

WFP DED Carl Skau: Remarks for NY noon media briefing

Sudan

- The potential for a regional crisis borne out of the situation inside Sudan is already happening. This is a catastrophe of monumental scale and we have only a small window to ensure that this does not become a forgotten or ignored crisis.
- In Khartoum and the Darfurs we have a full-scale humanitarian disaster unfolding in which populations are largely cut off from assistance and there has been a complete breakdown of services.
- The circumstances under which we are scaling up could not be more complicated. Despite that, together with partners, we are doing everything and anything in our power to reach vulnerable people.
- Yesterday an inter-agency mission carried out a humanitarian assessment to Darfur, crossing from Adre in Chad and travelling to El Geneina in West Darfur. This is the first time that we have been able to reach El Geneina since the start of the conflict in April.
- The team passed through towns and villages that are almost totally abandoned following a mass exodus of people. Most infrastructure from health facilities to banks have been destroyed.
- Those that remain are mostly women and their children who are acutely vulnerable and have not fled because they are too scared. Their husbands have been killed, injured or are missing.
- These families are barely surviving. Most are eating just one meal, sharing what food they have between neighbours and selling what they have to buy food. Some markets are beginning to reopen with limited food coming in from Chad.
- Our teams spoke to the communities about providing emergency food assistance. We aim to start cross border deliveries of emergency assistance as soon as possible.

BSI

The collapse of the Black Sea Initiative is regrettable, to say the least.

- Under the Initiative, WFP has shipped more than 725,000 tons of grain relieving hunger in some of the hardest hit corners of the world, including Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa and Yemen.
- WFP relied on Ukraine, a competitively priced, accessible, and high-quality source of wheat. Despite the war and thanks to the accord, Ukraine remained WFP's biggest

supplier of wheat in 2022, supplying more than half of WFP's wheat grain. Losing this source is concerning.

Conflict and Hunger

- The largest food and nutrition crisis in history persists. This year, 345 million people continue to be acutely food insecure, while hundreds of millions of people are at risk of worsening hunger.
- The causes of this food crisis are manifold: conflict and insecurity, climate change and unrelenting disasters, with added pressure from persistent food price inflation and mounting debt stress amid an expected slowdown of the global economy.
- Conflict is a primary driver of acute hunger around the world.
- The impacts of armed conflicts on food security can be direct, such as displacement from land, looting, or destruction of food stocks and agricultural assets. Indirect impacts can include the disruption of food systems and markets, and decreased access to supplies necessary for food preparation such as fuel and water.
- Many of the countries where WFP works are dramatic examples of the link between conflict and hunger. Conflict or its impact continues to be a key driver of acute hunger in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali, Nigeria, the Sahel, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.
- Unfortunately, these are countries with large numbers of people in need and, tragically, it's where critical shortfalls in humanitarian funding is forcing WFP and other humanitarian partners to reduce or cut assistance and, in our case, to make impossible trade-offs to prioritise assistance.

Funding Crunch

- In fact, WFP is in the midst of a crippling funding crisis that is forcing us to scale back life-saving assistance right as acute hunger hits record levels.
- At least 38 of 86 WFP country operations have already cut - or plan to soon cut - the size and scope of life-saving food, cash and nutrition assistance programmes. That is almost half of WFP operations worldwide.

Let me give a few examples:

- Afghanistan -- in March, WFP was forced to cut rations from 75 to 50 percent for communities facing emergency levels of hunger (IPC4). In May, WFP was forced to make a 66% cut (8 million people) to its caseload and now assists 5 million people. WFP will stop food distributions all together in the coming months unless more funding is received.
- Syria -- WFP cut assistance in July for 2.5 million of the 5.5 million people who rely on the agency for their basic food needs. These 5.5 million were already on 50% rations.

- Palestine -- in June WFP cut its caseload in the country by 60% - or 200,000 people. In May, WFP had already cut the value of its cash assistance by around 20 percent. Without further funding, the operation will come to a complete halt in November.
- In Yemen, WFP's food assistance and the continued support of donors has kept famine at bay for years. Now, WFP is facing huge funding gaps. We will be forced to scale down our work as early as next month – with cuts for 7 million people across the country.
- West Africa -- Most of the countries in the region are facing extensive ration cuts, particularly the seven larger crisis operations (Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, CAR, Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon) where acute hunger is on the rise. Shortfalls are already impacting WFP's ability to provide assistance during the lean season.
- Less funding means WFP is forced to stop assisting people who are 'only' in the hunger category known as 'crisis level'. This is so that we can save those who are literally starving (those in the catastrophic hunger category).
- But what then happens is that those people who were in crisis rapidly drop into the Emergency (IPC4) and Catastrophic (IPC5) categories. And so, we have another humanitarian emergency on our hands.
- We are entering a humanitarian doom loop where we save people who are starving, at the cost of allowing millions of others to fall closer to that same category. Ration cuts are not the way to go.

At this challenging time for millions of people our message is that world leaders must act to prioritize funding for humanitarian response, enhance coordination among aid organizations and governments, and invest in long-term solutions that address the root causes of crises, such as conflict resolution, poverty reduction, and sustainable development.

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