

Inputs from The World Food Programme to the 2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

(a) Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the SDGs and targets, including policy implications of their synergies and trade-offs,

In 2023, the hunger and malnutrition crisis continue to be driven by various converging factors. The proliferation of armed conflicts, insecurity, and civil unrest is greatly undermining food and nutrition security, destabilizing global markets and supply chains, while driving forced displacement and humanitarian needs around the world to

historic levels. Climate shocks and disasters, including persistent droughts, floods, and intensifying weather events, are aggravating the devastating economic and financial fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. In both developing and developed nations, massive food price inflation has occurred, accompanied by a mounting global debt crisis and looming threats of global recession. With less fertilizer in 2023, there may be reduced harvests and, potentially, localized availability crises.

Estimates from countries with WFP operational presence and available data indicate that 345.2 million people will be food insecure in 2023¹.³ This is an increase of almost 200 million people since early 2020. In many countries, COVID-19 and the ripple effects of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine exacerbated pre-existing needs, pushing more people into food insecurity.

An estimated 43.3 million people across 51 countries (where data is available) are in Emergency or worse levels of acute food insecurity in 2023 (Integrated Phase Classification (IPC)/Cadre Harmonisé (CH) Phase 4+, including severely food insecure based on CARI).² They need urgent assistance to prevent them from falling into famine³ or famine-like conditions.

In 2023, at least 846,000 people are expected to experience Catastrophic Conditions (IPC/CH Phase 5). They are concentrated in 7 countries: Somalia, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Mali, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen. This is an increase of 74,000 people compared to 2022, where 772,000 were estimated to be in Catastrophic Conditions in 6 countries.⁴ The most recent IPC analysis from October 2022 for Afghanistan

¹ This February 2023 estimate is the seventh update of WFP's acute food insecurity estimates for the Global Operational Response Plan, which began in June 2020 and is covering 79 countries with WFP operational presence and data available. Included are countries: a) where WFP implemented unrestricted resource transfers in 2022, or b) with an active Country Strategic Plan (CSP) or Limited Emergency Operation (LEO) and acute food insecurity data available. The analysis covers displaced populations, and in countries where operations only cover displaced populations (and potentially host communities), only these populations have been included. This estimate is based on most recent assessment data and projections for 2022/23 (or latest available) from Integrated Phase Classification (IPC), Cadre Harmonisé (CH), WFP Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI), remote CARI (rCARI), comparable analyses or estimates. Expected peak-numbers for 2023 (or latest available) are used (see also the methods paper). Numbers reported by regional offices can differ from numbers presented here due to different objectives. The Regional Bureau in Nairobi uses most recent data instead of peak data for their seasonal updates, adds estimates for urban populations not covered by available assessments, and keeps estimates for the effects of the Ukraine war for countries where assessments do not cover the full population. The Regional Bureau in Panama tracks food security continuously and reports only values for the most vulnerable populations are (IPC/CH Phase 4+ / CARI/ rCARI severely food insecure). The Regional Bureau in Johannesburg shows totals which include additional countries.

² This includes 35.2 million people in Emergency or worse levels of acute food insecurity based on IPC/CH data in 41 countries, and 8.1 million severely food insecure people (based on CARI) in 10 countries.

³ Famines are rare and extreme events leading to intense human suffering, with lasting consequences for those affected. The projection of these conditions is an alarm bell that we are not doing enough. Even in the absence of famine, significant excess deaths can be expected.

⁴ Previous estimates in 2022 indicated 903,000 people in IPC/CH 5. The reduction to 772,000 is due to an update of the Jun-Dec 2022 projection, which

found no population in Catastrophic conditions (IPC Phase 5), however, vulnerability levels continue to be among the highest worldwide, as 12 provinces remain on the brink of famine in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency conditions).

The food crisis is also a malnutrition crisis. Even before the onset of the global food crisis, 45 percent of all children under five deaths were already related to malnutrition.⁵ However the current situation has led to an explosion in these already horrifically high rates. Globally, more than 30 million children in the 15 worst affected countries now suffer from acute malnutrition due to conflicts, climate shocks, impacts of COVID-19, and food price increases.⁶

In 2022, the world came together and rallied extraordinary resources to tackle the unprecedented global food crisis. But it is not sufficient to just keep people alive, we need to go further, and this can only be achieved by addressing the underlying causes of hunger

(b) Three key areas where transformative actions for accelerated progress have been successful, and three key areas where support is most urgently needed, with regard to the cluster of SDGs under review in July 2023.

Energy

- As the world's largest humanitarian organization working towards zero hunger, food is central to WFP's work. In emergencies, WFP is the first on the ground delivering food assistance to respond to crises caused by conflict, climate shocks, pandemics, and other disasters. At the same time, WFP promotes long-term change by working in partnership with national governments and communities.
- Most of the food that WFP provides through food assistance needs to be cooked before consumption. This is generally done with firewood and charcoal, with dramatic consequences on the environment (deforestation), socio-economic development (fuel collection time or purchasing cost), and public health (respiratory diseases).
- Not only is energy necessary to consume food, but it is also needed to improve the way food is produced, processed, and preserved. Accessing energy leads to improved livelihoods that support long-term resilience and self-reliance
- As the world looks to 'build back better' from the COVID-19 pandemic and get back on track on the SDGs, WFP is partnering with a wide range of partners to implementing market-based, sustainable energy approaches that strengthen **food assistance** and boost **resilience activities** that support local food value chains.
- Below are few key areas of transformative actions for accelerated progress:
 1. WFP promotes **clean and modern cooking** in school kitchens leveraging its presence in thousands of schools where it delivers school feeding programmes. Where solar electrification is possible, it

changed the peak estimate for 2022 from 161,000 people in IPC 5 to 31,000. While Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria were added to the list in 2023, Ethiopia has not been included in this count as no recent IPC information is available.

⁵ Black et al; Maternal and Child Nutrition Study Group. Maternal and child undernutrition and overweight in low-income and middle-income countries. Lancet. 2013 Aug 3;382(9890):427-451. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(13)60937-X. Epub 2013 Jun 6. Erratum in: Lancet. 2013. 2013 Aug 3;382(9890):396. PMID: 23746772

⁶ 2023 projections from WFP and UNICEF, cited in the joint UN Call to Action on child wasting in January 2023.

delivers additional benefits such as lighting, digital learning and refrigeration for fresh food and medicines. At the center of communities, schools act to showcase and diffuse innovation to surrounding areas. Beyond schools, promoting clean and modern cooking solutions, such as gas stoves, mini-gasifiers or electric pressure cookers, through WFP's cash-based transfer approach, ensures that poorest households are empowered to make choices that improve their food security and wellbeing. Also, by injecting cash into the local economy, this approach supports local retailers and energy service providers; it builds energy market systems creating the needed conditions for long term impact.

2. WFP builds the resilience and livelihoods of smallholder farmers through inclusive agricultural growth and the sustainable dissemination of **energy equipment and services to boost agricultural market development**, which in turn strengthens local food value chains.
3. **Energy access for productive uses** increases efficiency and crop yields through mechanization of land clearing, preparation and harvesting. Water pumps allow for irrigation but also oxygenation of fishponds and water distribution and lifting for hydroponic applications.
4. Renewable energy systems can also sustainably power **food processing** tasks, such as milling, saving time, and increasing the quality of the produce. Energy-powered preservation (e.g. drying, smoking and refrigerated storage) reduces **post-harvest food losses** increasing the availability of nutritious foods and enabling farmers to control the timing of crop sales.

Water

- **Water and food security are inextricably linked.** Water quantity, quality, and availability directly impact all four dimensions of food security (production, access, utilization and stability). Inadequate access to water also increases the burden of water collection, especially for women and girls, negatively affecting their health, education, and chances to improve livelihoods and food security in the future.
- **Water is a crucial element across the humanitarian/development/peace nexus.** First, with water-related disasters accounting for three quarters of all recent disasters, **a humanitarian response is triggered in most cases by drought or flood events.** Second, with an estimated 70% of the 345 million most food insecure people living in arid and semi-arid environments and water-stressed areas, **tackling the underlying causes of food insecurity and building resilience necessarily means addressing access to water** for domestic and productive uses. Third, water can be a **catalyst for tensions and conflicts** between state actors, farmers and pastoralists, refugees and host communities, upstream and downstream sections of a watershed and across communities.
- **The environmental and climate crises exacerbate food and water insecurity.** Land and ecosystem degradation is diminishing the capacity of soils and vegetation to retain moisture and store water underground. Climate change is increasing the frequency and magnitude of water-related hazards and accelerating land degradation, in a vicious circle. Against this background, **land and ecosystem restoration is a key activity addressing adaptation, water and food insecurity at the same time.**
- **WFP works in contexts where access to sanitation and water for domestic use is severely impaired** and improving availability and access to water is a fundamental aspect in the challenge to achieve

Zero Hunger, as stated in **WFP's Strategic Plan (2022-2025)**. The document also highlights the importance of partnerships when working on cross-cutting water-related issues.

- **WFP is in a unique position to respond to the increasing frequency of water-related emergencies and work to address some of the underlying causes of food insecurity while building resilience.** In 2021, 49 countries over 84 (58% of those with WFP's presence), across all Regional Bureaux, have implemented water-related activities.
- **In the fragile contexts where WFP operates, the appropriate management of land and water resources is the main limiting factor and it is essential to boost food and nutrition security, livelihood activities, and reduce hardships.** Through land rehabilitation interventions, WFP and its partners help literally “refill” water into the soil and the below aquifers and make it available for communities’ food security and nutrition purposes. Regenerating agricultural soils through management practices also increases moisture retention and irrigation potential.
- Below are few key areas of transformative actions for accelerated progress:
 1. **Asset creation and livelihoods activities through Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) represent the backbone of water-related programme activities carried out by WFP.** Assets creation and livelihoods interventions aim at increasing the natural resource base (soil and water availability) and improve the way such resources are managed. Asset creation interventions often rest at the core of an integrated package of activities, are context-specific, frequently implemented in collaboration with WFP Engineering team and always through robust participatory approaches with governments, UN and NGO partners, private sector and academia. In 2021, WFP's asset creation activities benefited 8.7 million people, primarily through soil and water conservation interventions.
 2. **Regarding the other activities in the water sector, School-Based Programmes and Nutrition** promote water management activities and trainings to maximise food security and nutrition outcomes and minimize hardships for children and vulnerable groups. On top of **responding to the increasing number of water-related disasters by providing emergency food and nutrition assistance**, WFP also sets up **Anticipatory Actions** systems to respond to slow and rapid onset disasters and avoid their worst consequences. It also establishes **insurance schemes** at macro-level (e.g., ARC Replica) and micro-level. In 2022, WFP provided financial protection against climate events to 3.8 million people.

(c) Examples of specific actions taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that also accelerate progress towards multiple SDG targets, including actions identified by your intergovernmental body, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving SDGs.

Clean Energy access

- In 2020, WFP enabled more than 1.6 million people to access sustainable energy services, promoting clean cooking solutions; providing households and schools with more efficient, less polluting appliances; and connecting smallholders to energy equipment and services that improve food production, processing and preservation
- In Chad, WFP has partnered with UNHCR to reach 12,000 beneficiaries in displacement settings (households and small businesses) with efficient cookstoves. The implementation approach is market-based, supporting the sustainable development of energy value chains, and enabling greater inclusivity through end-user vouchers.

- In 2020, WFP concluded a two-year project in Burundi and Sudan, in partnership with UNHCR and the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit, to support over 600,000 beneficiaries with access to efficient cooking technology in humanitarian and displacement settings.
- In urban Lesotho, WFP is demonstrating the application of electric pressure cookers in schools. This technology reduces the energy needed to cook school meals and the costs associated with access to fuel.
- In 2020, WFP promoted solar water pumping in Niger to drip-irrigate crops year-round in ten ecological farms and 53 community-based vegetable farms; in Senegal to support women's groups to grow vegetables; in Chad to lift underground water for small-scale vegetable gardening and reforestation projects; and in Nigeria as part of communal natural resource management activities that lead to improved household consumption, irrigation and livestock production.
- WFP has demonstrated solar drying technology in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, with 650 solar driers distributed.

Water resources management / Ecosystems restoration

- **An ODI research (2017) focusing on water management interventions** carried out through asset creation across three countries (**Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Kenya**) showed that participants **reported increased water availability, reduced runoff and soil erosion, and improved water management** as a result of WFP supported interventions. This has expanded production areas and **crop yields and improved livestock health and production. It also contributed to** a range of livelihood improvements, including **reduced hardships for women and girls for collecting water, improved hygiene and sanitation, new forms of income, reduced food gaps and better nutrition.**
- **In the Sahel Integrated Resilience programme**, which started in 2018, **increased water availability and water access**, fostered by land rehabilitation efforts, **has been crucial for communities to maintain or even improve their food security - despite recurrent shocks, and to avoid deterioration of food security during the lean season.** Up to 2023, asset creation activities across five Sahelian countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger) have contributed to rehabilitating 220,000 hectares of land, harvesting an estimated 2.4 billion m³ of runoff water, and recharging approximately 475 million m³ of groundwater.

(d) Assessment of the situation in the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and within the respective areas addressed by your intergovernmental body, and policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

(e) Key messages for inclusion into the Political Declaration of the September 2023 SDG Summit.

On Climate Change / Ecosystem degradation:

- Climate change acts as a risk multiplier, especially in parts of the world where conflict is imminent or already occurring. More recognition of and research into the complex links between climate hazards, conflict and food insecurity are called for.

- Anticipating climate hazards, engaging with anticipatory and early targeted action to dampen the negative impact on livelihoods and food security, and thus contributing towards averting escalation of conflict and hunger is essential.
- By embedding resilience in interventions, partners can lessen the effects of shocks and stressors, and thus more durably relieve human suffering.

On Water (SDG 6)

1. **Supporting integrated resilience building and ecosystems-based climate adaptation programmes** that can help restore degraded environments and replenish local productive potentials, key for soils, water resources, people and food systems.
2. **Promoting people and community-driven approaches to water.** Achieving Zero Hunger can only happen if communities, particularly women and vulnerable groups, can have a say in water access and management.
3. **Water-related interventions require a systemic, multi-sectoral approach to ensure meaningful outcomes**, following a series of principles: 1) **Working at the nexus**: addressing the root causes of emergencies while responding to them; 2) **Partnerships**: multiple and specialized partnerships are required given the multi-sectoral nature of water and the complex assessments and requirement; 3) **Context-based**: in-depth assessments carried out by WFP or other stakeholders are crucial; 4) **Placing people at the centre**: participatory, inclusive processes are required to assess water needs and requirements, solutions, and minimize conflict. 4) **Adequate intervention unit**: to ensure meaningful results in water management activities, the appropriate size of the area of intervention needs to be chosen. 5) **Layering and sequencing of interventions**: water management complexities require multiple activities to be clustered and sequenced to ensure meaningful and sustainable outcomes.
4. **Investing in medium- and longer-term solutions across the nexus while responding to emergencies, in close collaboration with partners through:**
 - ✓ **Land rehabilitation and increased water availability across landscapes for productive and ecosystem functions.**
 - ✓ **Increased community water resources availability and management** through water harvesting techniques, small-scale water storage, practices and technologies that increase soil moisture retention and the efficiency of water use.
 - ✓ Improved **communities' climate adaptation efforts** in natural resource management.
 - ✓ **Trainings and access to water for multiple purposes, including in schools, for nutrition outcomes** and to **reduce the burden of vulnerable segments of the population, particularly women and girls.**
 - ✓ **Boosting agricultural value chains across food systems** (decrease post-harvest losses, increase market access, etc.), especially for women and marginalized groups.
 - ✓ **Promoting climate analyses, forecasting, early response, anticipatory actions and risk management systems** against drought and flood events at national and local community levels.

On Energy (SDG 7)

- Energy is an engine of transformative socioeconomic opportunities that touches on every aspect of sustainable development and the ability to access energy is a fundamental enabler to achieving food security and zero hunger.
- A holistic approach to development recognizes interdependent economic, social, and environmental dimensions and the need for peace. While it is true that ‘building forward better’ from the COVID-19 pandemic shock is possible, in the absence of systemic change, business-as-usual economic growth driven by fossil fuels would continue to benefit those at the top, fuel conflict, and push economic activity beyond planetary boundaries.
- In developing countries, agricultural development on average has not yet matched the scale and natural resource intensity and carbon footprint of industrialized nations, providing an opportunity to adopt a just quantum leap towards sustainable agriculture and food systems driven by renewable energy. Achieving this would necessitate major investments to ensure progressive carbon decoupling from economic activity at large, including food systems, and preserving the biosphere.
- It is therefore essential to build the resilience and livelihoods of smallholder farmers through inclusive agricultural growth and local food value chains, supported by the sustainable value chains for **energy equipment and services**.
- Promoting **clean and modern cooking** in school kitchens, ensuring additional benefits, where solar electrification is possible, such as lighting, digital learning and refrigeration for fresh food and medicines is a game changer.
- It is also essential, beyond schools, to promote clean and modern cooking solutions, such as gas stoves, mini-gasifiers or electric pressure cookers in communities, through cash-based transfer approach, ensuring that poorest households are empowered to make choices that improve their food security and wellbeing, and that local retailers and energy service providers are supported to build energy market systems for long term impact.

On Water, Energy, Ecosystem and Food Security nexus

- With the world’s demand for natural resources becoming more pressing than ever before, operationalizing the **Water, Energy, Ecosystem and Food security nexus** approach is critical to secure the supply of these resources by strengthening synergies and reducing trade-offs among these sectors.

On Funding

- **Flexible Funds are required immediately and should be allocated in a most strategic way** to achieve these recommendations and prepare for an escalation in needs in 2023, leveraging **innovative approaches to maximize the efficiency and impact** of operations.