

A dramatic illustration of a child with curly hair, seen from behind, standing on a pile of rubble in a destroyed city. In the background, a massive, fiery explosion or fireball rises into the sky, illuminating the scene. The child is looking up at the explosion. The overall tone is somber and powerful, symbolizing the impact of conflict and disaster on vulnerable populations.

The Causes of Hunger in Some Parts of the World

The world produces enough food to feed all 7.5 billion people, yet more than 10% of the population goes hungry each day.

Since 2020, after years of progress towards zero hunger, numbers once again are on the rise.

A lot of this was due to the knock-on effects of COVID-19, but that's not the whole story.

Conflict and the worsening climate crisis, together with the ongoing effects of a global pan-

demic, have worked together to undermine the fight against hunger.

These issues also underscore some of the other top causes of world hunger.

Here are ten of those causes, what Concern is doing to address them, and how you can help.

Hunger by the numbers

The world produces enough food to feed all 7.5 billion people

Despite this, 10% of the world

goes to bed hungry each night

According to the Global Hunger Index, 47 countries will fail even to reach Low hunger status by 2030

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to increase global hunger by 30 million people

1. Poverty

Poverty and hunger go hand in hand. Parents and caregivers experiencing poverty usually can't

afford enough food to feed themselves and their children - and, if they can, they often aren't able to afford nutrient-rich foods.

In turn, undernourishment makes it difficult for children to focus in school, hindering their chances of breaking what is often an intergenerational cycle of poverty. Parents (especially mothers) who skip meals so that their children have enough to eat may also struggle with working to earn enough money to keep food on the table. It's a vicious cycle.

We can see the link between poverty and hunger play out in larger statistics: The Democratic Republic of Congo is one of the world's poorest countries. In 2022, nearly 62% of the country's 60 million residents lived below the poverty line. Earlier this year, the UN estimated that 43% of all Congolese are also living below the hunger line in a crisis that is only expected to grow.

2. Food shortages

Across regions like the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, farming families experience periods before harvests known as hunger seasons. These are the times of year when food supplies from the previous harvest are exhausted, but the next harvest is still a ways off. This leaves families forced to skip one (or more) meals each day in the period before the next harvest,

which could be months away.

We've also seen food shortages increase in the last few years as the results of COVID-19 and the crisis in Ukraine. Border closures intended to curb the pandemic and trade routes interrupted due to conflict have prevented critical supplies from getting where they're needed most. Read on to learn how the situation in Ukraine, for instance, has fed the hunger crisis in Somalia.

3. War and conflict

A history of conflict has played out in tandem with a history of hunger in South Sudan. More

than a decade of civil war has led to mass displacement and abandoned fields, meaning crops and harvests have failed. Conflict also has an economic impact: It often leads to soaring inflation rates that make imported (or even local) foods unaffordable for many residents.

International conflicts also carry a large impact. Pre-war, Ukraine and Russia exported 25% of the world's wheat supplies. Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan rely on this region - more than 8,000 km away - for staples. Those supply chains have been interrupted due to the conflict, and have left millions of people, including those affected by the ongoing drought in Horn of Africa, without a key lifeline.

4. Climate change

Countries like Malawi enjoy relative peace and political stability. However, climate change is also a major cause of hunger, with each shock setting the most vulnerable people and communities further and further back.

Too little - or too much - rainfall can destroy harvests or reduce the amount of animal pasture available. These fluctuations are made worse by the El Niño weather system, and are likely to only get worse in the future. Extreme climate patterns also tend to affect the poorest regions of the world the most: The World



Bank estimates that climate change has the power to push more than 100 million people into poverty over the next decade.

5. Poor nutrition

In order to thrive, humans need a range of foods providing a variety of essential health benefits. We mentioned above that families living in poverty often get food lower in nutrients. That's because many of these families rely on just one or two staple foods, like corn or wheat, for the majority of their meals. As a result, they don't get enough critical macronutrients and vitamins. Even if they feel full, they may still be suffering the effects of hunger, particularly malnutrition.

Nutrition is especially important for pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as young children. Mums-to-be who don't get enough vitamins and minerals during their pregnancy may "pass on" malnutrition to their children. If a child does not have the adequate nutritional support during their first 1,000 days between conception and their second birthday, they may also suffer lifetime health and developmental ramifications.

6. Poor public policy

Systemic problems, like poor infrastructure or low investment in agriculture, often prevent food and water from reaching the populations that need them the most. This is especially true in fragile contexts. Many of the world's hungriest countries also experience some form of political instability or conflict. Political

leaders often focus limited resources on these emergencies rather than the silent ones like hunger.

This can become further exacerbated if another disaster hits, creating a complex humanitarian crisis. With decades of crisis in Somalia, the latest drought to affect the region is one example of a complex emergency, one that - even with the long spring rain season delivering water to the area - could still lead to a famine.

7. Bad economy

After two civil wars and the 2014-16 Ebola outbreak, Liberia's economy was left weakened by back-to-back crises.

Seven years after the end of the Ebola epidemic, more than 50% of Liberians still live below the poverty line. It also ranks as the eighth hungriest country in the world, with a 2022 Global Hunger Index score of 32.4.

Inflation as the result of a bad economy means that, even if food is available and people have jobs, they may not be able to afford even the most basic staples. Last year, the cost of a food basket rose by 66% in Ethiopia, and 36% in Somalia.

8. Food waste

According to the World Food Programme, over 1 billion tonnes of food produced is never consumed. That's equivalent to us throwing out one-third of the global food supply every year.

What's more, producing this wasted food also uses other natural resources that, when threatened, have a ripple effect in the

countries that are already hit hardest by hunger, poverty, and climate change. Producing this wasted food requires an amount of water equal to the annual flow of Russia's Volga River, and nearly 3 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

9. Gender inequality

The UN notes that if female farmers had the same access to resources as their male counterparts, the number of hungry people in the world could be reduced by up to 150 million. Female farmers are responsible for growing, harvesting, preparing, and selling the majority of food in poor countries, and they're just one example of the many ways that hunger is a women's issue.

Women are on the frontlines of the fight against hunger, yet they are frequently underrepresented at the forums where important decisions on policy and resources are made.

10. Forced migration

Hunger can be a cause of forced migration. Forced migration can also be a cause of hunger. Refugees and internally-displaced people living in displacement camps or informal communities are often legally or linguistically prevented from getting work to support their families while away from home (many refugees are also women and children, which means their options are even more limited).

Many refugees live in neighbouring countries, countries with limited resources to begin with. Some of the hungriest countries

in the world are also among the largest host communities or have high rates of internal displacement. Food aid helps, but the problem of hunger and migration can only be resolved with a political solution.

How Concern addresses the causes of world hunger

From Afghanistan to Ukraine, Concern's Health and Nutrition programmes are designed to address the specific, intersectional causes of world hunger in each unique context. We work with displaced communities to deliver food supplies, as well as to help migrants build skills (including home gardening) and find sources of income that empower them to keep food on the table.

Programmes like Lifesaving Education and Assistance to Farmers (LEAF) support farmers affected by climate change to improve their harvests using Climate Smart Agriculture techniques, while also addressing existing cases of malnutrition in the community via our standard-setting programme, Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM). Thanks to LEAF, food aid was not needed in one region of Kenya for the first time in 30 years.

You can help us in the fight against hunger. Last year alone, Concern was able to reach 8.3 million people with lifesaving and life-changing Health and Nutrition initiatives. With \$0.93 out of every dollar going directly into our programmes, your tax-deductible donation to Concern means that we can reach even more next year.

