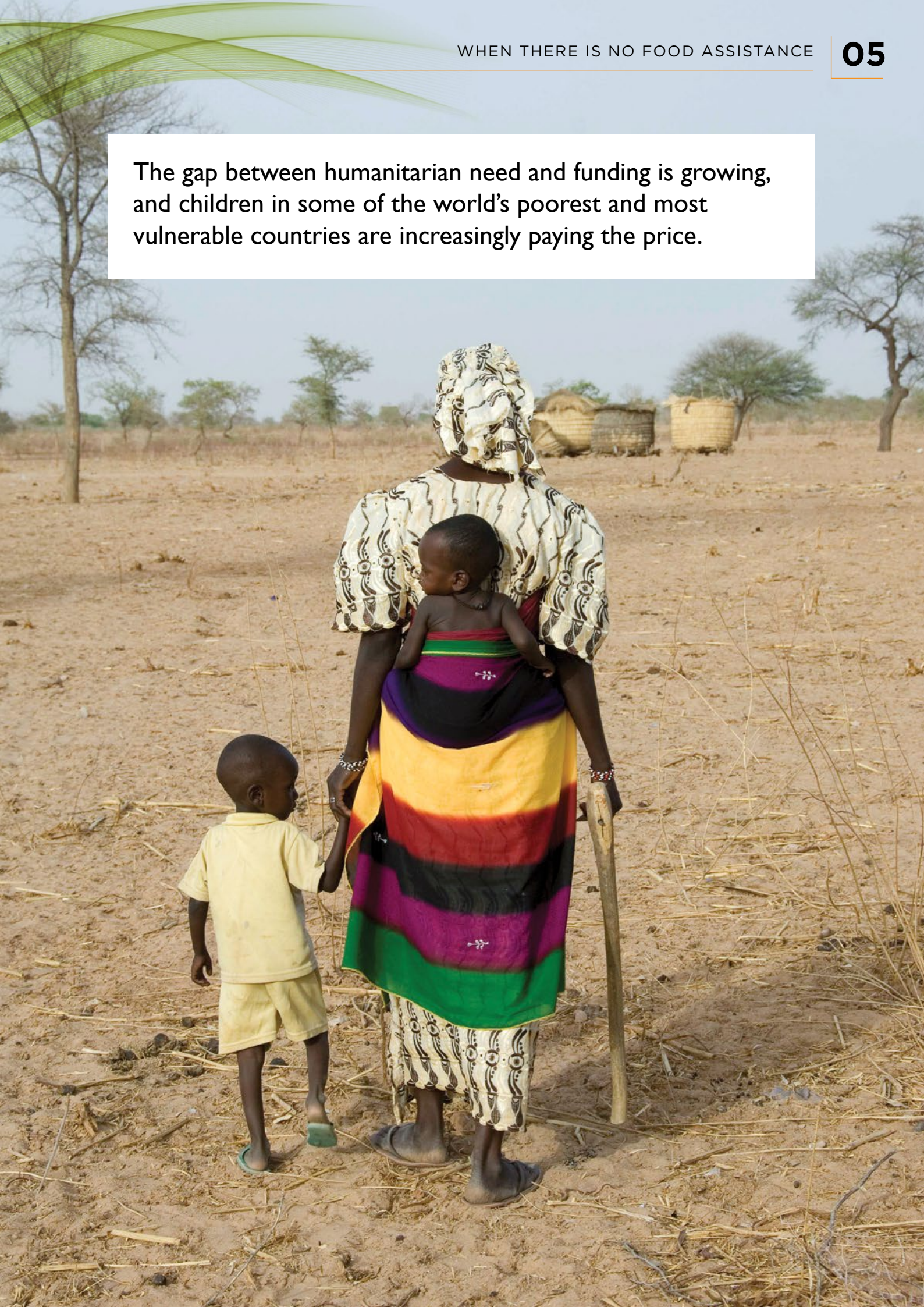
It's almost impossible to overemphasise the importance of food in our daily lives. Food fills the belly, but it also plays a central role in the economic, social, cultural and spiritual life of families, communities and nations. When there is no food, parents are forced to make impossible choices – provide a meal or pay their children's school fees, eat less or forgo

<sup>9</sup> FAO, WFP and IFAD (2015).

<sup>10</sup> WFP (2014).



The gap between humanitarian need and funding is growing, and children in some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries are increasingly paying the price.





medicine to treat an ill child, send out the oldest children to look for their own food so the youngest can eat. In other words, hunger drives vulnerable families to make short-term decisions that often have long-term negative consequences. Pipeline breaks in school meal programmes mean the most vulnerable children drop out of school or are too hungry to learn to their full potential. A shortage of food for a TSF means young children and their mothers no longer receive a sufficient amount of nutritious foods designed to ensure the best start in life for children. A lack of food makes illnesses such as diarrhoea more severe, and when mothers are busy trying to find any way possible to meet their family's basic food needs, they cannot afford the time to bring their young children to health clinics to receive vital medical treatment. The long-term impact of children being exposed to hunger and poor nutrition for so long and so often is difficult to overstate; it can have intense and far-reaching effects on children's social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual well-being and development. Hunger and malnutrition interferes with children's educational performance, and their ability to form social relationships and lead healthy lives. It also takes a deep emotional toll on mothers, fathers and other caregivers as one of the most fundamental identities of a parent is being able to provide well for one's children and see them grow up into healthy, productive and happy adults.

World Vision believes every child and their family has the right to eat enough nutritious food each day to allow them to live a healthy life. All children should be protected against the causes and consequences of both acute and chronic food and nutrition insecurity. National governments have the primary responsibility for ensuring that the food and nutrition needs of their populations are met. This responsibility was recognised in a number of key global policy frameworks,<sup>11</sup> most recently the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>12</sup> When national governments are unable or unwilling to fulfil these obligations, the provision of humanitarian food assistance becomes a critical global safety net for the world's poorest children and their families, in their most difficult moments and in some of the world's most difficult places to be a child.

The humanitarian system is increasingly failing its most vulnerable global citizens. There are currently more displaced people than any other time in recent history. Protracted crises in Syria and South Sudan and recurrent emergencies in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel mean more people than ever are dependent on food assistance for their very survival. Global funding requirements for humanitarian assistance in 2015 were US\$18.8 billion, but halfway through the year only US\$4.8 billion (26 per cent) of those requirements were met. This was the widest gap between needs and funding in 10 years.

## WHAT IS A FOOD RATION?

A standard World Food Programme (WFP) food basket for an adult completely dependent on food assistance (such as a refugee or internally displaced person (IDP) provides 2,100 kilocalories (Kcals) per adult per day. This consists of 550 grammes (g) of food per adult (400g of cereal flour/rice/bulgur, 60g of pulses, 25g of vitamin A fortified oil, 50g of fortified foods (Corn Soya Blend), 15g of sugar and 5g of iodised salt. When these rations are cut in half, which happened in World Vision's food assistance programmes for IDPs in eastern DRC, this translates into an active adult male consuming fewer calories than recommended for an active 5-year-old child.

<sup>11</sup> UN, *Declaration on Human Rights* (1948); World Food Summit, *Declaration and Plan of Action* (2000); FAO, *International Conference on Nutrition* (1992, 2014); UN, *Millennium Development Goals* (2000); FAO, *Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security* (Rome, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> For more information on the SDGs see *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform* [website] <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>> accessed September 2015.





World Food Programme (WFP) estimated in early 2015 that it would need US\$11 billion to meet all current emergency needs. However, WFP's funding gap for its largest emergencies (Levels 3 and 2) was US\$4.6 billion as of May 2015.<sup>13</sup> The gap between humanitarian need and funding is growing, and children in some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries are increasingly paying the price. With one of the strongest El Niño events on record gaining strength and putting the lives and livelihoods of millions of already vulnerable women, men and children at increased risk, this can only get worse.

World Vision is one of the largest food assistance programmers globally and one of WFP's largest non-governmental organisation partners. Between October 2013 and September 2014, World Vision reached 8 million beneficiaries in 35 countries, 60 per cent of whom were children. Global funding shortages for food assistance have contributed to an increase in the number of 'pipeline breaks' in World Vision's lifesaving programmes, and the people who suffer the most are children. This has meant less food was available – and in some cases, World Vision has had to cancel these essential programmes altogether. For example, World Vision was contracted to provide food assistance to 10.3 million vulnerable people from October 2013 to September 2014. However, by the end of September 2014, World Vision had only received enough resources to provide food assistance to 8

million people – meaning 2.3 million men, women and children went without the critical food assistance that vulnerability assessments showed was needed. Sixty per cent, almost 1.4 million, of those who didn't receive the help they needed were children.

In early 2015, World Vision asked children and their parents to share their own stories about what happens 'when there is no food'. These are people living in some of the most difficult places in the world – eastern DRC, Niger and Somalia. These families had been let down at multiple levels. Their community had been unable to support them. Their governments had failed them. And at a time when they were at their most vulnerable, the international humanitarian community, whose *raison d'être* is to step up when all else fails, had failed them as well.

National and donor governments, the UN and humanitarian and development organisations need to listen to those deeply affected by pipeline breaks, and they need to do more and do it better. Too many have been guilty of accepting a relentless cycle of hunger, poor nutrition and lack of education for the world's most vulnerable children. Too many have failed to act in support of the dreams and aspirations of these largely forgotten children for a better future for themselves, their families and their communities. In the face of El Niño and other global crises, leaders at the regional, national and international levels have an unprecedented opportunity and responsibility to address the underlying causes of food insecurity and guarantee that the most vulnerable children and communities get a head start through an immediate, effective, global response to prevent loss of life and livelihoods. Only such a response can ensure that no one is left behind and that countries can meet their commitments outlined in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and secure a hunger-free world for children.

<sup>13</sup> WFP, *Operational Resourcing Update* (May 2015).



‘Our studies have suffered from declining grades which makes our dreams difficult to imagine. When there is no food at school I miss the food and being able to learn. We will not move forward.’





# Methodology

Rarely do people ask affected children about how hunger impacts their lives, dreams and aspirations. Children's participation is itself a human right and helps to achieve other rights, including survival, protection and development. World Vision spoke to children and their families in eastern DRC, Niger and Somalia who didn't receive the promised help in the form of food assistance from the international humanitarian community. Children who participated were chosen by World Vision staff, but there was no compulsion or incentive offered to participate. The responses were often very personal and honest and showed how hunger takes not only a physical toll but a deeply emotional one as well.

World Vision presents this report as a snapshot of experiences and views of people from three countries that regularly experience large-scale food and nutrition crises and are regular recipients of food assistance. Because of where these children live – countries at the very bottom of the HDI,<sup>14</sup> characterised by weak governments, high levels of chronic poverty, recurrent human-made and natural disasters and often under-funded humanitarian appeals – World Vision believes this report provides a window into the experiences of children and families in the many places around the world where hunger is commonplace.

<sup>14</sup> Niger ranks last on the HDI and DRC comes in second to last (187 and 186 respectively, out of 187 countries). Since Somalia did not have a functioning national government for more than 20 years there was not enough national-level data to assign it a rank.

## Where World Vision spoke to children and families

### NIGER

Niger is one of the least developed countries worldwide, ranking last on the 2014 HDI (187th out of 187 countries). The majority of households in Niger face chronic food insecurity, high maternal mortality rates (590 per 100,000 live births) and limited basic social services in rural areas. The situation of Niger's children is of particular concern: one in eight children die before their 5th birthday and 42 per cent of children are chronically malnourished (stunted). During the peak of the 2012 drought-induced food crisis, the national prevalence of global acute malnutrition among children 6 to 59 months reached 14.8 per cent nationwide, exceeding the emergency threshold of 15 per cent in four of eight regions of the country. Historic trends indicate that, even during non-crisis years, rates of acute malnutrition can rapidly peak beyond emergency thresholds during the lean season when food access is most constrained.

Niger

**WORLD VISION** began implementing food assistance programmes in Niger in 2006. Programmes include Targeted Supplementary Feeding programmes (TSF), Cash for Work, Food for Work (FFW), Food for Assets (FFA), Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) programmes and GFD. In 2014, World Vision's food assistance programmes reached over 275,000 people in Niger.

### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

DRC ranked 186th out of 187 on the 2014 HDI. That same year more than 6.5 million people (10 per cent of the population) faced acute food insecurity. Most of these people live in the conflict-affected provinces of eastern DRC where they face extreme poverty, ongoing armed conflict, poor access to services and limited or even non-existent infrastructure. Within DRC there are 2.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 1.4 million former IDPs, many of whom returned home to find their houses and possessions looted or destroyed. An estimated 120,000 refugees are also living in DRC, including more than 90,000 from neighbouring Central African Republic. In May 2014, a Demographic and Health Survey estimated 8 per cent of children under the age of 5 (nearly 1 million children) are acutely malnourished (wasted) and 43 per cent (about 6 million children) are stunted. Child mortality rates are among the highest in the world.

**WORLD VISION** began implementing food assistance programmes in eastern DRC in 2010. Programmes include TSF, School Meals and General Food Distribution (GFD). In FY14, World Vision's food assistance programmes reached over 200,000 people in eastern DRC.



## SOMALIA

In 2011, the first famine in 25 years took the lives of 260,000 people in Somalia – half of the people that died were children under 5 years of age. Based on the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) assessment, there were 1,025,000 people classified as in ‘Crisis’ and ‘Emergency’ (IPC Phases 3 and 4), representing a 20 per cent increase since January 2014. These are populations that require immediate live-saving humanitarian assistance. IDPs are the majority (62 per cent) of people in Crisis and Emergency situations. The worsening food security situation was a result of poor rains, conflict, trade disruptions and reduced humanitarian assistance. More than 218,000 children (one in seven) under the age of 5 are acutely malnourished. Critical levels of Global Acute Malnutrition (over 15 per cent) were found in 21 out of the 50 populations surveyed.

**WORLD VISION** began implementing food assistance programmes in Somalia in 2008. Programmes include TSF, School Meals, FFA, MNCH, GFD and Outpatient Therapeutic Feeding programmes. World Vision reached 2,717 children with TSF in 2013, with 337,000 people reached in total by the food assistance programmes.

A white silhouette map of Somalia is positioned on the right side of the page, partially overlapping a larger map of Africa. The word "Somalia" is printed in black text across the top of the map.

Somalia

A white silhouette map of the Democratic Republic of Congo is positioned on the left side of the page, overlapping a larger map of Africa. The text "Democratic Republic of Congo" is printed in black across the map.

Democratic  
Republic  
of Congo



# Findings

## Broken promise on proper nutrition and health

Children in their first 1,000 days (between a woman's pregnancy and her child's second birthday) are particularly susceptible to the lifelong negative impacts of hunger, even during brief periods of food shortages. For children under 6 months, exclusive breastfeeding gives a baby the best start in life, and the mother requires extra calories and nutrients to make her breast milk nourishing to her baby.

### **MODERATE ACUTE MALNUTRITION (MAM)**

Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) is a serious, life-threatening condition characterised by severe wasting or thinness that results from illness, lack of appropriate foods, or other underlying causes. MAM affects millions of children under 5 years of age worldwide, in both emergency and non-emergency settings.

From 6 to 24 months, children require regular, small amounts of nutritious foods so that their bodies and brains develop to their full potential.

TSF programmes are food assistance programmes which target children with Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) in their first 1,000 days. Mothers and children enrolled in TSF programmes receive a ration supplemented with specialised nutrition products such as fortified blended foods or ready-to-use foods, which are designed to meet the added calorie and micronutrient requirements of this highly vulnerable population. Food is provided on the condition that mothers bring their young children to a health centre for health screenings, vaccinations, deworming and education on proper feeding practices and care for young children.

The goal of TSF is to prevent children with MAM falling into Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM). Children with SAM are nine times more likely to die<sup>15</sup> than well-nourished children, and this risk increases dramatically during humanitarian emergencies where food shortages, disease outbreaks and reduced access to health services exacerbate overall vulnerabilities. For each child suffering from SAM, there are eight to ten suffering from moderate malnutrition.

Somalia and Niger are countries with some of the highest child malnutrition and mortality

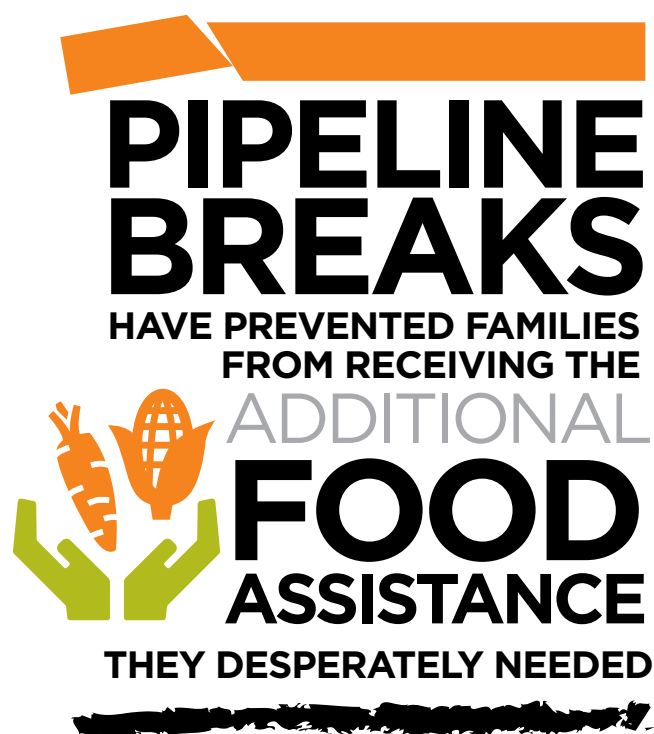
<sup>15</sup> Black et al., 'Maternal and child undernutrition: Global and regional exposures and health consequences', *The Lancet* (19 January 2008) 371(9608):243-60.





Targeted Supplementary Feeding programmes are food assistance programmes which target children with Moderate Acute Malnutrition in their first 1,000 days.

rates in the world, with malnutrition rates regularly above the World Health Organization emergency levels even in their 'good' years. To understand how these pipeline breaks affected them and their young children, World Vision spoke to mothers in Somalia and Niger who were enrolled in TSF programmes which suffered significant pipeline breaks.



In both Somalia and Niger, mothers told us how important the food rations are for the health of their young children. Myiba Gobida, a mother from Niger, said, 'I had twins and not enough milk to feed both. When I came I received food and it saved my children. If there was no food, I would have lost them'. When the food is not provided, mothers say their children quickly become malnourished. A Somali mother told World Vision, 'My twins were admitted to the programme and recovered well after daily Plumpy'Sup®.<sup>16</sup> When we received less Plumpy'Sup® I could feel them becoming lighter'.

Pipeline breaks have a negative impact on the ability of medical professionals to provide life-

saving health services. One health care worker in Somalia remembered a child with severe malnutrition who was brought in November 2014 when there was no food: 'We had nothing to give and the child died.' Another medical professional, Dr Iboune Saley in Niger, said, 'It's frustrating to have to turn people away because I have no food. When there is no food, some may not come back when the food returns because they won't know. I don't treat severe malnourished children; they die if I don't send them to [the capital city].'

Addressing child malnutrition also depends on access to the right MNCH services and, for this reason, TSF programmes are often implemented through local health clinics. In addition to food assistance, those enrolled in the TSF programmes receive complementary health services that are critical for improving nutrition such as health screening, vaccinations, deworming and education on proper care of young children and feeding practices. Given the high levels of food insecurity and vulnerability of women and children enrolled in TSF programmes, the additional nutritious food they receive as part of participating in the comprehensive MNCH programmes is very important. However, pipeline breaks have prevented families from receiving the additional food assistance they desperately needed. Hawa Nuhou, a mother in Niger, told World Vision that she 'came [to the clinic] three times and there was no food; my children cried all the time'. Health-care workers in Somalia and Niger reported that women stop coming to the health centres for other services when there is no food: 'When the food doesn't come women stop coming ... because food is an important incentive for good health – without the food they think there is nothing else they can do'. 'The worst days are when there is no food, women get unmotivated to come and their health suffers', says Zeinabou Sauley, health-care worker, Niger.

<sup>16</sup> Plumpy'Sup® is ready-to-use soft, peanut-butter-like food made of peanut paste, vegetable fat, soy protein isolate, whey, maltodextrin, sugar and cocoa designed to treat MAM in young children.



Furthermore, when the promised food isn't available, women and their families can incur significant financial and opportunity costs in terms of the time and energy that would otherwise go into meeting their other household and livelihood responsibilities – costs borne by families that can least afford it. Gouba Tenigaba, a woman in Niger, told us, 'Travelling here to receive food means I leave my vegetable garden and work at home undone. It's very sad and demotivating to arrive and find out there is no food.' Some women travel many kilometres (km) to participate in the programme, enduring costs for transport and leaving their other children unattended. Zeinabou Issa from Niger travelled '22km on a donkey cart to find out there is no food, then I must go home with nothing'. A food shortage also means that older children eat less at home because there is less to go around. When there is no food, they use the little provisions they have for the younger children, which can result in a loss of education for the older children, as they often miss school because they feel 'dizzy' from not eating.

TSF programmes are also an important safety net to address the 'lean season', a time of year when household food reserves have been depleted, greater energy is required to plant crops and money is required to buy crop inputs and food for the family. In Niger, the 'lean period' is during the rainy season. TSF programmes were implemented in Niger to address these household food gaps, and Catherine Souobau, a mother in Niger, told World Vision that 'during the rainy season we really depend on the food we receive here. Our crops have been harvested and the stock is empty'. The rainy season is also a time when illnesses like diarrhoea and malaria, which are exacerbated by poor nutritional status, increase.

## Broken promise to education

Education is an investment in a brighter future for children, families and nations. National education levels are positively correlated to national income; countries with an adult literacy rate of 40 per cent averaged US\$210 gross national product (GNP) per capita annually while countries with a literacy rate of at least 80 per cent had a per capita GNP over US\$1,000.<sup>17</sup>

School meal programmes are widely used by national governments to support poor children to attend, and succeed, at school. Each day, 368 million children worldwide (one in five) receive a meal at school. Operating in 169 countries, school meal programmes are funded largely by government budgets and are the most widespread type of safety net programme globally.<sup>18</sup>

Nowhere is the issue of school meals and education more important than for children living in low-income countries, where more than half of all children under age 13 live in extreme poverty.<sup>19</sup> Almost 58 million children of primary school age were not in school

### WHAT IS A SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMME?

School meal programmes include meals as well as high-energy biscuits or snacks for students. Some programmes also provide take-home rations to families with children who attend school regularly.

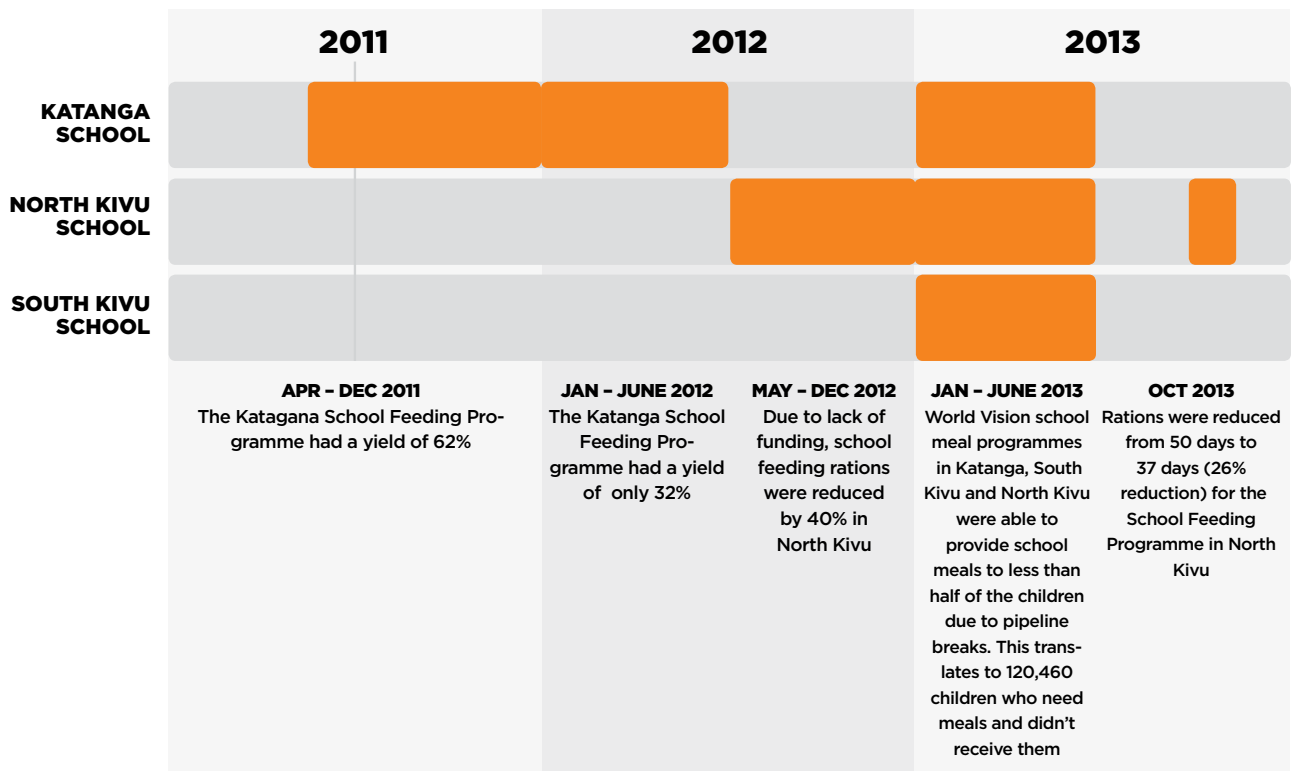
(WFP, *State of School Feeding Worldwide, 2013*)

<sup>17</sup> UNESCO, *Education for All Monitoring Report* (Paris, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> WFP, *State of School Feeding Worldwide* (Rome, 2013) <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp257481.pdf>; UNESCO, *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2013/2014* (2014) <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002256/225660e.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> World Bank, *The State of the Poor: Where Are the Poor, Where Is Extreme Poverty Harder to End, and What Is the Current Profile of the World's Poor?* (2013)

## PIPELINE BREAKS IN SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMMES IN EASTERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO 2011-2013



as of 2012, and nearly half of those lived in low-income countries.<sup>20</sup> These are children who are living in a world of multiple daily deprivations and disadvantages – hunger, poverty and poor health. School meals play a key role in attracting and keeping poor children in school. However, according to WFP, these programmes are least available where they are needed most; 49 per cent of school children in middle-income countries received free school meals in 2011 while only 18 per cent of children in low-income countries, received school meals.

For many of the children who receive school meals through World Vision's food assistance programmes, a meal at school is often their only complete meal for the day.

World Vision spoke to children in Somalia and eastern DRC who were direct beneficiaries of the organisation's school meal programmes. Both countries are well known for ongoing

conflicts which have killed and displaced millions of people for more than 20 years and left millions of people living in an ongoing, protracted humanitarian crisis. The children see education as a key to a better future. In eastern DRC, two students told World Vision they wanted to become doctors, two wanted to be nurses, one wanted to be a mechanic and one a pilot. But pipeline breaks meant school meals were no longer provided to students. One 14-year-old girl lamented that as a result of no school meals, 'Our studies have suffered from declining grades which makes our dreams difficult to imagine'. School children in Somalia told staff at World Vision that 'when there is no food at school [we] miss the food and being able to learn. We will not move forward'.

Children reported that the school meals make going to and succeeding at school possible, 'If we continue to go without food, our classes will continue to decrease' (13-year-old girl,

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.





**ONE 14-YEAR-OLD GIRL LAMENTED THAT AS A RESULT OF NO SCHOOL MEALS, 'OUR STUDIES HAVE SUFFERED FROM DECLINING GRADES WHICH MAKES OUR DREAMS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE'.**



**368 million children worldwide (one in five) receive a meal at school. Operating in 169 countries, school meal programmes are funded largely by government budgets and are the most widespread type of safety net programme globally.**

DRC). DRC school official, Sister Marie Claire Baderha Nwienga, noted that 'without food, children are quiet, sleepy and unresponsive – they don't act like children'. Those who do attend classes are distracted, stressed and their studies suffer, despite their motivation to learn. Another school director in DRC, Clovis Katsuva Kambale, explained to World Vision that 'when food is here kids are happy, motivated and attentive, and [they] work hard because they're not hungry. When there is no food, all they can think about is food and what they can find when they get home'.

The impact of pipeline breaks in school meal programmes extends from the schoolyard to the homestead. In Somalia, school meals are an important incentive for school attendance. 'Girls in particular benefit from a take-home ration of oil. Attendance decreases by 60 per cent when a pipeline break occurs' (Somali school administrator). Children targeted for school meals generally come from very poor households and their parents are rarely able to make up for a missed school meal at home. A parent from DRC, Francois Mahazi, informed World Vision, 'When the children do not receive food at school, I can provide

something after school but it's not enough'. A Somali mother confirmed the same, 'Children don't play when they don't eat at school. They are always around the home, tired and hungry, and I cannot provide enough food'. In Somalia, children used to bring food home from school to share with their siblings but with no school meals, all the children in the household suffer. A lack of food also wears away at the social fabric already weakened by decades of conflict. DRC school directors report, 'There is jealousy and fighting amongst the students when some children have more than others. This is unlike them, but the stress and hunger brings about these behaviours. [Also] when children [do not get food] at school, parents come to [verbally] attack school leaders, demanding that we feed their children'. The same issues are described by a Somalia school administrator, 'Children become violent towards the principal and teachers and do not understand why there is no food. They exhibit signs of stress and distraction and completion rates drop'.

As a result of the pipeline breaks in the school meal programmes, attendance rates drop as children are too weak to attend classes or are forced to skip school in order to help their families meet their most basic need for food. A common reason given for children not attending school was that they needed to help parents look for wild food in the surrounding mountains. In interviews conducted in Somalia, school administrators stated that girls'

attendance at one school fell 67 per cent from 215 to 70 when food was not available. In eastern DRC, two of the girls interviewed told World Vision that they missed school in order to look for food, while they know of other children who left school to join family businesses in trading and farming. When the school meal programmes resume, schools say the children will return to classes.

## Broken promises undermine long-term food security and resilience

FFA programmes provide vulnerable, food-insecure households with food or cash transfers in exchange for their participation in activities which build productive individual or community livelihoods assets. FFA can be important for helping families maintain productive assets during the lean season, recover earlier from disasters and build resilience and food security over the long term. It also helps balance the opportunity costs that households face when they must forgo investments in their long-term food security or adopt negative coping strategies to meet immediate food needs. In other words, regular, predictable food or cash transfers of sufficient size and duration ensure that households have the time, energy and resources to make resilience-building

### WHAT ARE NEGATIVE COPING STRATEGIES?

Negative coping strategies are common in poor households during times of crisis. Families are forced to take extreme short-term measures such as eating less, pulling children out of school or selling assets in order to meet their immediate needs. However, these actions undermine their ability to recover and prosper over the long term.



investments in their farms and livelihoods, prepare more nutritious household meals, send their children to school, and access health services. There is also increasing evidence that FFA programmes can help promote social cohesion, trust-building and social inclusion<sup>21</sup> by bringing community members together to discuss and agree upon activities that benefit the community as a whole, an aspect particularly important in countries emerging from or prone to recurrent conflict.<sup>22</sup>

World Vision began implementing FFA programmes in 1985.<sup>23</sup> A recent review<sup>24</sup> demonstrated how innovative approaches by World Vision's food assistance programmes in six countries (Uganda, Lesotho, Niger, Zimbabwe, Myanmar and Kenya) were designed and implemented to address the root causes of hunger and help poor families and communities become more resilient to future shocks and disasters. In 2013, 30 per cent of World Vision's food assistance programmes incorporated resilience-building elements.

Pipeline breaks in FFA projects are not uncommon. In a synthesis review of WFP's FFA projects, funding shortages and/or delays were reported during the evaluation period. 'Funding of FFA activities faced shortfalls of up to 65 per cent and was variable and unpredictable. Funding unpredictability affected asset completion; communities did not always continue to work if rations were not provided on time, and assets were not completed if materials and supplies were not available when needed.'<sup>25</sup>

Northwest Somalia is a region characterised by recurrent drought and persistently high levels of humanitarian need. From December 2011 to September 2012, during the peak of the Somalia famine in which 260,000 people died (half of whom were children under 5 years of age), World Vision implemented a FFA programme in highly vulnerable pastoralist and agro-

pastoralist areas. The food transfers the project provided were critical to ensuring that the most vulnerable households were able to participate in World Vision's long-term food security and livelihoods programmes in the area.

The female participants in this programme planted and fenced 700 trees and built a *gabion* (a small dam) to reduce flash flooding as an erosion control measure. In exchange for this labour-intensive work, they were supposed to receive 75 kilogrammes (kg) cereal, 22kg pulses and 5.2kg oil for 234 days of work (26 days per month for nine months). However, despite having met their part of the obligation to the agreement, they did not receive the full rations due to pipeline breaks. Participants said, 'We're grateful, but it does affect the way we feel when the full food is not paid. All we get is just enough [to eat], so when something is missing, it affects us'. Pulses are an important source of protein and the women told World Vision that when it is missing from the rations they receive, they feed their children the less nutritious maize or are forced to spend their scarce household income to supplement the family diet, 'When there is less food to eat and sell, we feel stress, our children get sick and we lose hope'.

The men in the programme told World Vision staff that when they don't receive their full payment many migrate to surrounding towns to look for ways to earn income, which leaves their primary livelihoods activities unattended. They also cut trees from surrounding forests to make charcoal for sale, a practice which contributes to the already widespread environmental degradation in the area. 'There is more money in charcoal and rocks than our community project, but this [FFA] is better for the environment and our community benefits as well.' They also said that sometimes both parents are forced to leave their children with neighbours so they can leave the area in an attempt to find work and send money back when possible.

<sup>21</sup> WFP found that FFA projects in Côte d'Ivoire and the Kyrgyz Republic created community-level platforms to promote reconciliation, building trust and resolving conflict.

<sup>22</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report: Conflict, Security and Development* (2011).

<sup>23</sup> WVI, *Sustainability of FFW/FFA Programmes – A World Vision Global Review*, Internal report (2009).

<sup>24</sup> World Vision International (WVI), *Telling Our Stories: Leveraging Food Assistance for a Hunger-Free World* (2014).

<sup>25</sup> WFP, *Impact Evaluation Synthesis: Synthesis Report of the Evaluation Series on the Impact of Food for Assets (2002–2011) and Lessons for Building Livelihoods Resilience* (2014) <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/reports/wfp265051.pdf>.



The gap between humanitarian needs and available funding is the largest it has been in 10 years. Breaks in global food assistance due to funding shortages cannot remain an option.



# Recommendations for a hunger-free world for the most vulnerable children

World Vision believes that every child and their family has the right to enough nutritious food each day to live a healthy life and that children must be protected against the causes and consequences of both acute and chronic hunger and malnutrition. National governments have the primary responsibility for ensuring the food and nutrition needs of their populations are met. But when government systems are overwhelmed, food assistance is a critical global safety net that alleviates immediate hunger and malnutrition and addresses the root causes of hunger so that poor families and communities can become more resilient to future shocks and disasters.

Pipeline breaks in food assistance programmes are strong evidence of a global humanitarian system that is stretched beyond its limits. With one of the strongest El Niño events on record gaining strength through late 2015 and into early- to mid-2016 and putting the lives, food security and livelihoods of millions of already vulnerable women, men and children at increased risk,<sup>26</sup> this will only get worse. Leaders at the regional, national and international levels have an unprecedented opportunity and responsibility to act now on early warning reports. Mounting an immediate and effective

global response will help to prevent widespread loss of life and livelihoods, and ensure no one is left behind on the path to achieving the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>27</sup>

To ensure no one is left behind, World Vision recommends:

## 1. FIND NEW MONEY TO FUND EMERGENCIES.

The gap between humanitarian needs and available funding is the largest it has been in 10 years.<sup>28</sup> Breaks in global food assistance pipelines due to funding shortages cannot remain an option; it simply deepens an existing emergency in the hope of mitigating the effects of another emergency, with the world's most vulnerable children paying the price.

- Donors must urgently heed early warning reports and fully fund the food security and nutrition requirements of the humanitarian appeals, especially across countries affected by the global El Niño event, to prevent pipeline breaks. Particular attention must be paid to countries in East and Southern Africa which have the highest burden of affected children and communities.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> FAO, '2015–2016 El Niño early action and response for agriculture, food security and nutrition' (working draft, 12 November 2015).

<sup>27</sup> See <http://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org>.

<sup>28</sup> OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview* (June 2015).

<sup>29</sup> UNICEF, *El Niño's Impact on Children*, Briefing Note (November 2015).



- The international donor community must adopt a donor framework agreement that provides for more multi-year, flexible humanitarian funding and builds on and links to the commitments made by governments in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.<sup>30</sup> The framework agreement must also specify that donors should earmark 10 per cent of development finance for risk management.<sup>31</sup>

## 2. PROTECT LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

- When disasters strike, emphasis must be placed on meeting immediate hunger and nutrition needs and protecting livelihoods so that disasters don't have long-term consequences on vulnerable households. Particular attention must be paid to preventing poor nutrition of children in their first 1,000 days (from conception to age 2). Children in their first 1,000 days are at heightened risk of malnutrition from even brief periods of food shortages, which can have lifelong, irreversible physical and cognitive consequences. National governments with support from the

international community must urgently scale up interventions to address hunger and malnutrition, with a focus on children in their first 1,000 days. This must include increased investment in health services such as vaccinations, treatment for waterborne diseases and targeted supplementary feeding programmes.

- Urgently needed is the implementation of social protection interventions such as cash or food transfers and public work programmes, increase in investments in preventative health services and protection of productive assets such as livestock and water resources which help poor households and communities prepare for and mitigate the worst impacts of disasters.

## 3. BUILD LONG-TERM RESILIENCE TO PHENOMENA SUCH AS EL NIÑO

A hunger-free world requires building household and community food security and resilience to phenomena such as El Niño. This means greater investments in child-sensitive national safety nets programmes, national disaster risk management and climate change


<sup>30</sup> UN, 'UN Secretary-General's Remarks to Member States: Briefing on the World Humanitarian Summit' (New York, 20 April 2015) [website] <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?id=8555>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



adaptation policies and systems and greater support for sustainable, profitable, agricultural livelihoods strategies for smallholder farmers.

- *Significant investments in national safety nets policy and programmes.* National safety net programmes, as part of comprehensive national social protection systems, are among the best-documented and cost-effective ways to promote equity, reduce vulnerability and invest in human capital development, particularly for the extreme poor. Safety nets improve access to nutritious food and education during times of crises and promote stronger inclusion of vulnerable populations in economic activities.
  - ▶ Use child nutritional status, particularly for children under 5 years of age, as a key performance metric for national social protection systems. Stunting is a widely accepted measure of multidimensional poverty and the prevalence of acute malnutrition in children under 5 is a sensitive and objective crisis indicator, acting as a strong proxy for household welfare. This focus will keep resources focused on the poorest households which experience the highest levels of child undernutrition.
- *Increased investments in sustainable, resilient and profitable agricultural livelihood strategies for smallholder farmers.* Seventy-five per cent of food-insecure people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their food and livelihoods.<sup>32</sup> More investment by national governments, regional organisations and the international community is needed to address the underlying causes of poverty, food insecurity, poor nutrition and other forms of vulnerability in rural areas. Recommendations include:
  - ▶ Increase allocation of resources to the agricultural sector in line with their regional and international commitments and ensure effective budget implementation to support smallholder farmers.
  - ▶ Reform existing agricultural plans to increase their impact on nutrition, particularly for children.
  - ▶ Integrate climate-smart agriculture techniques such as Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration and Conservation Agriculture in agricultural strategies to ensure sustainable management of land, water, biodiversity and other natural resources.
  - ▶ Develop national plans to scale-up support to smallholder farmers, develop farmers' entrepreneurial capacities and create viable livelihoods in the rural areas, such as savings groups, with special focus on women and youth.

**RECENT STUDIES SHOW THAT** NEARLY  
**1 BILLION CHILDREN**  
  
**LIVE IN COUNTRIES THAT WERE AFFECTED BY CONFLICT IN**  
**2013 OR 2014**

- *Strengthened child-sensitive community-level resilience and adaptation to climate change.*
  - ▶ Support age-appropriate and child-centred disaster risk reduction.
  - ▶ Ensure children's perspectives are considered in the development of environmentally friendly practices, systems and technologies.
  - ▶ Increase public funding for climate change adaptation and mitigation in developing countries to at least US\$100 billion per year by 2020.

<sup>32</sup> FAO, WFP and IFAD, *State of Food Insecurity in the World* (Rome, 2015).

**World Vision** is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. We serve all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

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