



HELP FIGHT FAMINE

THE GLOBAL FOOD SOLUTION:
CONFLICT AND CLIMATE-
PROOFING WORLD SUPPLY

INTRODUCTION

The 2022 Group of Twenty (G20) Heads of State and Government Summit comes at a critical moment for the world.

The G20 is a crucial opportunity for the world's major economies to help developing countries with major challenges.

Food insecurity has the potential to devastate populations across vast swathes of the globe.

With a catastrophe unfolding, we need short and long-term solutions to save lives.

Aside from an immediate injection of funds to the world's hunger hot spots, developed economies must look to the future.

Conflict and climate change are wreaking havoc on global food systems. But this doesn't have to be the story of the 21st century.

This discussion paper outlines steps to address the root causes of food insecurity, and insulate food systems from conflict and climate shocks.

Conflict in Ukraine and climate shocks hammering the Horn of Africa are unequivocal proof that a new approach is needed.

Australia can offer the world a Global Food Solution to make famine a thing of the past.



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OVERVIEW

The world is facing one of the worst hunger and malnutrition crises in human history.

Escalating conflict and an increase in extreme weather events because of climate change are driving a massive food emergency across the world.

There are 50 million people in 45 countries on the brink of starvation.

In the Horn of Africa, more than 26 million people don't have enough food to eat.

Catastrophic hunger levels in Somalia have left more than 513,000 children at risk of dying from severe acute malnutrition, 173,000 more than during the 2011 famine ¹.

For the first time in 20 years, the number of people living in extreme poverty has increased.

Women and girls have been impacted most, with almost half a billion now living below the poverty line. They are 70 per cent of the world's hungry ².

Global food insecurity means over 800 million people go to bed hungry each night.

After four consecutive failed rainy seasons, the Horn of Africa is staring down the barrel at a fifth.

Drought kills livestock, destroys crops and fuels conflict.

Over the past 30 years, the number of climate related disasters has tripled.

A child born in 2020 will experience on average twice as many wildfires, 2.8 times the exposure to crop failure, 2.6 times as many droughts, 2.8 times as many river floods, and 6.8 times more heatwaves in their lifetime compared to a person born in 1960.

While climate and COVID-19 compounded multiple crises, conflict remains the number one driver of life-threatening hunger ³.

The war in Ukraine has fuelled the crisis, driving up food and fertiliser prices. This conflict has disrupted supply chains and highlighted the fragility of the global food system when put under extreme pressure.

Ukraine is one of the world's largest grain exporters. Staples are not reaching hunger hot spots. More people will die of starvation unless action is taken. Without urgent action, this hunger crisis will kill more people annually than the entire COVID pandemic.

Conflict and climate are the key drivers of displacement.

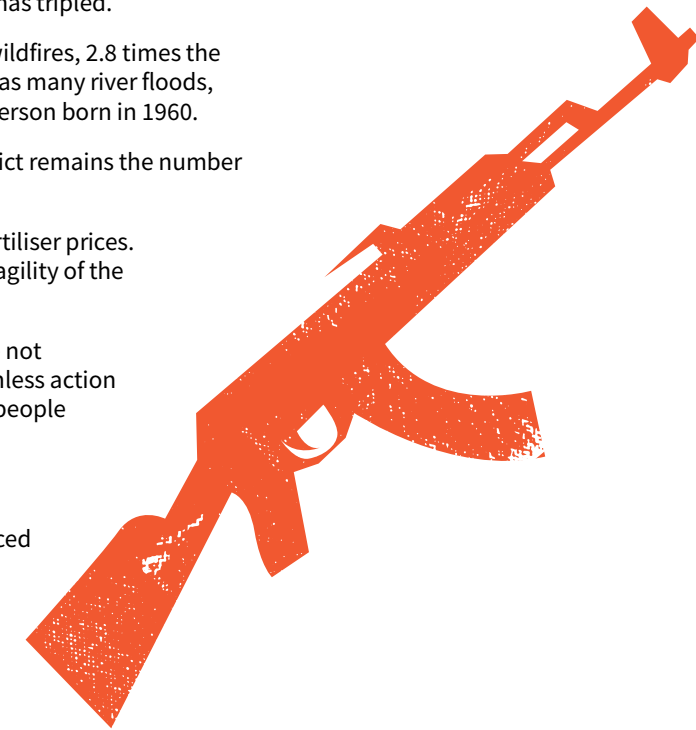
At the end of last year there were 89.3 people worldwide displaced by war, violence, persecution, and human rights abuses ⁴.

In mid-2022, there were at least 17.8 million people internally displaced, seeking asylum or living in refugee status across the Horn of Africa.

1. Catastrophic hunger levels leave 500,000 children at risk of dying in Somalia - <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1126491>
2. Plan International, Real Choices, Real Lives: world hunger and it's impacts, August 2022. Available at: https://plan-international.org/uploads/2022/07/RCRL_GlobalHungerCrisis_June2022.pdf
3. WFP, Global Food Report on Food Crises, 2022. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/global-report-food-crises-2022>
4. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-au/news/press/2022/6/62a9d2b04/unhcr-global-displacement-hits-record-cappin-g-decade-long-rising-trend.html>

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EFFORT

Drought is not a new phenomenon. Nor is conflict, displacement, or inflation.

We know how to stop deaths caused by these issues. Hunger and starvation are avoidable.

The global food system does not have to be held ransom to conflict and climate.

Australia has an important role to play as a wealthy middle power in encouraging like-minded partner nations to take steps to conflict and climate-proof food systems.

Through diplomacy, hunger and its causes can be tackled.

Australia should call on parties in conflict to abide by international humanitarian law and allow unfettered humanitarian access so that critical services and supplies can reach those in need.

Those that violate international humanitarian law must be held to account.

While not a member of the United Nations Security Council, Australia could advocate to members to improve monitoring and reporting of conflict and hunger, including starvation as a weapon of war.

When it comes to preventing famine and addressing the root causes of hunger, the most urgent need is funding.

Funding should be flexible, multi-year, delivered efficiently to local communities and leaders, fast and new.

As a priority Australia should invest in a long-term Global Food Strategy which tackles the root causes of the hunger crisis.

Australia should look to increase funding to the Goba Humanitarian Response Plan through fast-track mechanisms.

While an immediate investment is needed to save lives, funding is most effective when directed to preventative measures that strengthen systems and build resilience.

All funding should prioritise local responses to save lives.

Supporting local food production, protecting the poorest and most vulnerable, and making food available are critical.

Funding local actors is key.

As a signatory of the Grand Bargain, Australia is obliged to ensure 25% of funding goes as directly as possible to local and national organisations.

Australia should heed the recommendation from the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 1 November 2019.

That would adopt a child rights-based approach to trade agreements and development aid policy and programmes, with the rights of children included in programme design, delivery and evaluation. This would ensure children receive the food they need to live, learn and grow.

Australia has developed agricultural innovation systems based on climate extremes like floods, bushfires, droughts and cyclones.

This expertise can help equip other countries with the tools to conquer an environment in which change is rapidly occurring.

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research harnesses the nation's valuable knowledge to help developing countries adapt their farming practices.

Enhancing the Centre's role would make a lasting difference on the world's food system.

Climate shocks are no longer rare.

That's why substantial investment in prevention, preparedness, child-centred adaptation, and anticipatory action are needed.

Australia should significantly increase its climate finance commitment and re-engage with the Green Climate Fund.

Australia should end fossil fuel subsidies and redirect the funds towards better aid and climate finance

Children's views should be a part of decision-making that affects children's rights and the planet.

Minimum standards for consulting with children on climate change policy should be implemented and the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified.

A nexus approach across humanitarian assistance, development and climate is required to efficiently allocate the limited resources to support long term resilience-building and system strengthening.

SUMMARY

In The Global Food Solution: Conflict and Climate-proofing World Supply, the Help Fight Famine alliance has presented an opportunity to shift the dial.

Foreseeable shocks to the food system do not have to spark famine. Millions of lives can be saved.

Australia's unique position on the global stage makes it an ideal country to prosecute this strategy with other nations.

The world's poorest and most vulnerable people should not be thrust into hunger when the capacity to feed all people exists.

The whims of actors engaging in conflict must not spell famine. And there is a clear path to making climate resilience a hallmark of the food system.

These clear actions will Help Fight Famine in decades to come.

