

2021 Economic and Social Committee Humanitarian Affairs Segment

Preventing Famine and Responding to Extreme Food Insecurity in the COVID-19 Era

Thursday 24 June from 17:00 to 18:30 (Geneva time) – link to join below

Member State Sponsors: Dominican Republic, Ireland, Switzerland, and The United States of America.

UN Organizers: World Food Programme (WFP), UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

NGO Partners: International Rescue Committee, World Vision International, The Norwegian Refugee Council, Concern Worldwide.

Background

Today, girls, boys, women and men are currently living in famine-like conditions in Yemen, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Madagascar. Some 34 million people around the world are on the brink of famine and the slightest shock could tip them over the edge. Humanitarian organizations are working around the clock to avert famine, but we urgently need resources,¹ backed by political action, to halt the impending wave of suffering. The price of doing nothing in the face of these growing hunger needs will inevitably be measured in terms of lost lives.²

As highlighted in the WFP-FAO Joint Call for [Action and Hunger Hotspots Report](#), a dramatic increase in the numbers of people in acute food insecurity is evident through new [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification](#) (IPC) analyses or similar analytical processes, with 174 million people facing Crisis or worse levels³ of food insecurity in 58 countries. WFP projections indicate that this number could increase to over 270 million people this year.⁴

As recognized by the UN Secretary-General's Famine Prevention Task Force, conflict, climate change and the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, are the key drivers of hunger in 2021. The impacts of each of these converging catastrophes are disproportionately hardest on women and girls – making up 60 percent of those chronically food insecure globally. Critically, in nearly two-thirds of countries, women are more likely than men to report food insecurity. Women farmers are also at particular risk of hunger, and face steeper and deeper barriers to accessing land, agricultural inputs and credit.

Tragically, by the time “Famine” (IPC 5) is officially declared, it will already be too late, and thousands of people will have needlessly lost their lives due to hunger-related causes. This side-event will be a platform to advocate for action and funding to prevent famine, mitigate extreme food insecurity and to protect hard-fought development gains.

¹ WFP and FAO have appealed for the emergency mobilization of \$5.5 billion in extraordinary resources to avert catastrophe for these 34 million women, men, girls and boys.

² Yemen, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Ethiopia, and northeast Nigeria are the areas worst affected. They face catastrophic levels of acute hunger.

³ (IPC Phase 3-5)

⁴ Across 79 countries with WFP operational presence and data available, WFP estimates that up to 270 million people are acutely food insecure or at high risk in 2021.

Objectives of the Side Event

1. Call for urgent high-level action and funding to prevent wide-spread famine for the rest of 2021 and beyond.
2. Through voices from frontline responders, highlight how conflict, climate change, and the impact of COVID-19 have exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities, magnified gender inequality and have increased humanitarian and protection needs to unprecedented levels.
3. Raise the level of support for actions to address conflict-induced acute food insecurity while empowering women and girls; ranging from investments in humanitarian cash, scaling up proven interventions to tackle acute malnutrition and building countries' resilience through climate-resilient inclusive food systems.
4. Call for unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access in accordance with IHL and UN Security Council resolution 2417 (2018) to ensure that civilian populations and in particular women and girls can safely access life-saving assistance in situations of wide-scale insecurity and armed conflict.
5. Seek solutions, and encourage discourse, on how local and community action - through women's leadership in particular - can improve early warning and build resilience to climate and conflict related shocks to avoid hunger.

Key concrete action points and recommendations/take away messages

1. Flexible funding and high-level political action are urgently needed to prevent famine and mitigate the protection impacts of acute hunger in 2021 and beyond.
2. Unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access is crucial to prevent famine.
3. The needs of communities and women and girls must be front and center.
4. The voices and leadership of frontline responders and local actors need to be amplified.

Discussion points or guiding questions

- The scope and scale of acute hunger (IPC 3 and above) in 2021: What is driving the rapid expansion in needs?
- How can we prevent famine in 2021 and beyond? What needs to happen today to avert catastrophe and build resilience?
- How can we ensure/improve humanitarian access?
- How can we address/mitigate the protection risks and impacts of extreme hunger on women and girls?
- Seek recommendations from frontline responders and affected communities.
- Which approaches, data models and actions enable early detection and action?
- Addressing acute hunger during a global pandemic (i.e. when donor countries are concerned with unprecedented domestic challenges and have reduced fiscal space).
- What concrete steps must be taken to ensure humanitarian interventions address hunger and malnutrition in situations of armed conflict in a way that is sensitive to the needs of women and girls and empowers them to lead solutions and build resilience?

Format of the side event

This will be a virtual event. Opening remarks will be delivered by Ambassador Michael Gaffey, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations Office at Geneva. This will be followed by a keynote address from Ms. Sarah Charles, the Assistant to the Administrator of USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, the U.S. Government lead for international disaster response. After these remarks an interactive panel discussion, interventions from the floor, and closing remarks will follow.

Chair and moderator

The event will be Chaired by Ambassador Manuel Bessler, Deputy Director General, Head of Humanitarian Aid Department and Head of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA).

Draft Panel composition

1. Dominic MacSorley, Chief Executive Officer of Concern Worldwide
2. Maclean Natugasha, Norwegian Refugee Council Cameroon Country Director
3. Amadou Allahoury Diallo, Special Advisor to the President of the Republic of the Niger - Responsible for the Agriculture and Livestock Unit
4. Susan Gamboripai, Youth Advocate and Refugee from South Sudan
5. Reena Ghelani, Director, OCHA Operations and Advocacy Division

Background Material

- [Call for Action to avert famine in 2021](#)
- [Global Report on Food Crises – 2021](#)
- [ICVA Open Letter to Prevent Famine - 2021](#)
- Secretary-General's Famine Prevention Task Force – [Press Release](#)
- [Hunger Hotspots](#): FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity (March to July 2021 outlook)
- [Ending the hunger crisis: Response, recovery and resilience](#). IRC May 2021.
- [G7](#) famine prevention and humanitarian crises compact

Connection details to join the event

This Event will be held via Zoom and use the FAO corporate registration system. To Register click [here](#). A link and calendar entry will be generated after you register.

Contacts

	<i>Focal Point 1</i>	<i>Focal Point 2</i>
Name	Gian Carlo Cirri and Benjamin Syme	Patrick Jacqueson and Fiona Arnone
Email	giancarlo.cirri@wfp.org benjamin.syme@wfp.org	Patrick.jacqueson@fao.org Fiona.arnone@fao.org
Phone	+41 22 917 85 69	+41 22 917 4470
Mobile	+41795116485 +41798426851	+41797599654