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MAIN FINDINGS / KEY MESSAGES

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MAIN FINDINGS & KEY MESSAGES

1. Main findings of the Global Report + Key messages

In 2019, around 135 million people across 55 countries experienced acute food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 3 or worse) and so required urgent food, nutrition and livelihoods assistance.

Acute food insecurity is the most extreme end of the hunger spectrum.

- This means a population's inability to access and consume food becomes so difficult that their lives or livelihoods are in immediate danger. It often results because people are highly vulnerable -- it can manifest rapidly when shocks hit.
- Acute food insecurity means people are unable to feed their families and could be forced to either sell off household assets for cash, or rely on external assistance, to survive.
- People in acute food security require a range of urgent assistance, from lifesaving humanitarian assistance to sustaining livelihoods support.
- We cannot allow anything - not COVID-19, not anything, to prevent us from delivering it.

135 million is a deterioration over 2018. But these numbers are just the tip of a larger iceberg.

- An additional 183 million people (in a subset of 47) countries were found to be living in Stressed conditions (IPC/CH Phase 2)
- So they are on the verge of slipping into acute hunger if hit with a shock or stressor – such as the COVID-19 pandemic, for example.

The report also tells us that in 2019 in the 55 food-crisis countries 75 million children are stunted and 17 million suffer from wasting. In just the 10 worst food crises: 9 million suffer from wasting.

Countries in food crises are highly vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic's impacts, which could be drastic for them. People in food crises are already weakened by hunger -- their health compromised; less able to fend off the virus. They are also less well-equipped to cope with the shocks the pandemic will inflict on food systems and economies.

We must keep critical food supply chains operating, so people have access to life sustaining food.

We must maintain the delivery of urgent humanitarian assistance to keep people in crisis fed and alive.

Human health is hugely important, but if we let people's livelihoods be lost due to the pandemic, once the health crisis has eased, a massive recovery and rehabilitation effort will be needed.

Most countries in the Global Report lack the means to provide their citizens with humanitarian, healthcare, and livelihoods support simultaneously at scale in response to COVID-19. They should not be forced to choose between saving lives and livelihoods. We must all step up and help. We are all in this together.

The Global Network against Food Crises is committed to addressing both the more well-known drivers of food crises -- as analysed in the new Global Report on Food Crises – as well as emerging threats, like COVID-19.

2. Which regions and countries are worst affected?

- Countries in **Africa** remained disproportionately affected by acute food insecurity.
- The worst food crises in 2019, in order of severity: 1) **Yemen** 2) **DR Congo** 3), **Afghanistan** 4) **Venezuela** 5) **Ethiopia** 6) **South Sudan** 7) **Syria** 8) **Sudan** 9) **northern Nigeria** 10) **Haiti**.
 - Together these 10 countries had over 88 million people acutely food insecure and accounted for 65 percent of all people in acute food insecurity.

3. What are the primary drivers of acute food insecurity?

i) **Conflict and insecurity (77 million people)**

ii) **Weather extremes (34M people)**

iii) **economic shocks (24M)**

Conflict and insecurity

- **Conflict and insecurity** were the main drivers in 22 countries, accounting for more than **77M people** acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance.
- This is yet another reason why the **UN Secretary General's call for a global ceasefire** is so important. The ceasefire needs stick even once the COVID-19 crisis has passed, because as the report shows, conflict is the world's leading cause of acute food insecurity.
- **Asia and the Middle East** is the region most affected by conflict, with 40M people in acute food insecurity across 9 countries.
- **Africa**: conflict / insecurity was a key driver for around 37M people in 12 countries:
 - 10 M people in West Africa and the Sahel (incl. Cameroon); around 9 M in 3 countries of the Horn of Africa; almost 16 M were located in DRC alone.

Weather extremes

- Weather extremes accounted for **34M people** acutely food insecure in 25 countries in 2019.
- **Africa** was the most affected continent with 26M people in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3+) conditions in 20 countries:
 - Over 13M were in 4 countries of the Horn; 11M were located across 9 countries of Southern Africa; Almost 2M were in 7 countries of West Africa and the Sahel.
- **Latin America and the Caribbean**: 4.4M across the 4 countries of the Dry Corridor.
- **Asia**: Weather extremes a main driver of acute food insecurity in Pakistan; more than 3M people in IPC Phase 3+

Economic shocks

- Primarily affected **24M people** across 8 countries in 2019:
- 14M in 4 countries of **Latin America and the Caribbean**, mainly in Venezuela (9 M), Haiti (4 M) and countries affected by the Venezuela displacement crisis;
- 10M in 4 **African** countries (including more than 9M in Sudan and Zimbabwe alone).

4. What can be done to address food crises and prevent COVID-19 from making them worse?

Humanitarian contributions to food security, agriculture and nutrition sectors in food crisis hotspots increased from USD 5.3 billion in 2016 to USD 6.5 billion in 2018.

- In many countries, the spending on humanitarian assistance far outweighed that on development assistance.

Most countries in the Global Report lack the means to provide their citizens with humanitarian, healthcare, and livelihoods support simultaneously at scale. They should not be forced to choose between saving lives and livelihoods. We must all step up and help. We are all in this together.

Today the partners of the Global Network against Food Crises have pledged our firm commitment to i) continue to help the millions of vulnerable people around the world who already face acute food insecurity and malnutrition, which threatens both their lives and livelihoods ii) and respond to the threat of COVID-19.

Concretely, we are pledging to:

- Accelerate our collective efforts to tackle hunger's root causes
- Vigorously assert the role of data in decision-making – we will address data gaps that impedes data collection, reduces response effectiveness and stalls development.
- Invest wisely. Strategic investments in food security and resilience must be made at the country / regional level for significant change to take hold.
- Advocate for dialogue and political action – we must shine a spotlight on the recurrent issues that obstruct food security and the factors that drive food crises.

We will continue improve coordination between humanitarian and development efforts in a way that would maximize impact and address the root causes of protracted crises.

- This means we must “Go beyond food” to effectively address people's vulnerability before, during and after crisis.
- We will do this holistically, understanding that our joint effort needs to involve not just humanitarian response actions, but also development interventions to promote sustainable economic growth and resilience livelihoods, and activities that promote and sustain peace.

Interventions in support of food security, nutrition and agricultural livelihoods address not only the symptoms of food crises, but their root causes.

- If we let people's livelihoods be lost as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, once the health crisis has eased, we will have major problems to deal with.
- It is both more humane and strategically smarter to protect and sustain agricultural and rural livelihoods before food crises hit, rather than rebuild them after.

ANSWERS TO TOUGH QUESTIONS / BACKGROUND READING

5. Did things get worse in 2019 versus 2018?

135 million represents the highest number in the four years since the Global Report on Food Crises was launched.

- Compared to 2018, 5 million more people were pushed into Crisis conditions as a result of adverse weather, 13 million because of economic shocks and over 3 million because of the impact of conflict and insecurity on their lives and livelihoods.
- It is of grave concern that the 2019 total significantly exceeds that of 2018 (113 million), 2017 (124 million people) and 2016 (108 million).

Regrettably, this is just the visible tip of the iceberg.

- Millions more people (183M) in 47 countries were found to be living in Stressed conditions (IPC/CH Phase 2). At the cusp of acute hunger, they are at risk slipping into Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 +) if faced with another shock or stressor, like COVID-19.

6. The 2019 and the 2020 edition look at different countries? How can you make comparisons?

When comparing just the 50 countries that were in both the 2018 and the 2019 analyses, the population in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) rose from 112 to 123 million.

- **Conflict and insecurity** was the main reason that pushed over 3 million additional people (out of this subset of 123M) into acute food insecurity by.
 - Significant increases in DRC, South Sudan, Cameroon, Afghanistan, Niger, and Uganda (which saw increased refugee influx from DRC and South Sudan) and B. Faso;
- **Economic shocks** were the main reason that pushed another 13 million people into acute food insecurity compared to 2018.
 - The main increases occurred in Zimbabwe and Haiti, even though inclusion of Venezuela and the increasing the flux of Venezuelan migrants to Colombia and Ecuador contributed to this increase.

7. Data gaps

In 2019; 16 countries faced lack of data; more specifically regarding: Sahawari refugees in Algeria; Bolivia; the Comoros; Congo; Djibouti; DPRK; Syrian refugees displaced in Egypt and in Jordan; Eritrea; Iran; Kyrgyzstan; Lao; Nepal; Venezuelan migrants in Peru; the Philippines and Tajikistan.

Data gaps mean that those countries were categorized as food crisis in needed of further analysis, but no IPC/CH data were available for 2019, nor were FEWS NET IPC-compatible, WFP CARI data and OCHA HNO estimates.

The criteria established in this report to define food crises allow us to identify a serious food security situation in these countries, in terms of the shocks they faced in 2019 and requests for emergency assistance.

Gaps in the availability of food security and nutrition data occur for varied and interlinked reasons (e.g. inadequate access to affected population or lack of financial and technical resources). In the four editions of the Global Report, data gaps have been reported at least 3 times for Bolivia, Congo, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Syrian refugees in Egypt and in Jordan, Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Venezuelan migrants in Peru, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Venezuela.

Significant progress has been made in recent years by governments, international organizations, research organizations and academic institutions in gathering, collating and analysing data. Still, more regular, detailed and disaggregated data by gender, sex, age and disabilities are needed – in particular, regarding countries like DPRK, Eritrea and Venezuela, which face high levels of food insecurity, and therefore that require more detailed documentation.

As such, the Global Network encourages countries, regional institutions and relevant stakeholders to (1) invest in data collection, particularly in these countries; (2) Facilitating strategic dialogue and technical support to countries experiencing recurrent lack of data and consensus around it; and (3) Improving access to data and their interpretation by policymakers.

8. Venezuela

Venezuela was among the countries identified by GIEWS as requiring external food assistance in 2019. Although the first three editions of the GRFC had insufficient data on Venezuela, an assessment in 2019 allowed an estimate for this edition: The WFP Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) estimated that between July and September 2019 around 9.3 million people (32% of the population) was food insecure and in need of emergency assistance.

The government has challenged and does not accept the results of this survey, as indicated in the report. For our partners and us it is paramount to be as transparent as possible about the consensus and the quality of the data presented in the report. We intend to continue working with our regional and national partners to strengthen the consensus on the data in the case of Venezuela.

9. North Korea

DPRK has been selected for further analysis in this report, given the severity of the shocks faced by the population and the repeated requests for external assistance by the government (see GIEWS list of countries requiring external assistance for food – since 1996 or 24 years).

In May 2019, FAO and WFP published a joint Rapid Food Security Assessment, which provides the most reliable estimate of the food insecure population in need of urgent assistance available so far for the country. However, the assessment still faced serious limitations regarding the sampling of respondents and the diversity of indicators used – which are among the requirements for presenting data in this report, together with consensus. As these requirements were not met in the case of DPRK, DPRK numbers are not included in the 135 million number, but is still used to provide an overview of the food security situation in the country in 2019.