



THE GLOBAL HUNGER CRISIS:

Australia's opportunity to help prevent catastrophic famine and build global resilience for the future

A total of 50 million people in 45 countries are teetering on the edge of famine. The number of those facing acute food insecurity has soared - from 135 million to 345 million - since 2019.¹ This is a crucial moment for Australia, in cooperation with the international community, to avert humanitarian catastrophe and famine.

A proactive and strategic approach that builds resilience and protects development gains is required to ensure that we are doing more than reacting from crisis to crisis and achieving outcomes in gender, climate adaptation and resilience.

Australia should commit to a ten-year Global Food Security Strategy to proactively respond to critical hunger spots and prevent food insecurity in countries at risk by building resilience.

The strategy should:

1. Deliver an immediate response for urgent relief and famine prevention of AUD \$150 million in the critical hunger spots of the Horn of Africa, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria. 
2. Complement global efforts to build resilience to and prevent food insecurity and invest AUD \$200m annually over the first 3 years of new and additional overseas development funding. This funding should deliver locally led programs in critical hunger spots and beyond. The strategy should improve household and community resilience to food insecurity and promote inclusive and resilient food systems by:
 - a. Promoting and directly funding **local leadership** and engagement of civil society to build resilience to food insecurity.
 - b. Investing in **anticipatory action** such as social protection and safety nets for marginalized and vulnerable groups, including women and girls, people with disabilities, children and displaced communities to increase their short- and long-term resilience to food insecurity.
 - c. Scaling up approaches that support gender equality and **women's economic empowerment** outcomes in agriculture and food systems.
 - d. Scaling up climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and peacebuilding programs to **address root causes** of food insecurity.
3. Appoint a Food Security Special Envoy to champion the food security agenda and lead Australia's whole of government and international engagement to build resilience to food insecurity by:
 - a. Promoting best practice agricultural innovation inclusive and resilient food and agricultural system through **partnerships** with local organisations.
 - b. Working with global partners to improve **global food systems and supply chains** through international collaboration on food insecurity including addressing supply chain bottlenecks to ensure farmers and food systems can keep functioning.

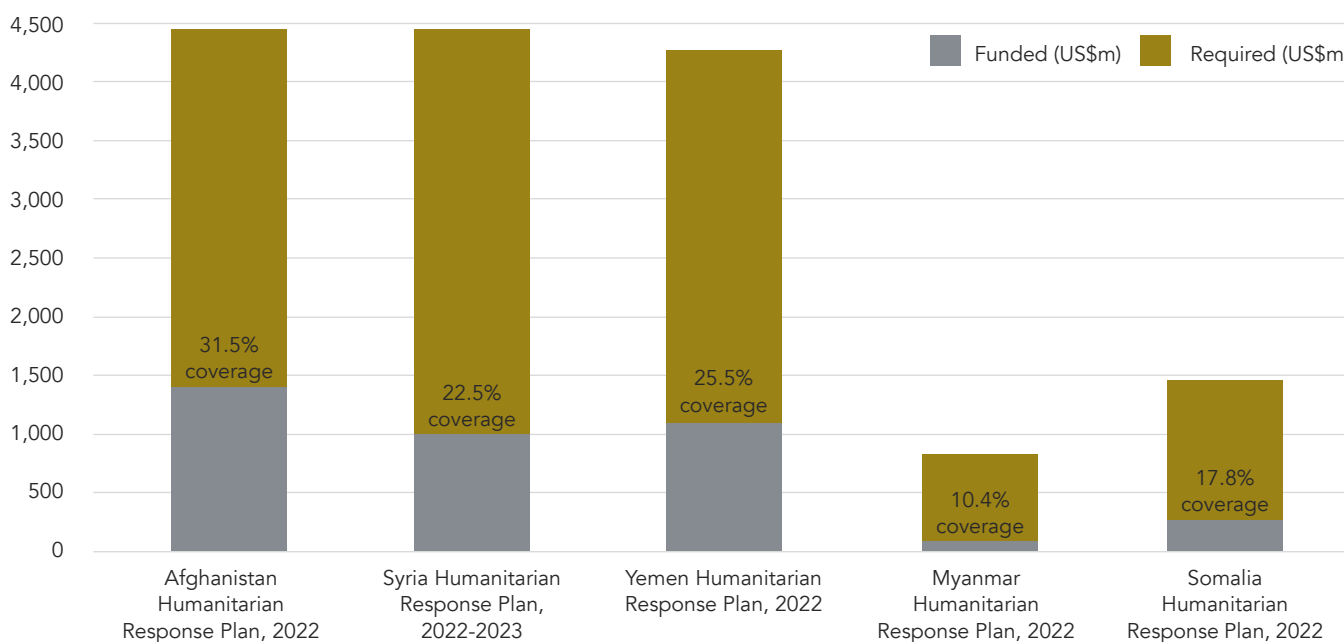
BACKGROUND

The three C's - COVID, climate change and conflict - have created the perfect storm, exacerbating existing inequalities and accelerating world hunger. UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres has warned that shortages of grain and fertilizer caused by the conflict in Ukraine, combined with warming temperatures and ongoing COVID-19 supply problems, threatens to "tip tens of millions of people over the edge into food insecurity, followed by malnutrition, mass hunger and famine, in a crisis that could last for years."² The food insecurity crisis will have the most severe impacts on those living below the poverty line, women, girls, children, and people with disabilities.

The world's already strained - and often inequitable - food and agriculture systems are being disrupted. Supply chains "from farm to fork" are being disrupted, and smallholder and family farmers - who produce 80% of the world's food³ - are experiencing reduced farming outputs. Many vulnerable families are facing disrupted incomes, while also grappling with unaffordable food prices. Parents are forced to cope by eating less, shifting to poorer quality foods, selling assets, with risks of child labour and child marriage.

Widespread and acute hunger is a powerful driver of societal violence and destabilization, undermining hard-won development gains and is both a cause and effect of conflict. Access to food and stable market prices of staple foods is also essential to the political stability of a nation. Improving agricultural productivity and resilience drives global economic growth and is a highly effective poverty reduction intervention. We all benefit from international research into new farming techniques, improved crop varieties, better disease controls, greater export opportunities and vital climate change solutions. Despite the growing scale and complexity of humanitarian emergencies, the support needed to address these crises is weakening with major gaps between funds required to address growing need and funds committed (Figure 1). The proposed strategy should address the most critical hunger spots as well as countries with increasing food insecurity risk and countries in our region where food systems and agriculture will be threatened by climate change.

Figure 1: Funding coverage for Humanitarian Appeals/Response Plans, 2022



On 19 May 2022, the G7 and the World Bank launched the Global Alliance for Food Security, to catalyze an immediate and concerted response to the unfolding global hunger crisis. The United States has increased its investment, with its 'Feed the Future' Strategy and accompanying USD \$11 billion investment.⁴ Australia can complement this effort in critical global hunger spots and in our region. Australia must re-extend its role in alleviating global humanitarian distress and re-establish itself as a leading global citizen in the fight against global hunger ahead of key international engagements such as COP27 and G20.



Women farmers in Uganda learn agricultural skills through Baptist World Aid Australia's development program there. Photo: Baptist World Aid

PROGRAM DELIVERY

Local partners are the best mechanism to effectively respond to and build resilience to food insecurity.

Individuals and communities faced with threats have repeatedly shown that they invest both in anticipatory actions to mitigate looming crises and in early responses, offering assistance within their own communities many months before the government or international humanitarian community becomes active. Through the Australian Aid program, Australia should leverage its NGO's and humanitarian agencies with strong partnerships and networks of local partners on the ground. The strategy should leverage Australia's development program, the Australian Humanitarian Partnership and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. The Australian Government can also support the Emergency Action Alliance which garners support and donations from the public.

Examples of successful projects that could be funded include:

Provision of livestock feed to communities in response to prolonged drought in Ethiopia in which 20,000 cattle died. A local partner is providing 17,004 bales of grass for 1,417 heads of cattle in Fentale District for two months.

Climate adaptation measures that are inclusive and ensure that food systems are strengthened against climate change such as this initiative which works with women farmers in urban areas to implement climate-resilient agriculture technologies and practices.⁵

Distribution of emergency food kits in Yemen that include items such as rice, vegetable oil, white beans, wheat flour and sugar. Community kitchens have been established in schools and gas cookers, gas cylinders and cooking utensils have been provided.

Note: This policy brief has been developed by the Australian Council for International Development's Humanitarian Reference Group, the principle mechanism for sector-wide humanitarian policy and advocacy.

- 1 <https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-welcomes-g7s-fresh-commitment-food-security-amid-unprecedented-global-food-crisis>.
- 2 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1118562>
- 3 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X2100067X?via%3DiHub>
- 4 Administrator Power Announces \$11 Billion to Combat Malnutrition and Safeguard the Lives of Women and Children | Feed the Future
- 5 <https://www.redcross.lk/main-news/happy-urban-home-gardeners-women-farmers-in-urban-areas-implement-climate-resilient-agriculture-technologies-and-practices/>



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With encouragement and support from Tearfund's partner EFICOR, Aulla successfully applied for a bore hole with a solar powered pump through a government scheme. Now, he can grow two crops each year – one with the monsoon rains, another in the dry season – and he has finally been farming profitably. Photo: EFICOR/Tearfund