



Unprecedented Hunger and U.S. support for Global Food Security:

International food assistance overview and farm bill recommendations

Introduction

World Vision is increasingly concerned about the rising levels of food insecurity around the globe. Populations are being driven to hunger by compounding crises like conflict, adverse effects of climate change¹, and global price hikes for commodities and agriculture inputs like food and fuel. Conflict remains the biggest driver of hunger, with 70% of the worlds hungry² living in conflict zones. The conflict in Ukraine³, for example, continues to be a driver of hunger. As the wheat basket of the world, grain exports have been severely impacted, reducing emergency food aid and driving-up food prices everywhere. Droughts, floods, extreme storms, and unpredictable weather have destroyed crops and livelihoods leading to locust swarms and high rates of displacement.

World Vision's Response

World Vision is working to respond to this crisis through immediate, emergency interventions as well as long term resilience programs. Our food assistance programming includes U.S. in-kind commodities, food commodities procured locally and regionally, cash transfers and other vouchers, school meals, and resilience-building programs that include interventions around climate-smart agriculture, water-shed management, community savings groups, sustainable livelihoods and local advocacy⁴. World Vision operates food security programs in partnership with the United Nations, World Food Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and other public and private partners. World Vision focuses on promoting dignity, fostering innovation, and effectively creating lasting change. To do so, we work with communities to develop tailored and diverse responses based on local contexts.

In humanitarian emergencies, our programming responds to the impact of conflict, violence, drought, climate shocks, and other disruptions of food supply and livelihoods. In 2022, World Vision responded to 59 humanitarian emergencies⁵ in 52 countries and assisted 27.7 million disaster survivors, refugees, and internally displaced people worldwide. This year, World Vision is prioritizing emergency efforts⁶ in Afghanistan, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, Myanmar, Haiti, Venezuela, Ethiopia, and Burkina Faso. We offer life-saving aid and assistance in these countries where children are one step away from famine, living with acute malnutrition, and facing the threat of civil unrest and other vulnerabilities. Effective emergency response is especially vital considering famine remains an ongoing threat in many regions around the globe. In tandem with emergency response, development food assistance supports vulnerable communities by moving beyond chronic hunger toward greater self-sufficiency and long-term resilience. Integrating multiple sectors, long-term presence, and community-based programs is the most impactful approach to achieving family and community level food security and nutrition.

GLOBAL HUNGER QUICK FACTS

- An expected 345.2 million people⁷ are projected to be food insecure in 2023 – more than double the number in 2020.
- Wasting affects 47 million children globally⁸. Children with wasting are desperately thin, have weakened immune systems, and face an increased risk of death: They require urgent treatment and care to survive.
- Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen have populations facing starvation⁹ (Catastrophe, IPC Phase 5) and are already critically food insecure (IPC Phase 5).

U.S. Response to Food Insecurity

The U.S. government is a key stakeholder in the fight against hunger through funding for humanitarian and development assistance such as International Disaster Assistance, Food for Peace, McGovern-Dole International Food for Education, Food for Progress, and Feed the Future. Investment in these programs ensures that children and their families avoid devastating hunger that can lead to long-term consequences like unrest, fragility, increases in negative coping mechanisms such as child labor and child marriage, and displacement. These programs bolster strategic alliances, promote economic growth and stability, and attract new consumers around the world for U.S. goods and products.

Emergency food assistance in Somalia

A humanitarian catastrophe, driven by the longest and most severe drought in recent history, is rapidly unfolding in the Horn of Africa and expected to continue well into 2023. Five failed rainy seasons have stretched livelihoods to a breaking point. Somalia is one of the countries that has been hardest hit. Famine-like conditions have been projected in parts of Somalia between April and June 2023. This is especially concerning because a quarter of a million people lost their lives the last time famine was declared in Somalia. In response to this crisis, World Vision in Somalia¹⁰ has reached more than 1.3 million people – approximately 740,000 of whom are children – with lifesaving interventions in the past 12 months. This includes food distribution, treatments for children experiencing malnutrition, and water delivery. Through funding from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, World Vision is implementing a multi-sector emergency response project in the Bay and Bakool regions. This project includes interventions such as supporting community management of malnutrition and outpatient therapeutic feeding programs for children with severe acute malnutrition. The response also addresses absorptive resilience capacity that supports livelihoods, 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.

Development Programs in the Farm Bill

While it is crucial to respond to immediate needs, it is also important to invest in holistic, multi-sectoral approaches to agriculture development that builds resilience. Evidence shows¹¹ that these investments, including innovation that gives farmers the tools to improve productivity, storage, nutrition and adapt to climate shocks, can minimize the severity of the next disaster when it strikes and reduce the need for future humanitarian assistance. The Farm Bill is a critical tool in fighting both acute and chronic hunger as well as investing in a community's ability to feed themselves and resist shocks. Title III of the Farm Bill authorizes several important international food aid programs including:

- Food for Peace Title II
- McGovern-Dole International Food for Education Child Nutrition Program
- Food for Progress



Food for Peace Title II

As the largest U.S. food aid program, Food for Peace provides funding for non-emergency development programs that reduce poverty and build the capacity of families and communities to feed themselves. Food for Peace Title II also includes emergency response funds for distributing U.S. in-kind food to people in the grip of natural disasters, conflict, and other food security crises. In FY21, emergency programs accounted for 86% of total¹² Food for Peace spending. Funding for non-emergency programs, called the “safe box,” accounted for the remaining 14%. As directed in statute, the safe box cannot be less than \$365 million. Food for Peace non-emergency programs, titled resilience food security activities (RFSAs), provide additional tools outside of in-kind commodities to alleviate poverty over the long term such as WASH interventions, climate smart agriculture practices, and economic inclusion.¹³

NOBO JATRA: NEW BEGINNINGS PROJECT

Bangladesh depends on agriculture as a key economic activity, yet it is regularly exposed to cyclones, tidal surges, and saline water intrusion. As a result, families struggle to grow and maintain nutritious food. World Vision’s Nobo Jatra (New Beginnings)¹⁴, seeks to improve food security, nutrition, and resilience. A key intervention includes teaching and empowering farmers with climate-smart farming techniques, sustainable production methods and increased access to markets. Using a Lead Farmer method, a “lead” farmer teaches 150 pupil farmers new techniques, such as planting saline-tolerant crop varieties.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Congress should authorize robust funding for the Food for Peace non-emergency programs to invest in community resilience and prevent future hunger and malnutrition crises.
- Food for Peace non-emergency programs should be allowed to use the most effective form of assistance based on the local context. From U.S. commodities to holistic resilience building activities, programs should be tailored to meet immediate needs and build a farmer’s capacity over the long term.

McGovern-Dole International Food for Education

Administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), McGovern-Dole provides U.S. agricultural commodities and utilizes local and regional procurement to reduce hunger and malnutrition and promote literacy and primary education in food-insecure countries. Parents in highly vulnerable communities have an incentive to send their children to school, as they receive the dual benefit of access to both education and nutritious food. Since 2002, McGovern-Dole has reached over 31 million children in 48 countries¹⁵ with school meals.

EDUCATING CHILDREN TOGETHER PROJECT



Within the Nampula Province in Mozambique, World Vision, with funding from USDA’s Food for Education program, provides nutritious meals to 80,000 students in 160 schools, to improve school attendance, attentiveness in the classroom, and student literacy. The project¹⁶ also focuses resources on building and improving latrines and handwashing stations to promote health and hygiene practices. This program also establishes local farmer groups where 1,800 farmers are trained on improved agriculture practices. These farmers are also connected with local resources like savings and lending groups. As their yields improve, these farmers can then supply the school with locally grown commodities to support and sustain the feeding program in the long term.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Congress should bolster the effectiveness of McGovern-Dole LRP by expanding it to a range of 10 to 20% allowing programs to be tailored to the local context.
- LRP language should be updated to allow for capacity building activities to help small-scale local farmers grow consistent, quality food. These changes would foster self-sustaining school meals program that continue after U.S. assistance ends.

Food for Progress

Food for Progress projects focus on improving agricultural productivity and expanding agricultural trade. USDA donates U.S. agricultural commodities which can be distributed as food or monetized by selling them locally to fund projects. NGOs, commodity groups, and U.S. universities partner together to provide skills training and develop value chain connections across the market.

COMMERCIALIZATION OF AQUACULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE TRADE (CAST) PROJECT

In Cambodia, fish is a primary source of protein and contributes to good nutrition. Creating new market opportunities for local farmers has led to increased household income as well as improve dietary diversity. The CAST project¹⁷, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food for Progress (FFP) program, has been successful in strengthening market links between value chain actors from innovation input suppliers, hatcheries, fish producers, financial institutions, distributors, and local and national buyers. To increase local fishery competitiveness and improve regulatory governance, funds for the project were acquired from the proceeds generated by the sales of U.S. soybeans to Cambodia. Led by the American Soybean Association, in partnership with World Vision, Auburn University, and Kansas State University, this program provides business development services along with technical assistance for local market actors like farmers and producers to secure loans and grants to grow their businesses.



KEY RECOMMENDATION

- Congress should reauthorize Food for Progress as well as the pilot program authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill to finance projects directly rather than through monetization. The pilot program has yet to be funded through appropriations.

References

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World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. We serve all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

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