



ON THE BRINK

**Food security crisis in Afghanistan,
Ethiopia and Yemen**

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank Aman Soufi and Najmo Abukar for their analysis and report drafting with support from Islamic Relief Afghanistan, Islamic Relief Ethiopia and Islamic Relief Yemen.

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Section 1: INTRODUCTION

The global hunger crisis has recently been deteriorating at a rapid rate. In 2021, over 811 million people were undernourished and food insecure - up 161 million from the previous year.¹ Famine-like conditions remain a continued threat in over 43 countries around the world. This upsurge in food insecurity has been driven by a combination of factors including poverty, conflict and climate change, as well as the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, overlapping and compounding drivers came together to form the perfect conditions for the deteriorating crisis.

Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Yemen are some of the places where the food crisis is most acutely felt. A considerable proportion of the populations is facing acute food insecurity, with many unable to consume adequate food to maintain their lives and livelihoods. After repeated economic shocks, political crises, and a series of environmental disasters such as drought, more than 24 million people in Afghanistan require life-saving assistance to prevent famine. More than half of the population are in Integrated Food Security Phase 3 and above facing emergency food crises and famine in extreme cases.

The food security situation in all three countries has been made worse by humanitarian access barriers that are complicating efforts to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to those most in need. Climate change and protracted conflicts undercut people's resilience towards such crises. In addition, the recent and ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict is also adding to the food security crisis, with huge spikes in the price of fuel and food as markets respond to conflict.

The world made some considerable progress in tackling global hunger in the first decade of the 21st century, but the current food security crisis threatens to reverse this. In addition to the above challenges, increasing levels of inequality are pushing another half a billion people into poverty. The pandemic has disrupted people's livelihoods, adding to the deteriorating food security crisis. In 2019 there were 27 million people on the brink of famine, by April 2021 this had increased to 34 million.

The global food crisis exacerbates existing inequalities in society, with women and girls being hit hardest. Women and girls account for 60 per cent of people globally who are food insecure,² and make up the largest proportion of people in poverty. Additionally, there are underlying structural inequalities - such as lack of access of adequate employment, education etc. - that expose economically vulnerable households to significant risk, reducing their resilience and undercutting the ability to withstand food security crisis. People living with disabilities also face huge challenges accessing food and other necessities. Episodes of food insecurity entrench societal inequalities for succeeding generations. For example, malnutrition affects young children's physical growth and development for the rest of their lives. The crisis is made worse by humanitarian access challenges making it difficult to reach vulnerable people with emergency food distribution. Movement restrictions such as roadblocks, unsafe humanitarian corridors and blockades are presenting significant logistical and security challenges to delivering humanitarian aid in a timely and coordinated manner. These humanitarian access barriers also make it challenging to gain accurate data on the extent of food security needs.

Islamic Relief is working in many of the countries that are worst affected by the food security crisis, such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Yemen, providing support to the most vulnerable and marginalised communities. This report will highlight the extent of the food security crisis in those three countries as well as the work Islamic Relief is undertaking to provide both immediate and long-term support to those most in need.

Section 2: DRIVERS OF FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity is the state of being unable to access safe, regular, and nutritious food that enables normal growth, development, and a healthy life. The severity of the food security crisis can be characterised by five phases and combines analysis from wide range of data including data on food consumption levels, livelihood change.

PHASE 1 (minimal)

Households can meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in a typical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income.

PHASE 2 (stressed)

Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies.

PHASE 3 (crisis)

Households either:

- Have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition.

OR

- Are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies.

PHASE 4 (emergency)

Households either:

- Have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in extremely high acute malnutrition and excess mortality.

OR

- Can mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation.

PHASE 5 (famine)

Households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution, and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. (For Famine Classification, the area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality.)

There are several factors that are driving the global hunger crisis – particularly conflict, climate change, poverty, restrictions on humanitarian access, and gender inequality.

Conflict is a primary driver of acute food insecurity. The impacts of conflict include displacement, destruction of property and disruption of livelihood that hinders people's ability to access and afford food. Six out of 10 of the world's most food insecure people live in countries grappling with conflict and insecurity. Conflict often involves competition over control of geographical areas that impact food production, such as land and water. Increased pressure on land and water resources, a variable and unpredictable climate, and greater price volatility tends to increase stress on food systems and increase the risk of conflict. In many cases, conflict can also disrupt and damage infrastructure for food production and storage systems, causing a decline in the accessibility, availability and affordability of food.

There is a vital relationship between nutritional status, human capital, and economic status. Millions of people across the globe have insufficient resources to meet their daily nutritional intake and are consequently at an increased risk of food insecurity. While there may be some overlap between poverty and food insecurity, it is important to note that food insecurity can be experienced by people living both below and above the poverty line. However, low-income households are often also faced with multiple structural barriers such as a lack of access to employment, health, education, and social safety nets. Poverty and food insecurities have the effect of mutual reinforcement that produces a vicious cycle. For instance, the effects of food insecurity such as malnutrition affect a person's physical and mental health and productivity levels, thus reducing the overall economic stability of households and making them vulnerable to poverty – while poverty increases malnutrition by increasing food insecurity. The socio-economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic is putting additional pressure on food systems, with a cascading effect on food security and livelihoods that have exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities in food systems. The pandemic has had a significant impact on low-income

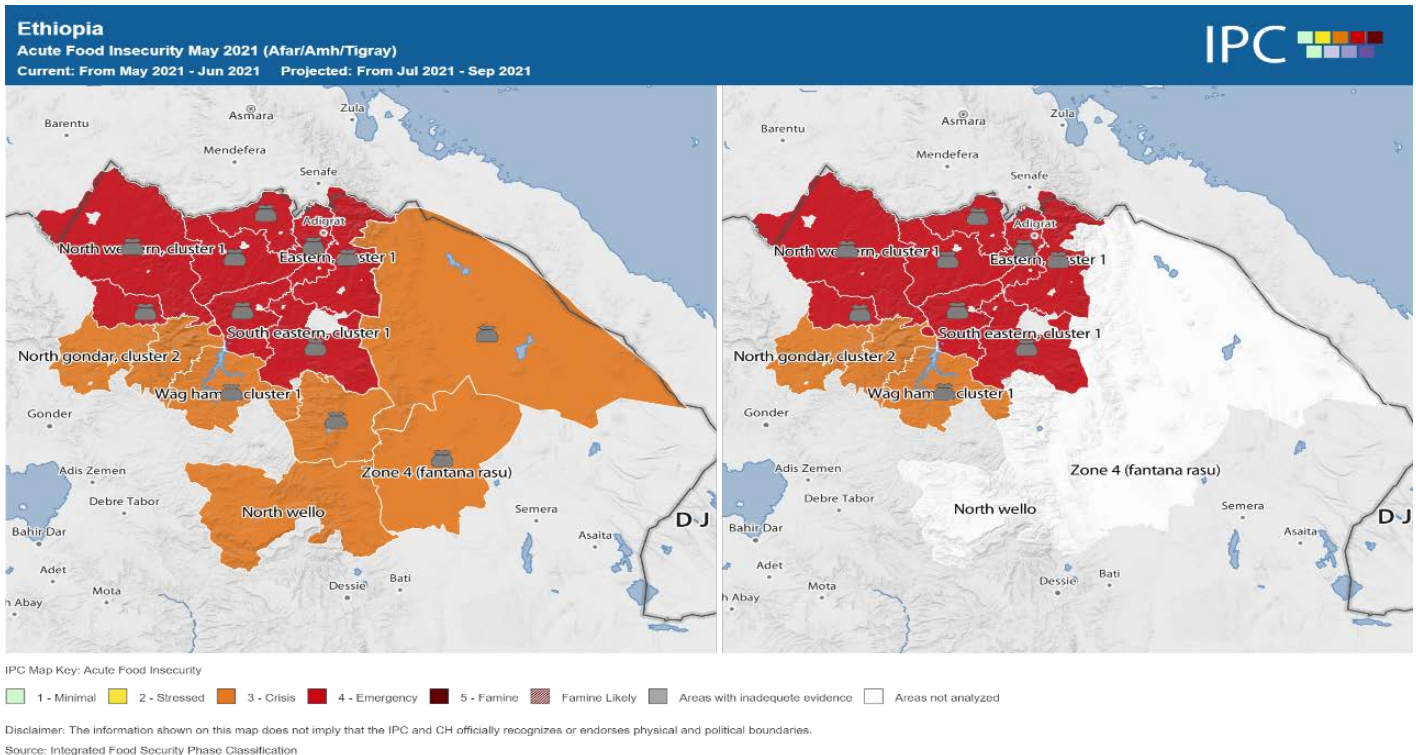
households that predominantly engage in physical labour work, who have been impacted by lockdown measures causing decline or loss of income thus impacting the affordability of food. The pandemic has impacted the accessibility, availability, utilisation (including food storage, processing, health and sanitation as they relate to nutrition) and affordability of food for both producers and consumers. However, this impact has been most felt by low-income households that lack the economic capacity and safety nets to compensate for a loss or decline in income.

Another factor that also influences food security is climate change. Over the last few decades, there has been an upward trend in global temperatures. In 2010, the global average temperature was 0.88°C (1.6°F) above pre-industrial levels. Temperature increases in 2019 were about 1.1 degrees °³. The past decade has been marked by devastating extreme events, including heatwaves, erratic rainfall and flooding, massive fires and heat-charged hurricanes.

Climate change has several direct and indirect impacts on food systems that limit the availability of safe, quality food, thus impacting the overall health and wellbeing of individuals. Climate change has a direct impact on crop yields and an indirect impact on water availability, pest management, product quality, and disease.⁴ Extreme climate events and atmospheric conditions have a significant impact on food security and livelihoods. Climate variability can also have widespread impacts such as those that occurred during 2020 and 2021, when a multiyear La Niña event, strengthened by climate change, helped produce a three-season drought in East Africa. The long dry season saw the temperatures of the land's surface soar well-above normal, and vegetation become desiccated. With the heightened probability of another below-normal dry season in early 2022, the eastern Horn of Africa (HoA) region is at a heightened risk of experiencing four consecutive dry seasons — unprecedented since satellite record keeping began in 1981.⁵ As the impacts of climate change continue to grow, the direct and indirect impacts on food production systems will produce economic and social consequences that will have a devastating affect food security.

Section 3: Country profiles and food security programmes

3.1 Ethiopia



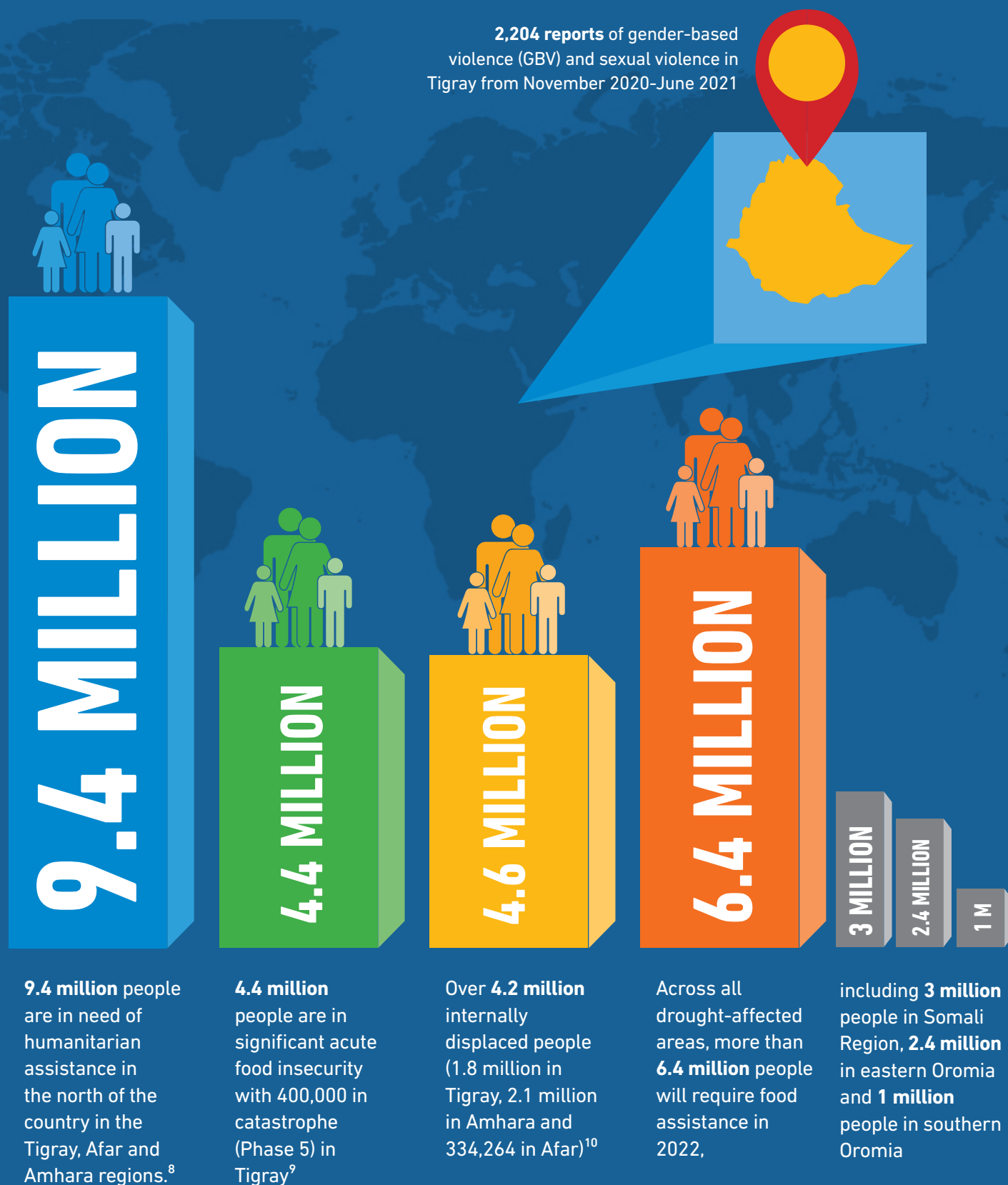
In Climate shocks, intensifying conflict, insecurity and disease outbreaks coupled with a deteriorating economy continue to exacerbate the humanitarian needs of 25.9 million people.⁶ Since November 2020, Ethiopia has been facing a humanitarian emergency largely spurred by the ongoing conflict in the Tigray, Amhara and Afar regions. In 2021, further escalations in the Tigray conflict led to 5.5 million people being at crisis levels of acute food insecurity.⁷

As the war spreads to other regions such as Afar and Amhara, at least 5.5 million people now face food shortages and around 400,000 people are facing 'catastrophic' hunger – the most severe global level. Eighty per cent of people in these regions depend on agriculture, but the violence has forced millions to abandon their homes and farms and has prevented farmers from harvesting crops during the peak harvest season.

The suffering in the north has overshadowed a growing drought crisis in the south, and across Ethiopia the UN estimates there are now 13.6 million people in need of food aid. One of the worst-hit areas is Borena, in the Oromia region on the southern border with Kenya, where in 2021 more than 69,000 livestock – the main source of livelihoods – had died due to a lack of fodder and water, plunging people into destitution. Milk production has decreased by 80 per cent. With few sources of income remaining, families are chopping down trees to sell as firewood and buy food, which is causing significant long-term damage to the local environment.

3.1.1 Devastating impact in numbers

2,204 reports of gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual violence in Tigray from November 2020-June 2021



3.1.2 Supporting vulnerable families in Ethiopia



Islamic Relief is providing food and other relief to displaced people in conflict affected Afar. We are also working in the eastern Somali region – one of the areas worst affected by the drought – and are planning to scale up our response in Borena as soon as we have funding. We are training health workers on how to treat severely malnourished children and in best practices for infant and young child feeding (IYCF). We are providing regular cash transfers to help poor families buy food and other essential items locally and bringing in urgent water supplies by truck. We are also training animal health workers and providing treatment and vaccinations for livestock.

Islamic Relief teams are on the ground providing thousands of the most vulnerable people with life-saving food parcels containing flour, oil, pulses, rice, sugar and salt. We also run eight mobile health units, which provide the only source of healthcare for many people in remote rural areas and offer longer-term support towards improving livelihoods by distributing goats, providing seeds and agricultural training for farmers, and fodder for livestock.

During Ramadan 2021, Islamic Relief supported 44,293 people experiencing food insecurity in Ethiopia. Of those supported, 12,029 were women, 9,751 were men and 527 were people living with disabilities. We distributed 6,920 food packs, each containing 25kg wheat flour, 3kg rice, 2kg edible oil. We are continuing to offer our support to the most vulnerable people through emergency food distribution. In the first few months of 2022, we have supported 19,388 people who were displaced from Chifra and Ewa at Waki, Yalo district seven kebeles (wards).

Case study: Families on the brink: Aliya's story



Aliya Yusuf (far left) and members of the savings group with their savings account books and the box for storing their savings.

Aliya is a 29-year-old mother who has been displaced by conflict and is unable to work or feed her two children. "I have been an internally displaced person (IDP) for five years now. I had my own convenience store before I moved to this IDP site because of violence. Now, I cannot afford to feed myself and my family. We rely on food assistance from the government. We only get food assistance every five or six months. My husband has also been unable to work."

Aliya's family has been sheltering in an IDP camp in the Oromia region but has been unable to find adequate access to healthcare and clothing to keep warm during cold nights. "The IDP site where I am living with my family is not favourable for living. We have been sheltering in a house constructed from corrugated iron. The inside of the house is very cold. We do not have enough clothing to warm ourselves. Regarding healthcare, there is a health centre nearby."

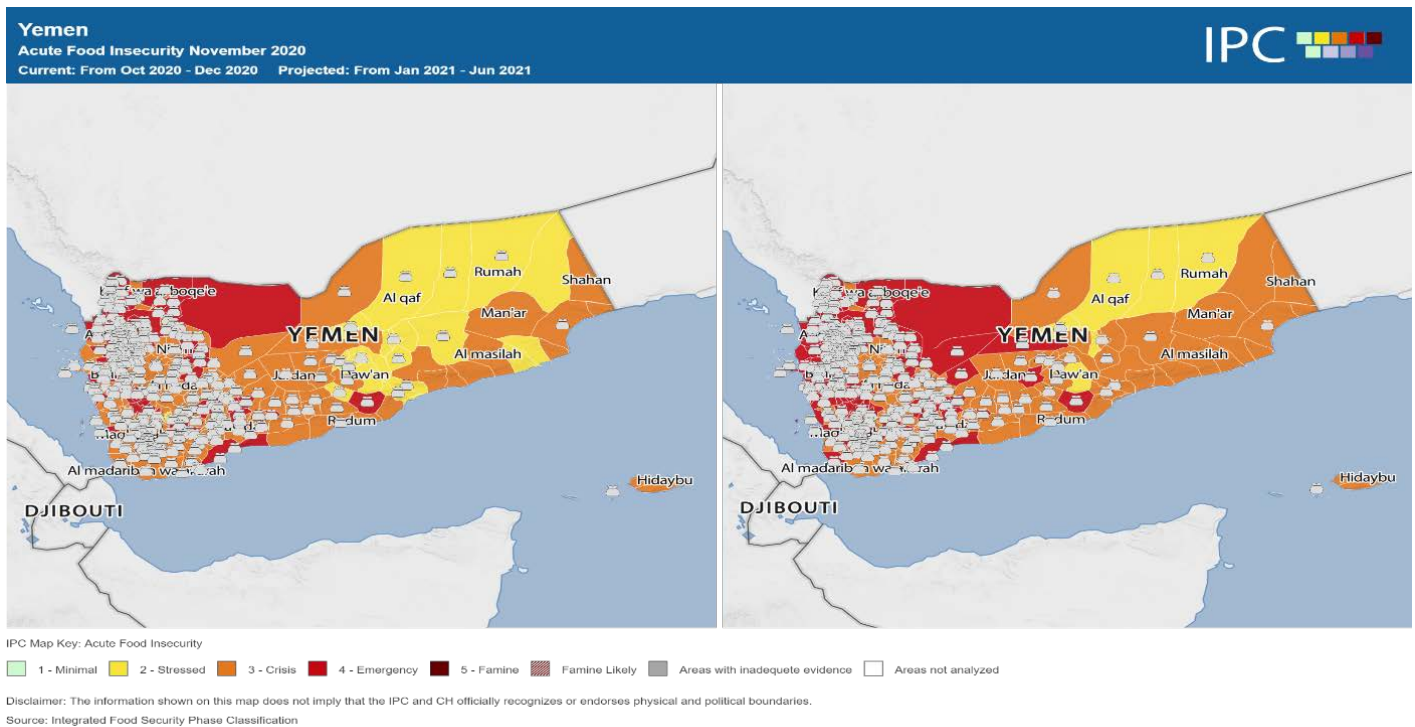
Islamic Relief has been implementing projects to enhance the economic security and resilience of impoverished families in Oromia. "Islamic Relief has organised us in a village saving and credit association. After we saved money for a year, the organisation

bought five cattle for 21 members of the group. We had some difficulties running the business of livestock rearing. There is drought and a shortage of cattle fodder. Because of the problems we faced, we were obliged to sell four of the cattle and divide the money among ourselves. Unfortunately, one of the cattle has since died. Each member of the group has received 3,700 Birr (£55) each from the sale of the cattle. With this money, I have bought a milk cow."

"We have a large number of members in our group. The money allocated for the group is small compared to the number of members it has. "We all have financially benefited from our small group business. Above all, we have learned the advantages of organising ourselves in village savings associations. We have developed expertise in financial management. We record any grievances in the book that was given to us by Islamic Relief. We have also developed a culture of working together for a better life."

Through the project, Aliya hopes to continue to grow by expanding and diversifying her business. "I want to continue to save the money we earn no matter how small or big and secure my family's future."

3.2. Yemen

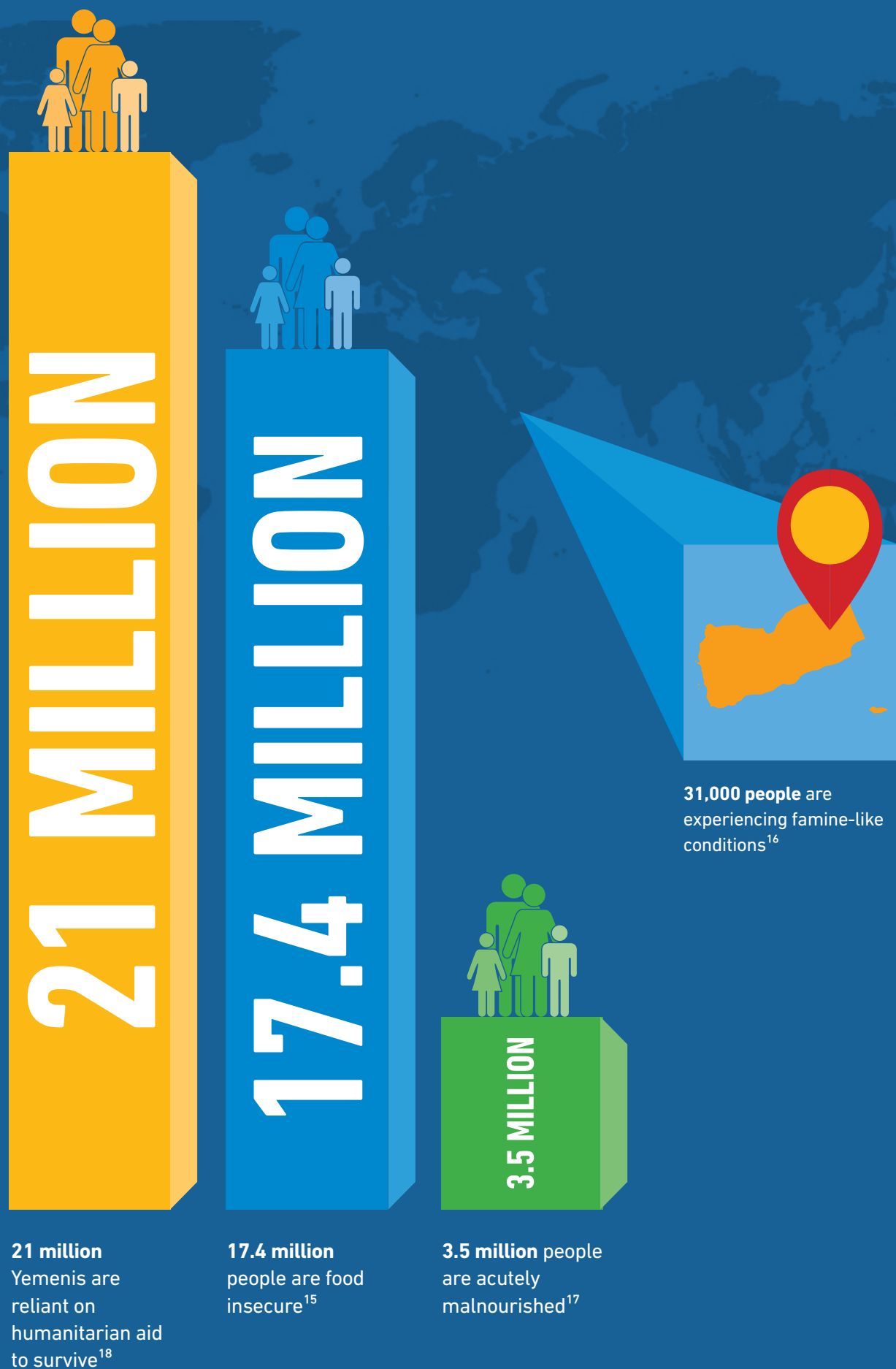


The humanitarian situation in Yemen is one of the world's worst. Seven years of conflict have resulted in dire economic shocks and food insecurity. Acute hunger and malnutrition remain widespread in Yemen, particularly in the north of the country. People fleeing ongoing violence are also suffering as hostilities continue along existing frontlines in densely populated areas in Marib and Al Bayda governorates, along with Hajjah, Al-Hodeidah, Ad Dali' and adjacent areas than half of the population faces food shortages and one in every six people is now on the verge of a catastrophic famine. Fifty-four per cent of the population has inadequate food, with some areas living in famine-like conditions¹¹ Over half of the population is facing crisis-levels of acute food insecurity, with 5 million people facing Emergency IPC Phase 4. ¹² The country's economy is collapsing, and people cannot access their money, plunging them even deeper into poverty.

Yemen continues to have one of the world's highest malnutrition rates among women and children, with 1.2 million pregnant or breastfeeding women and 2.3 million children under the age of five requiring treatment for acute malnutrition¹³. In Magjrabah, a remote district in Hajja governorate in northern Yemen, people have resorted to eating leaves to survive¹⁴. With the economy in perpetual decline and close to collapse, the cost of the essential food basket has risen significantly, affecting food consumption, and pushing people to work more days to meet the minimum cost of food. "We depend solely on the support of charitable organisations in order to feed our families," says 65-year-old Ali from Maghreb, who is one of millions of Yemenis facing dire living conditions since an escalation in the conflict in 2015.



3.2.1 Devastating impact in numbers



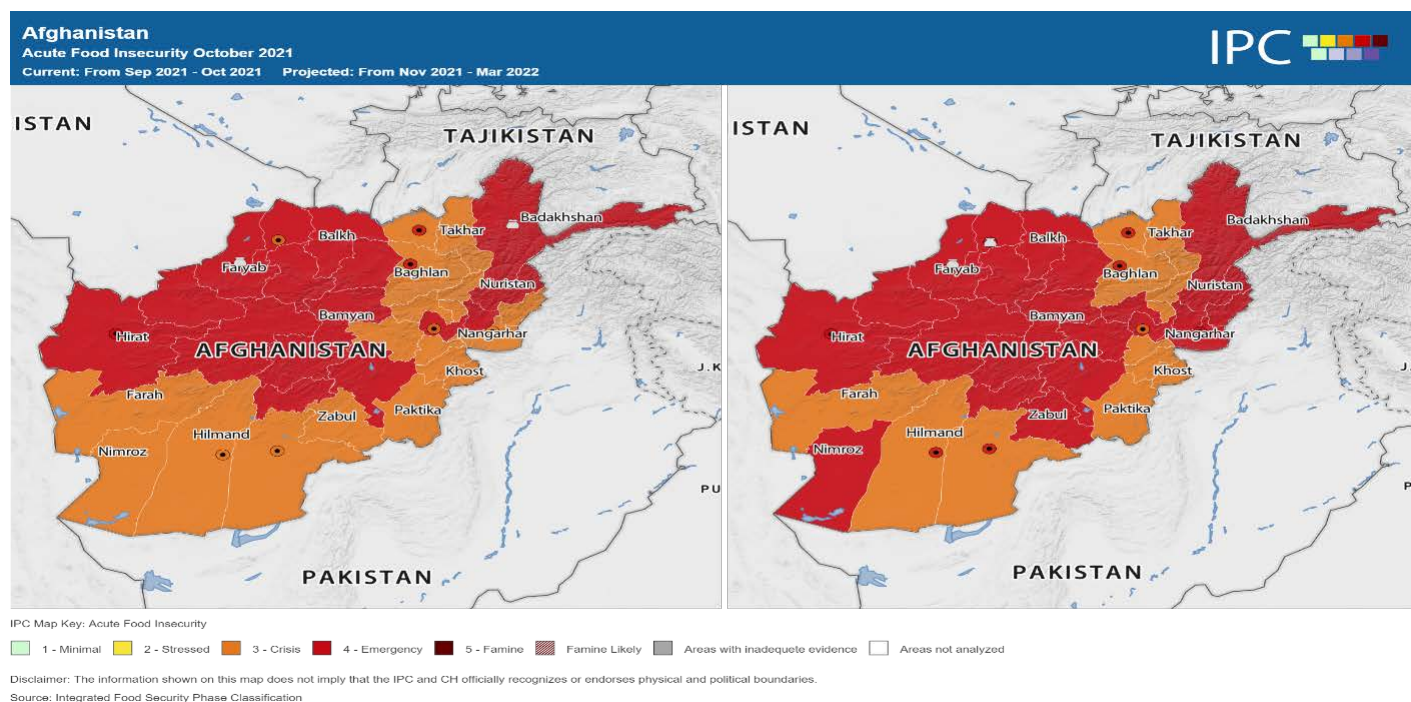
3.2.2 Helping families cope with the crisis



During Ramadan 2021, Islamic Relief supported 161,015 people experiencing acute food crisis in Yemen. Of those supported 36,008 were women, 33,647 were men and 24,162 were people living with disabilities. We distributed 21,334 food packs, each containing 25kg wheat flour, 5l vegetable oil, 10kg rice, 10kg sugar, 4.5kg white grain, 2.7kg dates, 2.4kg pasta, 0.9kg tomato sauce, and 0.5kg salt. We also provided qurbani meat so families could celebrate Eid al-Adha, and essential items such as fuel to help families cope during the harsh winter months. We continue to provide support through cash transfers, cash-for-work opportunities in which young people are paid to carry out projects that benefit the community such as clearing roads, and vocational training to help young people gain the skills to find paid work.

- Over 2 million people rely on regular food aid distributed by Islamic Relief.
- More than 5,000 children in Yemen have been supported by our orphan sponsorship programme.
- Islamic Relief supports 151 health and nutrition centres across Yemen, helping them to treat malnourished children and mothers in some of the most remote rural parts of the country.
- More than 150,000 people were provided with support through cash transfers and cash-for-work opportunities as of 2021.

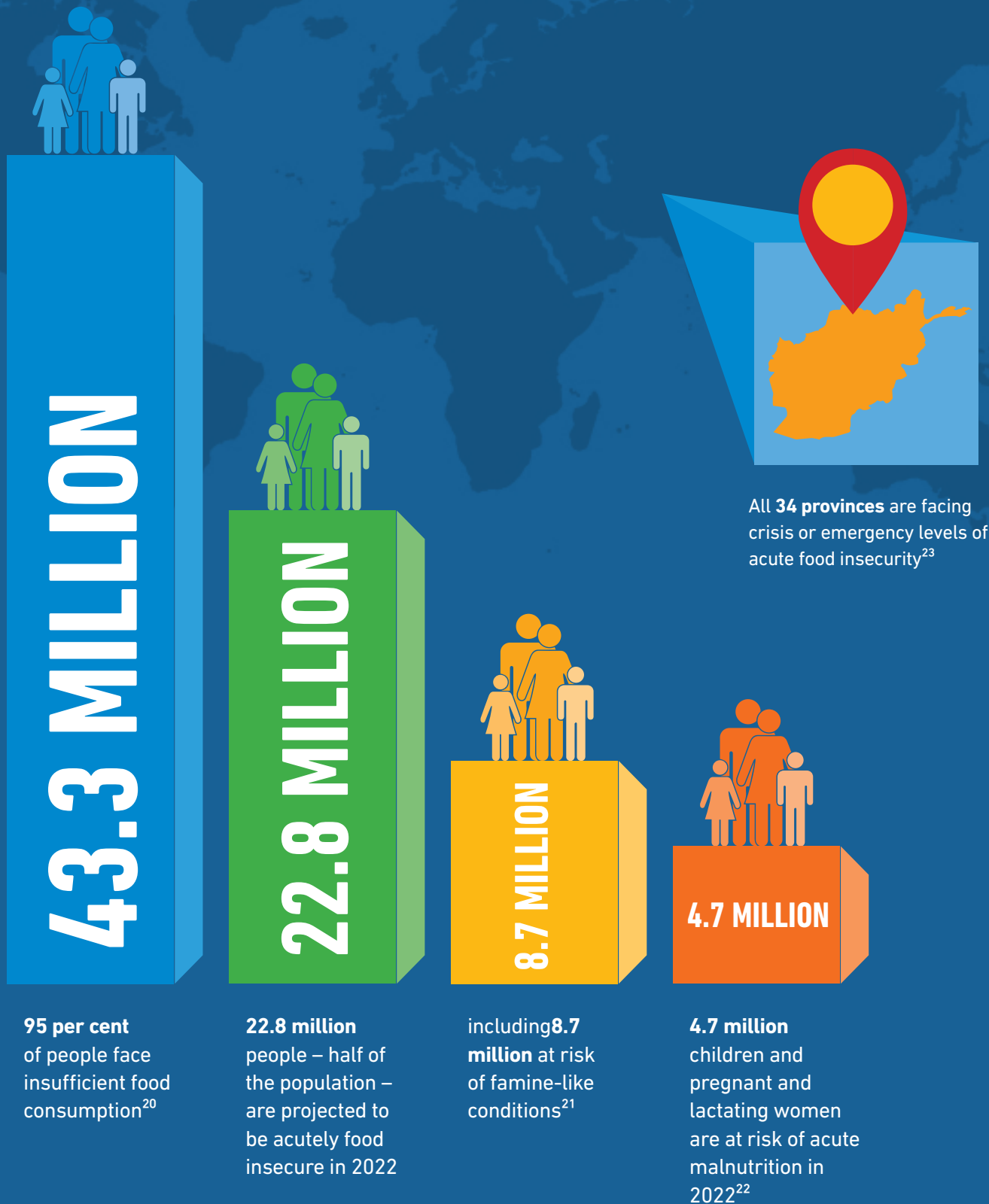
3.3 Afghanistan



Afghanistan has been wracked by decades of conflict, and is currently grappling with economic collapse, political turmoil, and the worst drought in 30 years. Twenty-three million people - more than half the population - are now facing hunger every day, and around 9 million people are just one step away from famine, which puts their lives at risk. The number of malnourished children is increasing every day. Families are running out of food and are so desperate that mothers are selling some of their children to buy food for the others. Currently, our teams are observing a rise in early child marriage and child labour, with children as young as five being sent out to work for more than 12 hours a day to earn just \$1-2 so their family can buy a meal. Areas where food consumption is already the worst, such as the Central Highlands and the North, have deteriorated further. There has also been a significant increase in food insecurity in the Kabul, North, and West regions¹⁹.



3.3.1 DEVASTATING IMPACT IN NUMBERS



3.3.2 Helping families cope with the crisis

Over the past 18 years, Islamic Relief has provided emergency relief and implemented life-changing development projects for some of Afghanistan's most vulnerable communities. Islamic Relief opened its Afghanistan field office in 1999. Today, there are almost 250 staff – nearly half of whom are women – working in the country, and 35 projects spread throughout. We have been involved in a variety of sectors, including sustainable livelihoods, education, health, child protection, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and emergency response.

In November 2021, our emergency response team delivered life-saving food packages, blankets and winter clothes, and supported longer-term livelihoods by distributing goats and sheep, providing seeds and agricultural training for farmers, and fodder for livestock. Additionally, we are running 10 mobile health units, which provide the only medical and healthcare services available to many people in remote rural areas.

- In partnership with UNDP Islamic Relief has received £22 million to support food security response in 2022. This money will provide people with cash, repair irrigation systems to boost agriculture, help local markets and support women-led small businesses.
- In 2021 alone, our work in Afghanistan supported almost half a million - 484,777 - women, men and children.
- That year, we reached almost 285,000 people directly through our interventions including in the areas of food, WASH, nutrition and healthcare, orphan and child welfare, survival items and livelihoods.
- During Ramadan 2021, Islamic Relief supported 40,702 people experiencing acute food crisis in Afghanistan. Of those supported 14,059 were women, 13,712 were men and 878 were people living with disabilities. We distributed 5,940 food packs, each containing 30kg wheat flour, 5L cooking oil, 5kg rice, 5kg beans, and 1kg salt. We are continuing to support the most vulnerable people through emergency food distribution.

- Since the start of the humanitarian crisis in August 2021, Islamic Relief has distributed a total of 21,350 food packs in Kabul, Herat, Balkh, Bamyan, Kapisa and Nangarhar provinces.
- In February 2022, Islamic Relief distributed 7,472 food packages, 1,700 hygiene kits and 650 goats.
- 27,020 patients have been provided with health treatment by 10 health mobile teams in Nangarhar and Balkh provinces and 1,300 families have received livelihoods assistance.
- In March 2022, Islamic Relief distributed a further 19,380 food packs (including Ramadan food packs), 2,450 hygiene kits, 4,750 NFI and water storage kits, 1,000 new-born baby kits, 2,000 packs of recreational items, cash distribution to 1,500 referral patients and 10,000 Covid-19 infection prevention kits. 10,000 patients received health treatment and 889 goats distributed to vulnerable households.



Section 4: EFFECTS OF THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION ON FOOD INSECURITY

4.1 Humanitarian access issues: Hindering food delivery

Access issues are one of the main drivers that hinder humanitarian response, including delivering food assistance. Humanitarian access continues to be limited in numerous conflict situations, preventing affected populations from receiving adequate assistance. People are dying needlessly while the aid they need waits in convoys. Some areas are difficult to access due to the presence of roadblocks or other movement restrictions. Bureaucratic and administrative impediments rivals - including complicated and opaque processes surrounding NGO registration - imposed by host authorities and their, projects stuck in ministries for months awaiting approval, visas and movement-related permissions, are just some of the obstacles that can significantly hamper humanitarian assistance. The movement restrictions of those with limited mobility are of particular concern since they are unable to reach distribution points for food or assistance. The limited mobility of both people and goods impacts access to hospitals and other basic services in areas in which these can be few and far between. It is also deeply concerning that reliable and comprehensive data on the food security of people in certain regions is not available due to access restrictions.

In **Ethiopia**, since November 2020, access has been unpredictable, especially within Tigray, where movement has been severely restricted. Humanitarian responders have had to constantly change their plans in the operational environment. Telecommunications, electricity and banking services have been shut off in the region, and access is severely restricted for aid workers, seriously hindering humanitarian response and exacerbating the crisis. In 2022, Islamic Relief resumed its work in Afar, especially development assistance projects, after a short period of suspension due to security challenges in 2021.

The severe access restrictions in Yemen driven by government authorities indicate significant distrust of NGOs. Movement complications exist mainly between Aden and Sana'a where an entry/exit visa is required. Vulnerable people are struggling to access assistance including reaching food distribution points. More vulnerable people will suffer and even die from preventable and treatable medical conditions without sufficient access to care. Households are running out

of food, and children are increasingly malnourished, putting them at risk of developing other severe health problems.

Across **Afghanistan**, humanitarian services are hindered by poor infrastructure. Humanitarian access is still considered possible if the government's instructions are adhered to. However, the collapse of the country's banking system in August 2021 means access to cash remains one of the major challenges humanitarian agencies face. The humanitarian crisis in the country has been exacerbated by international sanctions and banking restrictions. A significant liquidity crisis has left people without pay or money to buy food, and made it more difficult for relief agencies to deliver essential aid. Many banks in Afghanistan are at risk of closure. Fund transfers into Afghanistan are another major issue. These factors have resulted in price instability in the markets. The prices of food and non-food items are exceeding families' budgets. It is clear that Afghan civilians are bearing the brunt of the crisis.

As pressure mounted on the United Nations Security Council to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, Resolution 2615 was adopted in December 2021, creating a humanitarian exception to the 1988 Taliban sanctions regime. The Council in this resolution clarified that humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan doesn't violate the asset freeze against listed individuals and entities associated with the Taliban. While this is very welcome, the impact will depend on how individual donor governments interpret and communicate this exception at the domestic level and whether the banking sector is sufficiently assured – assurances from the government are now increasingly important to banks to ensure that NGOs can transfer humanitarian funds into, and within, Afghanistan. These exceptions do not apply to shopkeepers, farmers, small businesses and other commercial activity that people's livelihoods and the country's economy depends on. As a humanitarian organisation, Islamic Relief's concern is with the devastating impact these sanctions and restrictions are having on the wider economy, and in pushing Afghan women, men and children deeper into hunger and destitution.

4.2 Girls disproportionately impacted by famine and food insecurity

In most cases, where food insecurity is concerned, there is an inherent issue of gender. The barriers faced by women and girls when accessing humanitarian assistance, including food response, can be immense. Yet, without an understanding of the gendered socioeconomic barriers women and girls face in different areas of their lives, including restrictions on their ability to physically access food resources, humanitarian assistance responses may be unable to overcome – or even inadvertently exacerbate – discrimination against women and girls, and limit the potential of projects to improve the lives of these individuals in a sustainable manner.

Most marginalised and vulnerable communities in developing nations are involved in agriculture. According to UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) data, almost half of agricultural workers in developing countries are women. Due to the patriarchal system that disadvantages women farmers in many ways, they are the most impacted by food insecurity. Moreover, their weaker bargaining position pushes women to adopt extreme strategies such as reducing their own consumption to feed their family, collecting wild food, migrating, and selling assets.

In **Ethiopia**, based on the public health review conducted by Ayenew Negesse and others in 2020, it was found that in times of food insecurity, female-headed households experienced twice as much hardship as male-headed households. Labour market discrimination confines women to informal and casual employment and wage inequity is pervasive. Furthermore, female heads of household typically spend a greater share of their family's budget on food than male household heads. Food insecurity would increase significantly if gender discrimination for household heads is not addressed and solved. Therefore, the Ethiopian government needs to consider how cultural and social restrictions affect women's involvement in all aspects of household life²⁴. It is crucial to promote women's participation in the labour market and to change social policies that affected women and girls negatively throughout food security project cycles.

Vulnerabilities intersect when pre-existing gender inequalities are exacerbated by climate change. Climate shocks have impacted gender dynamics in the Horn of Africa, where gender inequality was already very high. Loss of livestock and food shortages due to drought has resulted in men being unable to provide income for their families, leading to conflict and tension in households and domestic violence.

In Yemen, women, particularly mothers, are more vulnerable to the hardships of war – and to hunger. They sacrifice food in order to ensure that their children have enough to eat,

putting themselves at risk of malnutrition in the process. Early marriage rates in Yemen are increasing, with families who can no longer cover their children's needs forced to consider marrying off their young daughters. Although early marriage is a common practice in Yemen, the number of cases is increasing due to current circumstances, including food insecurity. According to UNICEF report 2021, the rates of child marriage were highest among displaced populations, with one in five displaced girls aged 10 to 19 being married, compared to one in eight girls living in their host community. Early marriage threatens the lives, it can have serious health consequences for girls and their children. One in 10 girls who becomes pregnant before the age of 18 loses their child during childbirth²⁵. An estimated 6.1 million women in Yemen are in acute need of protection and access to basic services including food assistance. With a crumbling health system, there are severe shortages of maternal and child health services. Some 1.7 million pregnant and breastfeeding women have limited or no access to reproductive health services. Acute malnutrition affected more than 2.25 million children in 2021, as well as more than 1 million pregnant and breastfeeding women²⁶. Women and girls suffer disproportionately from the humanitarian crisis, and the levels of need they face are increasingly alarming.

In **Afghanistan**, the future for many women remains precarious. Afghanistan's women and girls are facing increasing difficulties, discrimination, and restrictions in all parts of life. They have had their rights stripped away, including access to education, control over their finances, and political participation. According to the Care report 2021, there was an alarming finding that women and girls reported having a less balanced diet than men, and that they consumed less dairy and meat. Furthermore, GBV has also increased since a drought began in early 2021 – especially instances of violence against intimate partners and child, early, and forced marriages²⁷. The majority of aid distributions were collected by men due to the cultural and social restrictions on women. The greatest barriers women face in accessing assistance are their limited freedom of movement (which restricts their ability to access distribution points), the lack of female humanitarian staff, and the lack of prioritisation of the needs of women. Restricting female aid workers increases the likelihood of many families, particularly female-headed households, facing starvation. As poverty increases, combined with drought conditions, we are seeing increased reports of child marriage, with teenage girls being married off and girls as young as six months old being sold off for future marriage in return for an immediate dowry. Such cases are likely to increase as the economic crisis deteriorates even further and people become increasingly desperate.

4.3 Extreme weather conditions resulting from climate change

While climate change is one of the main drivers of food insecurity worldwide, it is essential to shed some light on how it directly affects food insecurity in Ethiopia, Yemen and Afghanistan. According to the UN Environment Programme, climate change adaptation costs in developing countries are expected to reach between \$140bn and \$300bn by 2030 – much of which is attributed to agriculture. Farmers have already begun to migrate as temperatures rise, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Marginalised communities are likely to suffer the most as food and water become more scarce, health risks increase, and lives and livelihoods are put at risk. In Ethiopia, the food security situation has deteriorated rapidly. Prolonged drought and other hazards such as epidemics, floods, and conflict have led to poor harvests and livestock conditions. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change IPCC report from 2021, the land surface is much hotter than usual in the region. Vegetation conditions and water levels decreased rapidly in mid and late 2021. Crop and livestock production has also declined, affecting food availability and access. Eighty per cent of the population depends on rain-fed agriculture for their food and income²⁸. In a December 2021 FAO assessment, it was found that about 172 000 animals had starved to death and another 2 million were in poor health as a result of fodder shortages and drought.

Forecasts indicated that a La Niña-like climate was near peak strength early 2022 and continue in May 2022, and ICPAC's most recent weather assessment anticipates dry conditions in May 2022. Even if March–May rains were regular, the Horn of Africa area will still experience long-term rainfall deficits. Forecasts are in favour of a proper warm phase El Niño developing in the second half of 2022. Communities

have built up coping mechanisms to deal with one to two seasons of poor rains, but four seasons is unprecedented. This is eroding coping mechanisms for those with fragile livelihoods reliant on livestock, as a worsening food crisis and lack of water are causing livestock to die at an alarming rate. The numbers reported as of January 2022 have greatly exceeded the estimates from 2021. Approximately 6.8 million people are currently affected by the drought in Ethiopia. Afghanistan has experienced periodic droughts over the past 30 years, but none had occurred at the same time as a global pandemic until now. More than 80 per cent of the country has been affected by the dry weather and in many areas livestock and crops have been destroyed by as much as 40 per cent. Food security has further deteriorated, with streets full of crowds of people selling anything they have of value. Others are going into debt just to buy basic supplies. Many more people are barely scraping by day-to-day – the World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that only two per cent of Afghans have enough to eat. As a result of the significant increase in food prices, the availability of food has been seriously compromised as has people's ability to purchase it²⁹.

Meanwhile, in Yemen, the political blockade is having a knock-on effect on the environment. With fuel scarce, Yemen's forests are fast becoming a casualty of war. Deforestation practices are followed unwittingly, putting the lives of humans and animals at risk, and diminishing any hope of sustainable long-term livelihoods for those reliant on agriculture for income. More than 889,000 trees are felled annually to fuel bakeries and restaurants in the capital, Sana'a, alone and both people and cattle are at risk of dying due to a lack of fodder and water.

Section 5: CONCLUSION



The food security crisis has reached unprecedented levels and it is likely to get worse, affecting millions of vulnerable people, many of whom are already facing severe humanitarian crises. In Ethiopia, the food crisis is largely fuelled by the conflict in Tigray, Afar and Amhara as well as the ongoing drought in the Horn of Africa which is likely to become the worst drought the region has seen in four decades, affecting over 20 million people.

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to present challenges for global food security. The socio-economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic severely impacts people's livelihoods and their ability to access and afford nutritious food. Humanitarian access barriers are also adding to the already worsening crisis in some areas.

Market shocks, caused by ongoing global crises such as the war in Ukraine, are also adding to the food crisis, causing dramatic increases in the price of fuel and food, as well as supply and logistical disruptions. This will have a huge impact on countries like Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Yemen, which rely on wheat exports from Ukraine, and will also suffer the effects of the high fuel prices. However, the subsequent food and fuel price increases will have the biggest impact on vulnerable populations that are already struggling to meet their daily nutritional intakes. However, the subsequent food and fuel price increases will have the biggest impact on vulnerable populations that are already struggling to meet their daily nutritional intakes.

This spike in the food crisis is already creating new vulnerabilities and negative coping strategies such as early child marriage, GBV and child labour as families struggle to put food on the table. These protection issues for women and children are adding to the already mounting and complex humanitarian needs. In Yemen, up to 19 million people (mostly women and children) will need food assistance by December 2022.³⁰ Similarly in Afghanistan, more than half the population (55 per cent) are facing acute food insecurity, including nearly 9 million people at emergency levels—one step before famine conditions. Food insecurity is likely to deepen as Afghanistan faces shortages of food, rapidly rising food prices and an ongoing drought.

Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Yemen are facing deteriorating food security crises, with millions of people on the brink of famine. Urgent action is needed to avert further escalation and save lives.

Section 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Donors should guarantee long-term flexible funding to tackle worsening food insecurity by:

- Providing multi-year funding to better enable humanitarian and development agencies to address the root causes of food insecurity through a more strategic and long-term approach
- Supporting stronger linkages between early warning systems and early action, including prevention and the early release of funds based on early warning and pre-defined indicators
- Renewing commitments to medium and long-term initiatives to prevent the collapse of local agri-food systems and to protect fragile livelihoods in the context of resilience-building humanitarian assistance
- Adhering to their commitments under the Grand Bargain and allocating a greater proportion of funding to local and national humanitarian actors, in line with commitments to promote and support localisation.

6.2 Donors, governments and civil society organisations should address the impacts of climate change on food systems and invest in long-term adaptation measures by:

- Investing in forecasts tailored to meet information flows in existing drought early warning systems that integrate systematic approaches to trigger draught mitigation actions
- Increasing adaptation financing for countries with climate vulnerable food systems
- Increasing investments in adaptation measures that help reduce the negative impacts of climate change on the food systems
- Supporting and developing climate smart food systems by cutting greenhouse gas emissions and building resilience thorough integrated systems and practices.

6.3 Donors, governments and civil society organisations should recognise and address the gendered impacts of food insecurity by:

- Addressing structural challenges that inhibit women's equitable access to and control of natural resources, those relevant for agricultural outputs
- Ensuring that the rights of persons living with disabilities - such as equal access to services, information, and protection in situations of risk - are respected, protected, and fulfilled, and that key principles, such as non-discrimination and inclusion, are maintained
- Engaging local communities, farmers' associations, rural women's organisations and other civil society groups in the design of policies and programme interventions on food security
- Sustaining and scaling up support for women's economic empowerment in agriculture.

6.4 Governments should provide full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access by:

- Adhering to international humanitarian law and ensuring that humanitarian aid can be delivered safely, impartially and without obstruction, to all people in need
- Allowing humanitarian agencies to operate safely in all geographical areas, and with all communities, based on need and in accordance with humanitarian principles.
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