



CHILDREN IN CRISIS:

Global Snapshot and Policy Recommendations

Introduction

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to addressing the root causes of poverty, empowering children, their families, and their communities by partnering alongside them to reach their full potential. In 2022, World Vision responded to 59 humanitarian emergencies² in 52 countries and assisted 27.7 million disaster survivors, refugees, and internally displaced people worldwide. World Vision's integrated and community-based approach is based on more than 70 years of experience and shows commitment to quality, evidence-based and high-impact programs. Our programs span the globe, including some of the world's most difficult contexts, and encompass many sectors, including water, healthcare, education, child protection, food security, and economic empowerment. Across each of these sectors, World Vision works to promote gender equality and social inclusion as a core part of our strategy to reach the most vulnerable.

As a trusted partner, we work with the U.S. government, UN agencies such as UNICEF and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and are a leading partner of the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria and the World Food Program.

1 Hunger

Currently, there are unprecedented levels of hunger around the globe. Protracted conflicts, climate change, and the war in Ukraine have exacerbated food insecurity globally and now 45 million people² are estimated to have so little to eat that they are severely malnourished, at risk of death, or already facing starvation and death. Conflict disrupts livelihoods, markets, trade, and crop production and harvests and insecurity driven by conflict can also hinder humanitarian access, leaving communities without essential assistance. The crisis in Ukraine, for example, has significantly disrupted global trade and pushed up the cost of commodities and agriculture inputs like food, fuel, and fertilizer. Of the 193 million people who experienced crisis levels of food insecurity in 2021, nearly 139 million lived in environments where conflict is the main driver of food crises.³

Climate-induced extreme weather events such as drought, flooding, and tropical cyclones can undermine communities already facing fragility. For example, vulnerable communities living on low-lying, degraded lands, or informal settings like urban slums are highly exposed to sporadic weather impacts.⁴ When extreme weather affects livelihoods, families often face the risk of child labor, child marriage, and barriers to education. Weather extremes were the main driver of acute food insecurity in eight African countries with 23.5 million people in IPC phase 3 or above.⁵

» *Somalia*

An estimated 300,000 people could face famine across Somalia, mostly in the southern part of the country, and this number could continue to grow if emergency aid is not urgently scaled up and delivered to reach people in most need. Of particular concern are the districts of Baidoa and Burhakaba districts in the Bay region where malnutrition and mortality rates have surpassed emergency thresholds, alongside disease outbreaks, including cholera and measles. The last time famine was declared in Somalia, in 2011, over a quarter of a million people died, half of whom were children under five.

Through partnership with USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, World Vision is implementing a multi-sector emergency response in this most affected Bay region. This project includes interventions such as supporting community management of acute malnutrition and outpatient therapeutic feeding programs for children with severe acute malnutrition. The response also addresses livelihood issues by providing dry land seeds for vulnerable farmers alongside community irrigation plots with solar powered water pumping systems, treating livestock for parasites and infectious diseases, and multi-purpose cash transfers to the most drought affected households.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue efforts to address emergency hunger needs and food insecurity by supporting robust funding for U.S. Foreign Assistance food security accounts such as International Disaster Assistance, Feed the Future, Food for Peace, and McGovern-Dole food for Education.
- Reauthorize the Farm Bill, which includes critical international food security programs designed to address hunger and build community resilience. The Farm Bill is a critical tool in fighting both acute and chronic hunger and malnutrition. Title III authorizes several important international food aid programs, such as Food for Peace Title II⁷, McGovern-Dole International Food for Education⁸, and Food for Progress⁹.
- Increase support for multi-year, community-based programs that include climate-smart agriculture practices¹⁰ in order to build resilience to climate change and reduce needs, vulnerability, and risks over the long term.

» *Bangladesh*

The Southwest coastal region of Bangladesh is subject to many natural disasters such as cyclones, tidal surges, floods, and droughts. Increased soil salinity, and waterlogging create difficult farming conditions. As a result, families struggle to grow and maintain nutritious food for their children. World Vision's Nobo Jatra (New Beginnings)⁶, a USAID Food for Peace funded program, seeks to improve food security, nutrition, and resilience. A key intervention of this program includes teaching and empowering farmers with climate-smart farming techniques, sustainable production methods and increased access to markets. Using a Lead Farmer method of instruction, a "lead" farmer teaches 150 pupil farmers these new techniques, such as planting saline-tolerant crop varieties. The project also makes continuous efforts to ensure women's equitable participation in climate-smart farming and to improve access to and control over resources and increase decision making power at the household and community levels.



References

- ¹ <https://wvusso.sharepoint.com/sites/philrepweb/Shared Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2Fphilrepweb%2FShared%20Documents%2F2021%20World%20Vision%20Annual%20Review%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2Fphilrepweb%2FShared%20Documents>
- ² <https://www.fao.org/3/cc2134en/cc2134en.pdf>
- ³ https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000138913/download/?_ga=2.78246673.445399636.1671036577-1979538560.1671036577
- ⁴ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/02/World-Social-Report-2020-Chapter-3.pdf>
- ⁵ https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000138913/download/?_ga=2.78246673.445399636.1671036577-1979538560.1671036577
- ⁶ <https://www.wvb-nobojatra.org/>
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- ⁸ <https://twitter.com/WorldVisionUSA/status/1534913464996593670>
- ⁹ <https://www.wvi.org/publications/brochure/cambodia/commercialization-aquaculture-sustainable-trade-cast-project>
- ¹⁰ <https://worldvisionadvocacy.org/2019/07/16/women-farmers-in-bangladesh-use-climate-smart-farming-techniques-for-better-life/>

2 Children on the move

Conflict, natural disasters, persecution, pandemic, violence, and lack of economic opportunity are just some of the reasons why children are on the move, either alone or with their families, seeking a better life. It is currently estimated that there are now roughly 37 million children on the move¹¹, destabilizing regions. As children and their families migrate, they represent some of the most vulnerable among us but vulnerable to violence, exploitation, malnutrition, and trafficking.

Children and families fleeing the world's conflicts are perhaps the most at risk. In Ukraine, there are 7.1 million children in need of humanitarian assistance¹², as two thirds of Ukrainian children¹³ are now internally displaced or have fled the country as refugees. This includes children who have witnessed incredible trauma and children who have been institutionalized with disabilities. As they flee this conflict with the hope of return, World Vision is providing child-friendly spaces at the border refugee camps and services within Ukraine, providing a place for children to be safe, learn, play, and receive mental health and psychosocial support that is vital to their healthy development. In addition, we are advocating to provide resources and opportunities for those children with disabilities to be de-institutionalized, allowing them to return to their families where they have the best opportunity for healthy development.

» Central America

In addition to the violence and poverty that plague the region, Central America has also been hit hard by natural disasters in recent years, including drought and severe hurricanes. This has destroyed already fragile livelihoods and has tripled food insecurity in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua over the past two years, from 2.2 million in 2018 to almost 8 million people in 2021¹⁴. These climate challenges have exacerbated migration, leading to numerous child protection issues for children on the move and those outside of family care.

In response, World Vision has designed and implements the Hope at Home¹⁵: Building Resilience in Central America framework, which aims to address the root causes of forced migration by building resilience at the individual, family, community, and societal levels. Funded in part by USAID, this framework provides families with the ability to absorb and recover from shocks, while transforming their structures and means for living to cope with long-term stresses, change, and uncertainty.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Sponsor and pass the Strengthening Efforts to End Violence Against Children Act (SEEVAC), a bill to provide greater protections for children in humanitarian and crisis settings, as well as mandating the use of evidence-based interventions for reducing violence against children – a key driver in the migration of children and families.
- Sponsor and pass the Mental Health in International Development and Humanitarian Settings Act (MINDS Act). This bill would make permanent the Special Coordinator for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support at USAID, while mandating mental health and psychosocial support interventions in new and existing programs.
- Sponsor and pass the International Children with Disabilities Protection Act which would create support systems for families of children with disabilities to allow them to stay in the care of their families and not be institutionalized. Children in the care of their families allow them the best opportunity for healthy growth and development.
- Support a change in policy to recognize child protection and education interventions as lifesaving in conflict settings and humanitarian contexts to allow immediate deployment of child protection and education interventions along with the other forms of aid in these areas of crisis.

References

- ¹¹ [https://wwwusso-my.sharepoint.com/personal/lpeacock_worldvision_org/Documents/Desktop/Nearly 37 million children displaced worldwide – highest number ever recorded \(unicef.org\)](https://wwwusso-my.sharepoint.com/personal/lpeacock_worldvision_org/Documents/Desktop/Nearly%2037%20million%20children%20displaced%20worldwide%20-%20highest%20number%20ever%20recorded%20(unicef.org))
- ¹² <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/unicef-ukraine-refugee-response-humanitarian-situation-report-full-year-24-february-2023>
- ¹³ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-briefing-note-situation-children-ukraine>
- ¹⁴ <https://www.worldvisionadvocacy.org/2021/08/03/central-america-development/>
- ¹⁵ <https://www.worldvisionadvocacy.org/2021/08/03/central-america-development/>

3 Global Health

World Vision centers our health strategy on mothers and young children through a continuum of care and life cycle approach to promote health and nutrition practices and prevent major causes of disease. Our approach focuses on interventions that include basic medicines and products used to prevent and treat illnesses at the community level. We also partner with local health workers, in-country partners, and communities to provide products, training, supervision, and financial support, all with the goal of addressing under-nutrition, which contributes to 45 percent of deaths of children under 5¹⁶.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer an emergency, it has evolved into an ongoing threat to human health and survival, the impacts of which will take many years to comprehend. Indirect impacts of the pandemic on health include disruptions in routine immunizations and increases in maternal, under-five and neonatal mortality in the short and medium term in some low-and middle-income countries. In 2020, 22.7 million children¹⁷ missed basic vaccines, which was 3.7 million more than in 2019. According to the WHO UNICEF Immunization Coverage Estimates¹⁸, global vaccination continued to decline in 2021, with 2 million more children missing out on life-saving vaccinations in 2021 compared to 2020 and 6 million more missing out than in 2019.

» Africa: Sahel Region

5.2 million children in 11 countries in the Sahel and Horn of Africa are estimated to be zero-dose: children who have never received routine vaccinations. To help combat this, World Vision is partnering with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to reach zero-dose children with immunization services in seven countries in the Sahel region of Africa. World Vision's RAISE FOR SAHEL¹⁹ (Reaching & Adapting Immunization Services Effectively to Reach Zero-Dose Children in the Sahel R4S) program will target zero-dose children living in displaced communities and fragile and conflict settings across the Sahel region. The project will focus on identifying these children along with the unique barriers that prevent their access to immunization. The project will also build countries local and regional capacity to regularly reach under immunized children and build out primary health platforms such as health clinics and staff.

References

¹⁶ <https://www.worldvision.org/our-work/health#1470869887604-2b2a7064-3ed2>

¹⁷ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>

¹⁸ <https://data.unicef.org/resources/levels-and-trends-in-child-mortality-2020/>

¹⁹ <https://www.gavi.org/news/media-room/gavi-launches-new-partnership-reach-zero-dose-children-across-marginalised>

²⁰ <https://www.worldvisionadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/MNCH-policy-paper.pdf>

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support robust funding for the Global Health Maternal and Child Health (MCH)²⁰ account, which includes funding for Gavi, to support programs aimed at ending preventable child and maternal deaths. This account strengthens health delivery systems, treats diarrheal disease and pneumonia, and provides immunizations and immunization support.
- Support robust funding for the Global Health Nutrition account. These programs seek to prevent and treat stunting, wasting (acute malnutrition), and anemia and promote breastfeeding during the first 1,000 days of life—from the start of a woman's pregnancy to a child's second birthday.
- Support reauthorization of The United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Through PEPFAR, the U.S. government has invested over \$100 billion in the global HIV/AIDS response, saving 25 million lives, and prevented millions of HIV infections. This program is critical to the goal of ending AIDS by 2030.
- Scale up simplified approaches to address child wasting, such as ready to use therapeutic food (RUTF) distributed by community health workers in uncomplicated cases, to improve wasting treatment for the estimated 80 percent of children who don't receive it.