



This woman arrived in Nyal, in Panyijar County, South Sudan, to register for a food distribution. Emergency hunger levels have been declared in the county. *Bruno Bierrenbach Feder/Oxfam*

# ON THE BRINK

As famine looms, world leaders must pay up and deliver political solutions to save lives

**As famine takes hold in South Sudan and threatens to spread to northeastern Nigeria, Somalia, and Yemen, world leaders must immediately step up to fully fund the United Nations' appeal for \$6.3 billion. Of this amount, \$4.9 billion is urgently needed by July for critical assistance, including health, food, nutrition, and water. If lives are to be saved, humanitarian agencies must be able to rapidly scale up and access people in need. World leaders must not walk away from key meetings, such as the Group of Seven Taormina Summit in Italy and the Group of Twenty Hamburg Summit in Germany, without taking action to increase funding, improve access, resolve conflict and insecurity, and ensure that emergency relief is coupled with long-term approaches to building resilience in affected countries.**

# 1 INTRODUCTION

As famine takes hold in South Sudan and looms in northeast Nigeria, Somalia, and Yemen, the international aid response so far has been inadequate to address the dire needs. Without urgent action, the crisis will worsen. The United Nations has issued an appeal for \$6.3 billion to address the crisis,<sup>1</sup> of which \$4.9 billion is needed by July.<sup>2</sup> To avert catastrophe, international donors must immediately step up to fully fund this appeal.

Oxfam is working with local partners across the affected countries to deliver food and provide families with cash to buy what they need from local markets. We are striving to ensure people have clean water for drinking, cooking, washing, and sanitation to fight waterborne diseases such as cholera. If lives are to be saved, Oxfam and other humanitarian agencies need much more funding to rapidly scale up their provision of immediate livelihood assistance and to deploy staff to provide increased protection services.

World leaders have a specific responsibility to address this crisis and to uphold their own commitments to address hunger and malnutrition. At their 2015 summit at Schloss Elmau, Germany, for example, the members of the Group of Seven (G7) committed to “lift 500 million people in developing countries out of hunger and malnutrition by 2030.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, all states have endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals, which commit to end hunger and ensure access for all people to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food all year round by 2030.<sup>4</sup>

The international community must uphold these commitments by immediately responding to humanitarian needs in the four countries, resolving the conflicts that have led to this crisis, and, in the long term, scaling up financial commitments to smallholder agriculture to build resilience and improve food security in countries across the globe.

Two upcoming summits offer opportunities for timely action to prevent famine. At the G7 summit on May 26–27 in Taormina, Italy, and the Group of Twenty (G20) summit on July 7–9 in Hamburg, Germany, world leaders must take steps to ensure that people have access to aid and to provide substantial new funding commitments to meet the United Nations appeal, followed by rapid disbursement of their fair share of the required amount across all four countries.

*“Famine does not arrive suddenly or unexpectedly. It comes after months of procrastination and ignored warnings. It is a slow, agonizing process, driven by callous national politics and international indifference.”*

Nigel Timmins, Oxfam  
International Humanitarian  
Director

*“We are hungry. We cook only once a day. In the next few days we are going to run out of food. I am really worried. My child here says he is hungry all the time. I try to give the children water and tea to calm them down.”*

Sahra Suleiman, Barbayaal  
Ciyou Settlement, Sanaag,  
Somaliland

**Oxfam calls for G7 and G20 members to:**

1. **Fully fund the UN appeal of \$6.3 billion, of which \$4.9 billion is urgently needed by July.** As of May 18, the \$6.3 billion needed for the four countries is only 30 percent funded.<sup>5</sup>
2. Apply **political pressure** to governments in the four countries to ensure that **people have immediate access** to the help they need to survive, and **remove all obstacles and constraints** by governments and armed actors on the delivery of food and other life-saving assistance.
3. Find **durable political solutions to resolving the conflicts and insecurity** perpetrated by armed actors and some governments.
4. Ensure that **emergency support is married with long-term, strategic, and flexible approaches** to build resilience and capacity.

## 2 COUNTRIES ON THE BRINK



In Somaliland, Nimo Mohamed, 40, had been suffering from diarrhea for a few weeks now and was carrying medicine with her. Her husband and other family members were sick in the hospital.  
*Petterik Wiggers/Oxfam*

In northeast Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen, severe food insecurity currently affects approximately 30 million people, of whom 10 million face emergency and famine conditions.<sup>6</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this is unthinkable and unacceptable, especially when the technology, knowledge, and resources exist to prevent famine and extreme hunger.

Famine and other levels of food insecurity have strict technical definitions based on indicators such as death rates, acute malnutrition, and gaps in availability and consumption of food. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)<sup>7</sup>—which consolidates analysis of food security situations to indicate how many resources should be allocated, to whom, and to how many people—uses these indicators to determine whether a given situation should be classified as a crisis level of food insecurity (IPC 3), an emergency level of food insecurity (IPC 4), or a famine (IPC 5). IPC 3 means a region is already in danger and requires immediate assistance.<sup>8</sup>

At its core, famine is a human-made catastrophe, often driven by conflict. It is brought about by the colossal failure of governments and the international community to organize and act quickly.

## NIGERIA

Eight years of conflict and insecurity in northeastern Nigeria, which have spread into Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, have pushed communities in the region into dangerous levels of food insecurity. Prolonged conflict means that millions have been displaced. People are eating less food, they no longer have incomes so they cannot buy food, and many people

*“We survive on keay [a tuber that grows with lilies] and water lilies; when we have a catch, then the diet is blended with fish. This is what makes us live to see the next day; we actually care less at the moment since what we want is to live. If it means eating sand to see the next day, so be it!”*

Rebecca, Thorbiel Island,  
South Sudan

have resorted to risky coping strategies to survive. Irregular supplies of food, clothing, medicine, and other essentials, and restrictions on movement for people living in camps and key towns under the control of the military, have compounded people's vulnerability to physical threats including rape and sexual exploitation. In an attempt to cut off Boko Haram from food supplies and revenue sources, the government has closed borders; declared farmland, rivers, and lakes that people rely on for farming and fishing off limits; and banned means of transport such as motorbikes. Civilians are paying too high a price for these military tactics.

Now, 4.7 million people are facing crisis, and in the areas most affected by conflict—Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states—people are experiencing an emergency level of food insecurity (IPC 4). Although famine has not yet been declared, about 44,000 people may be living in famine-like conditions. Without further interventions, these figures could rise between June and August 2017 to 5.2 million people experiencing an emergency level of food insecurity and about 50,000 people experiencing famine-like conditions.<sup>9</sup>

## SOMALIA

The failure of successive rains, as well as clan and sectoral conflict, has devastated Somalia. Ongoing insecurity due to a variety of non-state armed groups, including al-Shabaab, has severely hampered humanitarian efforts to respond to severe food insecurity and outbreaks of cholera.

Between now and June, approximately 2.5 million people are facing a crisis level (IPC 3) of hunger and 700,000 are facing an emergency level (IPC 4) of hunger.<sup>10</sup> Of the people facing emergency levels of food insecurity, 87 percent live in rural areas, where they are more difficult to reach.<sup>11</sup> Approximately 620,000 people have been internally displaced owing to drought since November 2016, and cholera outbreaks are rising, with 697 deaths recorded since the beginning of the year.<sup>12</sup> Without a massive and urgent increase in humanitarian assistance, famine could soon be a reality in some of the worst-affected areas.

*"We have moved four times in the last four months. We were trying to follow the rain—moving according to where the rains were supposed to come. But they haven't. If the rains don't come, none of us will survive."*

Farhia, a 25-year-old pastoralist living in Somaliland

## SOUTH SUDAN

The world's newest country descended into civil war after independence in 2011. The famine that was declared in February 2017 in Unity state (IPC 5) is linked to a situation that has deteriorated since war broke out in December 2013, with untold thousands killed, villages burnt to ashes, attacks on hospitals and churches, bodies dumped in rivers, sexual violence against women, and forced recruitment of men to fight. Repeated forced displacement is leading to suffering and hunger, even in places where food had been plentiful.

The number of people estimated to need humanitarian assistance increased from 3.8 million in January to almost 5 million for February to April.<sup>13</sup> Emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC 4) are expected in

Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Western Bahr el Ghazal, Unity, Upper Nile, Jonglei, and Central Equatoria—more than half of the country—throughout the lean season. The number of food-insecure people is on a scale that has not been witnessed before in South Sudan, and acute malnutrition remains a major public health emergency.

## YEMEN

Two years since the escalation of conflict in Yemen, the country's humanitarian crisis continues to deteriorate. Its economy has been shattered, food prices have skyrocketed, and more than 7 million people do not know where they will get their next meal. Airstrikes, shelling, and other attacks on civilian infrastructure, including the crucial Hodeidah port, have severely hampered Yemen's ability to import food and other essential supplies.

Seventeen million Yemenis—60 percent of the population—face crisis or emergency levels of hunger (IPC 3 or 4); this is a 20 percent increase since June 2016<sup>14</sup> and the largest hunger emergency in the world. The ongoing economic crisis, conflict, and further military operations may jeopardize food imports, potentially leading to famine.

*"My youngest son is sick. His body is weak. I went to the hospital, and they told me he was suffering from malnutrition. He's unstable and has to eat healthy food to recover. I'm afraid my little son will die, and I would blame myself because I couldn't buy enough food for him. I was even thinking of selling my kidney before I received some humanitarian aid."*

Yahya, a Yemeni father.

### Spillover Effects

The impact of this crisis is felt far beyond the four countries' borders; millions outside of these countries are suffering and require urgent help. This situation is also exacerbating the worldwide refugee crisis, in which 65 million people have been forced from their homes because of violence, conflict, and insecurity.<sup>15</sup>

- Conflict and hunger in South Sudan are causing people to flee to Uganda; 800,000 have already fled there, making Bidi Bidi the world's largest refugee camp.<sup>16</sup> This is causing huge strains on local services in Uganda, as well as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan.
- In Cameroon, Chad, and Niger—the Lake Chad region—millions more have been affected by the conflict that began in Nigeria.
- The drought in Somalia, likely exacerbated by climate change,<sup>17</sup> also seriously affects Ethiopia and Kenya, where 7.7 million<sup>18</sup> and 2.2 million<sup>19</sup> people respectively need assistance.

*"We haven't enough food, not enough money for food, for clothing, for when our children are sick. Some people are starving because of no food."*

Mohamed, a 60-year-old displaced man in Maiduguri, Nigeria

# 3 DELAYS COST LIVES

## DONORS MUST NOT WAIT FOR FAMINE DECLARATIONS

History shows that when donors fail to act on early warnings of potential famine, the consequence can be a large-scale, devastating loss of life. In 2011, the Somalia famine killed nearly 260,000 people, half of them children. Warnings began in 2010 but did not trigger sufficient early action, and a massive mobilization of the humanitarian community did not swing into action until after famine was declared.<sup>20</sup>

Now clear warnings have again been issued. In the current crisis across the four countries, people have already died from starvation as well as from diseases associated with malnutrition<sup>21</sup>—even in areas where famine has not yet been declared.<sup>22</sup> UNICEF has said that nearly 1.4 million children are at "imminent risk" of death.<sup>23</sup>

## HUMANITARIAN SCALE-UP IS NEEDED NOW

Any delay in decisions on funding or scaling up will have stark human costs. Scaling up operations, finding partners, recruiting staff, strengthening understanding of the context and markets, and building relationships with communities are essential, yet time-intensive, steps.

To scale up quickly, donors and UN agencies should provide direct funding to actors on the frontlines or closest to areas experiencing crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity—these are often local and national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). This approach would stand in stark contrast with the actions of the past decade, when the share of direct funding to local NGOs has been less than 2 percent.<sup>24</sup>

Without a clear humanitarian response and leadership, the situation is expected to deteriorate in all four countries, as conflict, insecurity, and in some cases drought continue to wreak havoc, especially on women and children.

## ACTING NOW CAN SAVE LIVES

The risk of famine is high in northeast Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen, and other areas of South Sudan, but it is **not yet inevitable** if we act now with a massive injection of aid, backed with international political and diplomatic pressure and cooperation. Humanitarian agencies are already

*"Local NGOs—and local people—are always the biggest pool of responders. They are always most effective and cost-effective."*

John Ging, Operations Director, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), remarks at InterAction Forum, June 2014

How does famine affect women and children?

- Women generally eat last and least, and their health is thus critically affected.
- Hunger threatens the health and development of children and thus the well-being of future generations.
- Women and children are vulnerable to physical and sexual violence as people congregate around water points.
- Women and girls take on heavier burdens, including trekking to increasingly remote locations to fetch water.
- Boys are at risk of recruitment into armed groups and girls are at risk of early child marriage in exchange for livestock.
- Famine prevents millions of children from going to school.

responding but will need to scale up responses in regions that are now facing crisis and emergency levels of hunger to prevent those regions from tipping into famine.

In some areas, aid groups are having trouble reaching the people in greatest need. Diplomats and political leaders from the G7 and G20 countries must press for physical access to those areas if we are to save lives and prevent famine.

## 4 CRUCIAL FUNDING AND ACCESS ARE NEEDED NOW



Fekri, 40, is the father of four children living in Al-Jalilah village, Al-Dhale governorate, in southwest Yemen. Without a sustainable income, he depends on whatever he can earn from working in the market from day to day. *Omar Algunaid/Oxfam*

Some donors have reacted early and generously, learning from past mistakes, but a wider range of donors, including some G7 and G20 members, must step up immediately to help meet vast and grave needs.

## FUNDING, NOT EMPTY PROMISES, IS NEEDED URGENTLY

Funding should be provided according to need and across all four countries. According to UN figures, as of May 18, only 30 percent of the \$6.3 billion needed has been received. Country by country, this means that Nigeria is only 21 percent funded; Somalia, 33 percent; South Sudan, 42 percent; and Yemen, 21 percent.<sup>25</sup>

In the face of preventable suffering, pain, and death, the wealthiest and most prosperous countries should do much more. This crisis cannot be viewed as acceptable or simply humanitarian business as usual in a world of plenty. The international community has the resources and skills to prevent people from suffering and dying—and it must do so. Anything less is inhumane.

Some governments have created false choices between helping people at home and helping the most vulnerable people around the world, even though foreign assistance represents a tiny fraction of G7 and G20

*“At home we used hands for our work, now we are turned into beggars and we cannot provide for our families.”*

Nyadeng Nyichiar, mother, Malakal, South Sudan

*“My children have to go to the market and beg. Whatever they get is what we use to get food.”*

Yakura, a 30-year-old displaced woman in Maiduguri, Nigeria

members' budgets. Proposals to cut foreign aid by wealthy countries at a time of humanitarian crisis, with four countries facing famine, is immoral and short-sighted. It represents an abandonment of the shared Agenda for Humanity held up at the World Humanitarian Summit almost exactly a year ago<sup>26</sup> as well as the Sustainable Development Goals, which promised to leave no one behind.

Foreign aid can also be used strategically to build the capacity of local and national actors so that they are better able to withstand crises before they require an international response. World leaders, who committed to increase their direct investments in local and national actors at the World Humanitarian Summit, should uphold these commitments today.

The upcoming G7 and G20 summits provide opportunities for the world's wealthiest countries to do their part by providing their fair share to each country. Oxfam's "fair share"<sup>27</sup> analysis shows that if each of the G7 governments provided its country's equitable contribution, based on its gross national income, these contributions would amount to almost half of the \$6.3 billion needed. These contributions alone would mean \$492 million for Nigeria, \$703 million for Somalia, \$764 million for South Sudan, and \$964 million for Yemen.

According to data from the UN's Financial Tracking System<sup>28</sup> (the only official system for tracking donor funding) and information Oxfam received from G7 members, combined with Oxfam's fair share analysis, **as of May 18, no G7 country has provided its fair share of funding for all four countries, and France, Italy, and Japan have not provided their fair share for any of the four countries.**<sup>29</sup>

Urgent funding needed now must accomplish the following:

- **Be disbursed immediately.** Pledges are not good enough—a promise to pay later ensures that people will die now. For example, while the United States Congress appropriated \$990 million to address famine—demonstrating moral courage and rejecting President Trump's draconian cuts to aid—disbursal of this new funding must not be held back or slowed by the Trump Administration. It must be immediately translated into food, nutrition, health assistance, clean water, and protection and reach those in need. Recent pledges from other donors must be similarly converted into life-saving aid if famine is to be averted.
- **Go to frontline actors.** Organizations that are already implementing programs on the ground should receive funding quickly so that they can reach the most vulnerable communities with the greatest needs. In many instances, this will mean direct funding to local organizations that have access to vulnerable areas, as well as to international NGOs that are already working in these areas.
- **Help improve access.** Significant investments may be required to restore bridges and roads so that assistance can reach people in need. Other simple, lower-cost investments may also be needed. In South Sudan, for example, Oxfam provides vouchers for canoes that allow people living in swampy areas to reach the help they need.

- **Be flexible.** To keep pace with displacement patterns and rapidly changing contexts, targeting should be based on need and funding should be explicitly made flexible so that it can be reallocated quickly if necessary.
- **Cover programs focusing on the provision of clean water, sanitation services, and hygiene** as well as food and nutrition. Hygiene and clean water are crucial in preventing the spread of waterborne diseases, which can severely affect malnourished people, robbing them of critical nutrients.

## ENSURE ACCESS TO SAVE LIVES

Humanitarian responses can save lives, but only when they reach those in need. In the current crisis, too many people are inaccessible or cannot reach aid because of conflict and insecurity. Although every country context is different, there remains a need across all four countries for G7 and G20 members to apply political pressure to parties to the conflicts, including governments, to ensure the safe movement of people and access to aid.

This pressure should ensure

- **the free movement** of people to safely reach aid, as well as the free movement of essential goods and food;
- **the suspension of all military operations** that block access to aid, food, water, and health care to civilians; and
- **the prioritization of the safety and protection of civilians**, their dignity, and their human rights with respect to national and international law.

G7 and G20 members should press relevant authorities in the four countries to ensure that humanitarian agencies can respond fully and effectively. They should also increase their own presence on the ground to better understand the realities of delivering humanitarian assistance and build relationships needed to apply more diplomatic pressure in support of the response. For example, recent visits by Dutch and Swedish representatives to Yemen helped those donors better understand the situation on the ground and build relationships with partners.

In **Nigeria**, movement is severely restricted: in many cases people living in Boko Haram areas cannot leave these areas. Once people are in areas controlled by the military, they are often not permitted to move outside of perimeters established by the military—these sealed-off areas can be as small as about 5 square kilometers, and even 1 square kilometer. This situation has severely restricted people’s access to land, limiting their ability to carry out farming, pastoral, or other livelihood activities. Humanitarian organizations also need better information from authorities about the needs of people who may be moved, who are already on the move, or who are trapped. The government needs to remove bureaucratic impediments that delay humanitarian organizations’

*“When the government distributes food, those women with absent husbands don’t get enough. There is a scramble, and widows struggle to get hold of the food and carry it home.”*

Asta, a 19-year-old displaced woman in Maiduguri, Nigeria

responses. For example, the government should ensure that NGOs have permanent registrations, that visas are processed as quickly as possible, and that flexible one-year blanket waivers are provided for imports of humanitarian relief goods, including vital medicines.

In **Somalia**, attacks by non-state and armed militant groups are on the rise, and an estimated 85 percent of the south-central region is inaccessible owing to the presence of al-Shabaab.<sup>30</sup> These groups have blocked hundreds of roads and demand payment for access. The UN has reported that al-Shabaab is restricting aid workers' access and that death rates related to cholera and diarrhea in al-Shabaab-held areas are 4.5 times higher than in government-held areas.<sup>31</sup> World leaders must put pressure on authorities in Somalia to work with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to improve coordination and information sharing to enable quicker responses and highlight areas that are not receiving assistance. They should also support Somali authorities in regulating and supervising money-transfer businesses in order to sustain remittance flows, a vital lifeline for many drought-affected communities.

In **South Sudan**, the government must honor its commitments to allow humanitarian actors to reach famine areas and areas of extreme food insecurity. In several locations where heavy fighting makes it impossible for operations to be carried out safely on the ground, humanitarian agencies have resorted to dropping food by air.

In **Yemen**, in addition to a de facto blockade and the siege of highly populated areas, roads and bridges have been bombed and aid groups' work has been hampered by constraints on everyday activities, such as checkpoints, the withdrawal of permits, and temporary and ad hoc siege-like conditions. Any military operations that threaten to close the Hodeidah port—the lifeline to the country—must cease, and restrictions on commercial airspace, which are preventing food and other life-saving assistance from entering the country, must end.

*"I used to be a herder; I used to have 1,000 sheep. I have none left. This drought is different from the others—it is leaving nothing behind. In previous droughts we used to lose some animals, but we would always have some food and water. But this is different. It is sweeping away animals and people. It is a catastrophe."*

Abdilal Yassen, 70 years old,  
Fadigaab village, Sanaag,  
Somaliland

# 5 FINDING SOLUTIONS

This horrendous and unprecedented situation—millions of people in or on the brink of famine across four countries—provides a real challenge to the international system. How is it possible to be in this situation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and how could it have been prevented? It is clear that business as usual cannot continue.

The response across the four countries cannot be limited to purely short-term humanitarian actions. The international community must have the courage to find diplomatic solutions to these long-standing conflicts and invest in the hard work of building resilience and peace.



Oxfam staff member Pedro Marial Rock registers Majok Noan Mayian at a food distribution site in Nyal, South Sudan, in late March. Majok had arrived in Nyal the day before, after seeing his home burned in Mayendit and spending two days in the swamp. He received beans, oil, and salt for himself and eight of his family members who had traveled to Nyal together. *Lauren Hartnett/Oxfam*

*“What we have left behind is a horror. What we have in Mayendit is gone—houses are burned, our cattle are taken. And then living in the islands there, you don’t know if you will live to see the next day.”*

Majok Noan Mayian, South Sudan

## RESOLVE CONFLICT

Resolving conflict remains the touchstone of success. Each country situation is unique, but conflict, insecurity, weak governance, and an inability to reach affected people are the primary drivers of these food crises. Conflict has driven millions of people from their homes and communities, cutting them off from access to their fields, jobs, food, and markets.

It is principally the responsibility of governments to provide for their citizens and to ensure their rights to life and food. Whereas some governments are trying to respond to people’s suffering but lack the capacity to meet ever-growing needs, other governments and parties to the conflicts are taking actions that contribute to the crisis.

G7 and G20 leaders must press parties to the conflicts to find durable political solutions—not just military solutions—by restarting or reinvigorating commitments to immediate ceasefires and by engaging in

inclusive peace processes and dialogues that include the voices of women and minority groups. Bottom-up peace-building work is needed to help communities deal with the consequences of conflict at the local level.

World leaders should be doing much more to condemn violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in the four countries and, where appropriate, call for an international, independent, and impartial commission of inquiry to be established to investigate crimes against civilians.

In **Nigeria**, the military should articulate a clearer strategy for protecting civilians during its operations, moving away from pursuing territorial gains alone and toward ensuring people's safety and access to assistance and basic services. Such a strategy would allow for the broader return of civilian authorities, particularly local governance. However, reforms are needed to address longstanding weaknesses in governance, transparency, and accountability (particularly financial accountability) so that returning local authorities are able to address the root causes of conflict and its consequences. Nigeria's current surrender policy must be clarified, with demonstrable incentives for peaceful surrender, disarmament, and eventual reintegration into communities.

*"The war is not over. We're still seeing the presence of Boko Haram. It's not safe to farm."*

Yigam, a 50-year-old woman in Damboa, Nigeria

In **Somalia**, increased territorial control by the Federal Government of Somalia or Somali authorities has allowed for some increased access to populations in need. However, the conflict remains active, and these relative improvements in access should not be taken for granted. It is important to note that access to al-Shabaab-held areas remains challenging and access in government-held areas varies by administration. G7 and G20 members need to address the continued weaknesses in government-controlled areas, including the presence of gatekeepers controlling access to populations. Weaknesses in the Somali National Armed Forces must also be addressed. The drawdown of troops from the African Union Mission in Somalia scheduled for 2018 would be premature, as it could undo security gains. Ongoing reform efforts should also strengthen Somali institutions and tackle corruption.

In **South Sudan**, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union, with support from other international signatories of the August 2015 peace agreement, including the US and UK, should bring all warring parties and representatives of all segments of South Sudanese society back to the negotiating table to decide on concrete steps to advance the peace process. As long as conflict continues, hunger will continue to rise and humanitarian assistance will be required to prevent people from dying.

In **Yemen**, G7 and G20 members should dramatically step up diplomatic pressure on warring parties, inside and outside the country, to resolve the conflict to avert the human-caused famine looming over Yemen. Airstrikes and ground fighting are generating enormous humanitarian needs, displacing millions, and creating an extremely challenging and dangerous environment for aid agencies. Now more than ever, Yemen needs a genuine peace process that includes civil society, women's

rights organizations, and traditional leaders. Donors, including G7 and G20 members, who are providing generous funding while also supplying weapons, munitions, military equipment, technology, or logistical and financial support for military action to parties to the conflict are helping to fuel the conflict and increasing the suffering of the Yemeni people. This must stop.

## WORK DIFFERENTLY

This huge crisis challenges the working of the international system and calls for a different response. A long-term, strategic, and flexible approach is needed to provide fragile and vulnerable states with more technical and financial support. Humanitarian actors must immediately address acute humanitarian needs, while at the same time development agencies, including major actors such as the World Bank, should focus more on preventing crises and building resilience in order to reduce needs over time.

Instead of the typical siloed approach to humanitarian work, this “New Way of Working,”<sup>32</sup> launched at the World Humanitarian Summit, aims for collective outcomes, playing to the individual strengths of each agency involved. The New Way of Working presents clear opportunities for more effectiveness, coherence, and impact in countries experiencing food insecurity. It requires the following elements:

- **A foundation on principles.** The following humanitarian principles should be upheld: humanitarian aid must be delivered foremost on the basis of need, access must be unhindered, international humanitarian law must be upheld, and civilians must be protected without exception. Equally important is adherence to aid effectiveness principles, particularly transparency, accountability, and meaningful consultation of civil society and marginalized groups, including women and refugees.
- **Increased focus on addressing entrenched poverty and underdevelopment in areas affected by conflict and climate change.** Such a focus would include support for strengthening inclusive governance reform, access to justice, and gender equality; for ensuring a robust civil society; and for investing in basic social services and public infrastructure.
- **Investment in adaptive capacity, sustainable livelihoods, and smallholder agriculture.** Resources should be targeted to the poorest and most marginalized and vulnerable groups such as smallholder farmers, pastoralists, and women in countries with the highest rates of food insecurity and malnutrition.
- **Increased investment in preventing crises and building resilience.** These investments will protect development aid from the impact of disasters, particularly in areas repeatedly affected by climate shocks. For every \$100 spent on development aid, just 40 cents was invested in defending that aid from the impact of disasters.<sup>33</sup> As a result, development actors are leaving behind the world’s poorest

*“We used to be farmers, and we had plenty of food. Boko Haram attacked the village and burned down the houses because we didn’t accept their ideology. We came away empty handed. We can’t go back until peace comes to our area.”*

Fatima, Nigeria

people and virtually ensuring that development investments are wiped out by predictable humanitarian emergencies.

- **Increased accountability for famine response.** One recent proposal<sup>34</sup> calls for a commission of inquiry to examine each episode of a declared famine, what went wrong, what was done right, and who should be called to account, as a way of building up international norms and political will to prevent famine from reoccurring.
- **A commitment to responding earlier to warning signs of future crises before they escalate.** This would include developing standard operating procedures and early action financing mechanisms for funding to be disbursed immediately when humanitarian thresholds are crossed.
- **Increased support for nationally led approaches and increased direct funding to local organizations.**
- **Firm commitment to the Paris Agreement by G7 and G20 leaders.** This commitment should be upheld in recognition of the role that climate change plays in increasing the frequency and intensity of natural hazards—including in the Horn of Africa—and to prevent any backsliding. Indeed, leaders should work to make the commitments even more ambitious.

# 6 CONCLUSION

Famines are failures of governance. Occurring where there is chronic poverty and conflict, famines are enabled by a lack of government accountability and a weak press and civil society. In this age of globalization, governments and the international community have the power to end such failures—if they choose to—by marshaling international logistics and a humanitarian response network to work sustainably with existing local systems to prevent famine and address conflict, governance, and climate change drivers.

As the world's major economies, members of the G7 and G20 must not walk away from the Taormina Summit in Italy and the Hamburg Summit in Germany without announcing new funding and emphasizing clear solutions to provide life-saving relief to millions of people on the brink of famine.

# NOTES

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