

World hunger is rising sharply: let's stop it NOW!

VOICE POLICY RESOLUTION 2023

The critical level of humanitarian needs created by the current worldwide food crisis is undeniable. While food crises are not new, the steady increase in their scale and intensity is alarming. Year after year, the levels of hunger surpass all previous records. The number of people at crisis levels of food insecurity or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) nearly doubled between 2016 and 2021 ([GRFC 2022](#)). In 2022, over 258 million people were acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance across 58 countries/territories ([GRFC 2023](#)). In 2023, 345.2 million people were projected to be food insecure ([WFP](#)). According to the latest reports, acute food insecurity is likely to deteriorate further in 18 hunger hotspots across 22 countries between June and November 2023. Burkina Faso, Haiti, Mali, Sudan have been upgraded to the highest alert level, joining Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen ([FAO/WFP](#)).

Conflict, the climate crisis, displacement, locust infestations, COVID-19, economic shocks, and the conflict in Ukraine have intensified this dangerous trend, impacting people's purchasing power, and their capacity to access, produce and distribute food. As ever, people living in the greatest poverty and vulnerability are most impacted. The likelihood of addressing food and nutrition insecurity and of achieving Zero Hunger by 2030 is slim. The gap between needs and available resources is the largest in six decades, and the impact of the unequal distribution of food worldwide is deepening. **The current global food system is not fit for purpose and must be transformed to be more inclusive, fair, and sustainable.**

VOICE members have long sounded the alarm about the hunger crisis, highlighting the interconnectedness of hunger, conflict, climate change, displacement and economic crises. Humanitarian NGOs continue to call on donors to break the global hunger paradigm ([VOICE Out Loud 34](#)). In seeking to drive change, NGOs have supported climate adaptation programmes to enhance communities' resilience through anticipatory action, disaster risk reduction, early response mechanisms, and worked collaboratively with other actors to promote multi-sectoral responses. As frontline responders, international, national, and local humanitarian NGOs, have gathered evidence on the gendered impacts of hunger crises - as women are disproportionately affected and eat last and least - its effects on displacement, and the risk of starvation being used as a weapon of war.

Multiple initiatives have been launched to address the global food crisis, but despite their focus on crisis prevention and longer-term issues related to agricultural and food systems, little real progress has been made to prevent and address hunger and famine. Early warnings are not consistently translated into early actions, and there is a lack of meaningful investment in building resilience. The steep rise of world hunger reflects this failure. We must act now to prevent further starvation.

VOICE RECOMMENDATIONS:

VOICE calls on the EU and its Member States (MS) to stop the steep rise of world hunger by:

- **Preventing, preparing for, and acting quickly to respond to food and nutrition insecurity**
 - Invest in scaling up and mainstreaming evidence-based anticipatory action
 - Regularly assess and report on progress in addressing the hunger funding gap
 - Use [COHAFA](#) as a crisis prevention platform to enhance timely food security responses
 - Ensure additional funding for major food crises in coordination with the [High-Level Task Force on Preventing Famine](#)
 - Facilitate humanitarian access and ensure the protection of humanitarian space

- **Ensuring multi-sectoral and inclusive approaches to address the global food crisis and transform the global food system**
 - Adopt more flexibility between financial tools and frameworks to foster coordinated responses
 - Support locally led and sustainable initiatives to address hunger, protect food and nutrition security, and build resilience
 - Enhance better coordination between COHAFA and the [Working Party on International Food and Agricultural Questions](#) to foster policy coherence to tackle food insecurity

Preventing, preparing for, and acting quickly to respond to food and nutrition insecurity

Despite commitments that famine would not happen in the 21st century, more than 900,000 people are fighting to survive in famine-like conditions ([WFP](#)). Famine can and must be prevented. To do so, there is a need to: invest in the scale up and mainstreaming evidence-based anticipatory action, ensure that early warnings trigger timely and coordinated responses, and guarantee that funding is available to support resilience-building programmes. In 2022, 65% of humanitarian appeals were less than 50% covered, and only 3% of hunger related programmes were fully funded ([ACF](#)). Several initiatives - including the EU Global Food Security Response and the G7 Famine Compact and Global Alliance on Food Security - have sought to address the hunger funding gap, strengthen early warning and real-time analysis, and support country-level multi-sectoral data collection and coordination. These initiatives must be supported, and annual reporting mechanisms should be designed to assess the progress made, especially in terms of funding. European platforms - such as the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid of the Council of the EU (COHAFA) - could be used as a crisis prevention platform among Member States (MS) by including an update on existing early warning systems in its monthly meeting. This new agenda item should foresee the participation of NGOs and foster reflections on how to provide timely and adequate food security responses. This would be key to ensuring that crises worldwide get the same attention, and highlighting neglected crises. As the climate emergency has direct impacts on food security and is a humanitarian emergency, examples of good practice - such as Germany's commitment to allocating at least 5% of its humanitarian funding to anticipatory action by 2023 - should be shared and scaled up. Humanitarian NGOs also call on the EU and MS to ensure additional funding for major food crises in coordination with the High-Level Task Force on Preventing Famine. This is of utmost importance for those countries/territories which face emergency or famine situations and require urgent emergency responses, humanitarian diplomacy, and in-depth reflections on the main drivers of nutrition insecurity. As conflict remains one of the main drivers of food insecurity, ensuring respect for International Humanitarian Law and securing access for affected populations to humanitarian aid remain crucial. The EU and MS should use all of their political and diplomatic efforts to implement [UNSC Resolution 2417](#), which condemns the use of starvation as a weapon of war or unlawful denial of humanitarian access to civilians in need of aid. In line with [UNSC Resolution 2664](#), they should also enhance the protection of humanitarian space by adopting a standing humanitarian exemption to all EU autonomous sanctions regimes.

Ensuring multi-sectoral and inclusive approaches to address the global food crisis and transform the global food system

A recent report from [UNICEF](#) states that, in Somalia alone, an estimated 43,000 people died due to the drought in 2022, and that children under the age of five might represent half of these deaths. The eruption of the conflict in Sudan is expected to plunge millions more into hunger and exacerbate a dire humanitarian situation, with approximately one-third of the population of Sudan already facing hunger ([WFP](#)). Humanitarian crises are becoming more complex, recurrent, and protracted. Humanitarian aid alone cannot be the solution. Coordinated efforts across sectors are more important than ever. These include life-saving humanitarian response, climate, nutrition, gender, and health, as well as multi-sectoral and inclusive responses to early warnings, and deeper commitments to a resilience approach. Despite initiatives aimed at enhancing the nexus approach between humanitarian and development actors, silos still exist for many of those addressing food insecurity. To address this, the EU and MS must allow for more flexibility and fungibility between financial tools, policies, and frameworks to allow the nexus approach to be realised. Some MS, such as Denmark with its strategic partnership agreement, could lead by example and share good practice on how to enable policy environments for the nexus approach. Flexible, predictable, multi-year funding is key to ensuring greater support for local responders, including women-led organisations as they can respond rapidly to the needs of women and girls at times of crisis ([VOICE Out Loud 35](#)). Supporting and financing locally led and sustainable initiatives is crucial in addressing hunger, protecting food security, and transforming the global food system, causing rising inequality among others. This is also key to strengthening local markets and reducing their exposure to risks linked to global shocks. Promoting better coordination between COHAFA and the Working Party on International Food and Agricultural Questions, which seeks to address policy issues related to FAO's mandate and activities, could be another way to tackle food insecurity.

Specific actions are urgently required to stop the steep rise of world hunger. Strong political will is needed now to strengthen the overall humanitarian system - from prevention to response - to address the food crisis worldwide and to transform the current global food system.

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