



World Vision 

Pray to End Famine

FAQ

More people face famine today than any other time in history. Unfortunately, this crisis isn't hitting the news the way it needs to, and the world isn't responding quickly enough. We have provided a few basic facts about drought, famine, malnutrition and hunger around the world as well as what World Vision is doing in response and how you can participate.

What's the current situation with the hunger crisis?

Millions of people are experiencing unprecedented hunger and famine. A combination of conflict, recurring severe drought and high food prices are to blame. Conflict is the main driving factor of hunger across 18 countries, leaving 74 million people in need of food assistance.

In Africa alone—**South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Democratic Republic of Congo**—millions of people need urgent food assistance. Children across the region are suffering from severe malnutrition, well above globally acceptable rates for hunger.

- 63% of South Sudan's population faces food insecurity
- In Somalia, 2.1 million people are displaced due to drought and conflict
- Nearly 4 million children in Ethiopia are malnourished and require treatment
- Over 300,000 children in the conflict-ridden Kasai region of Democratic Republic of Congo are at risk of dying from severe malnutrition

Millions more in Syria, Yemen and Bangladesh experience high levels of food insecurity and hunger because of ongoing conflict:

- 17.8 million people in Yemen struggle with food insecurity
- In Syria, 10.5 million people require food and livelihood support
- Over 800,000 refugees have crossed the border from Myanmar into Bangladesh, the vast majority in need of food assistance

It will only get worse if nothing is done to help. Children, especially those younger than 5, are the most vulnerable, because they need critical nutrients to build strength and immunity against disease.

How did the situation with hunger get like this?

Conflict and drought remain the two key factors at play in the the four most at-risk countries. South Sudan, Yemen, and Nigeria are all experiencing internal conflict and violence. Somalia has a long history of conflict and is currently in a fourth year of drought.

It's really been the culmination of several disruptive events that have led the affected communities to where they are now. Many of the countries in the region also have struggled with extreme poverty for decades and lack basic infrastructure to help their struggling families.

Instability for farmers in South Sudan, for example, hinders crop production. That limits what is available at the market and raises food prices. Poor families then can't afford enough food to keep their children healthy, and eventually they need emergency help when they run out of money and food. We're not talking low funds or food that's been in our pantry that is well past its expiration. We're talking actually not having any money or any food at all—nothing.

The longer these factors persist, the less families are able to stave off the effects of lost livelihoods or homes.



I hear the word famine a lot, but how do you define famine?

Famine is the absolute worst-case scenario, and not all food crises are actually considered famine. A community's food crisis becomes a famine when there's so little food anywhere that it causes large-scale starvation, malnutrition and death.

To declare famine, three things must all happen:

- At least 20% of households in a given area face extreme food shortages
- More than 30% of children suffer from acute malnutrition
- Hunger causes more than two deaths each day for every 10,000 people

Why does it seem like there's always hunger in Africa?

The factors mentioned above create a cycle that's extremely difficult to break. When instability persists because of conflict or political problems, people flee their homes or are unable to plant their crops. Less food gets harvested. Prices go up. Families' livelihood prospects dwindle as markets close. Violent conflict makes things even worse because humanitarian groups often cannot access affected communities to bring emergency relief.

Droughts have become more frequent and intense in recent years in West, East and Southern Africa. Last year's El Niño has exacerbated weather-related problems. These droughts affect food-production systems in fragile contexts in similar ways to the conflict-related factors. Less food and water also means vast numbers of dead livestock in affected areas. This devastates families' source of income and food.

And when **40 percent of children in sub-Saharan Africa grow up stunted** due to chronic malnutrition, they literally lack capacity to learn and contribute to society. Their brains are smaller because they didn't get enough of the right nutrients at the right time to promote growth. Therefore, their countries lose out on significant leadership and innovation potential, which perpetuates the human capital loss cycle.



What is malnutrition?

Malnutrition develops when your body does not get enough of the vitamins, minerals and other nutrients it needs to function properly.

When these crises happen, some children are malnourished for long periods. That leads to wasting (being underweight for their age). Children who were already growing poorly when the food crisis began now risk becoming permanently stunted (being short for their age).

Their little bodies are beginning to lose the ability to absorb vital nutrients. They're literally starving to death. And they're nine times more likely to die than a well-nourished child. Medical workers often measure a child's mid-upper arm circumference to gauge the level of malnutrition the child is experiencing. That's why you may see photos of people wrapping a band with green, yellow, and red sections around a malnourished child's tiny upper arm. Green indicates the child is not malnourished. Yellow indicates malnourishment and red indicates severe malnourishment and risk of death.

When will people be able to get back to normal?

There's no substitute for lifesaving aid in an emergency. But World Vision also focuses on long-term solutions that build resilience so that families and communities have better options when crops fail and streams dry up. Livelihood skills training is one aspect of our current responses that helps families find their own way out of a food crisis.

- With long-term development programmes in place, hunger crises can often be avoided, and families can maintain independence.
- Farmers and pastoralists benefit from market development, immunizations for livestock, and training and seeds to grow drought-resistant crops.
- Cash aid gives impoverished families the ability to take care of themselves and stimulates local markets.
- Saving groups and community banks make loans that help members recover from emergencies.
- Building and repairing water and sanitation facilities contributes to healthy living.
- New business training, equipment, and materials can help families diversify their income so their assets are not wiped out by drought or adverse weather.
- Developing resilience is a generational process. Children who stay in school are better prepared for the challenges and opportunities in their future.

How can I help the hunger crisis?

We've got three ways you can help:

1. **Stay informed.** Follow the latest hunger-related developments.
2. **Pray for children and families** affected by famine and hunger crises.
3. **Help support life-saving aid.** World Vision is a global leader when it comes to emergency relief situations like this. We are already on the ground working to bring life-saving food, water and health interventions to children and families in South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, DRC, Uganda, Syria, and Bangladesh.

You can donate at <http://bit.ly/donate2endfamine>

