



SPECIAL APPEAL 2025

FROM RELIEF TO RESILIENCE: STRENGTHENING FOOD SECURITY IN CONFLICT



ICRC

MORE AND MORE PEOPLE IN CONFLICT-STRICKEN AREAS ARE GOING HUNGRY

Millions of people all over the world face the daily challenge of securing enough food, a crisis that demands urgent action and support. People who have fled their homes are barely able to eat one meal a day, mothers are unable to produce enough breast milk to provide their children with essential nutrition, and farmers have to take dangerous paths just to access their fields. According to recent data,¹ 733 million people worldwide face chronic hunger, and among them, 343 million suffer from acute food insecurity, urgently needing food and livelihood support.²

Food security is a cyclical, persistent concern, particularly during the lean season. The projections for 2025 are alarming, especially in regions where ongoing armed conflict and other violence converge with growing climate change. War and insecurity remain the leading cause of food insecurity globally.³ Last year, 65% of acutely food-insecure people lived in fragile or conflict-affected areas.⁴ In 2025, armed violence continues to be a key driver in 14 out of the 16 countries or regions identified as “hunger hotspots” – places where food crises are most severe and projected to worsen if not met with urgent action.⁵ As a result of armed conflict and protracted violence, humanitarian needs keep rising in places such as Mali, Myanmar, South Sudan, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria) and Yemen, among others.²

The adverse effects of armed conflict and climate shocks are colliding across the world. Drought, wildfires, heavy rainfall and flooding, combined with changes in seasonal weather patterns, wreak havoc on the lives and livelihoods of so many who were already struggling to survive. Communities suffered the highest temperatures ever recorded in the first six months of 2024, amounting to 12 consecutive months of record heat levels.⁶ Many countries continued to feel the effects of El Niño and La Niña weather patterns, which brought warmer, drier conditions or heavy rains and flooding to some areas, and cooler, wetter weather or drought to others.

Lastly, global food markets remain vulnerable to disruptions from climate change, geopolitical tensions and economic factors.² Trade disruptions related to conflict, combined with currency depreciation, result in increased food prices for many import-dependent countries. This inflation makes food unaffordable for the most vulnerable populations, especially those affected by conflict. Over the past four years, food prices in 26 countries globally have more than doubled.⁶

Central African Republic, 2025.
Pulcherie Dayo, a mother of 11,
displaced by armed violence,
brings her malnourished child to
the Doukouma health centre for
emergency care. She is a farmer, but
she struggles to harvest enough food
for her family.



ARMED CONFLICT IMPACTS ALL DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SECURITY

People displaced by hostilities lose access to their agricultural lands and to their sources of livelihood.

Households whose main breadwinners were injured, detained, killed or who went missing owing to armed conflict are left in emotional turmoil and under a tremendous financial burden.

Farmers, herders and other agricultural workers face conflict-related risks, such as the presence of landmines or unexploded and abandoned ordnance, for instance, when tending to their fields or taking care of their herds, which limits their ability to produce enough food.

Essential services that support access to water and sanitation are disrupted, leading to outbreaks of water-borne diseases and increasing the risk of malnutrition, particularly amongst young children.

Hostilities may also directly endanger the delivery of health care and humanitarian aid.

Even more during armed conflict, authorities may not have the resources to tackle food shortages at a regional or national level.



The world is facing an unprecedented food security crisis, with millions pushed to the brink by conflict, climate shocks, and economic instability. In war-torn regions, families are not just struggling to afford food—they are struggling to find it. At the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), we work where few others can, reaching communities trapped by violence, cut off from markets, and in desperate need of support. Our neutrality and longstanding presence in conflict zones allow us to deliver life-saving assistance while helping people rebuild their livelihoods. But we cannot do this alone. We call on donors to help us step up efforts, ensure access to those most in need, and commit to sustainable solutions that go beyond emergency aid. The time to act is now—before more lives are lost to hunger.

— **Jo Burton**, Head of the ICRC's Economic Security Unit



Burkina Faso, 2024. Nan and Risnata welcome displaced women into their cooperative in Ouahigouya. They are able to diversify their production with our support.

WHAT SETS US APART: OUR MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND HOLISTIC APPROACH

Deriving our core mandate from the Geneva Conventions, we at the ICRC strive to protect and assist people affected by armed conflicts and other situations of violence.

Our multidisciplinary and holistic approach addresses short- and medium-term individual needs while fostering long-term resilience and contributing to resolve systematic issues.

Our approach begins by reminding authorities and weapon bearers to respect international humanitarian law (IHL), also known as the rules of war, right from the outset of an armed conflict, and even before. People should be protected from hostilities and granted access to humanitarian assistance, which they are entitled to under IHL, thus helping reduce the risk of food insecurity. Because suffering cannot be completely prevented in conflict, we work to reduce communities' exposure to risks created by armed conflict and other violence – for example, the risk of sexual violence that women face going to work in fields in conflict-affected areas. Our staff members provide emergency food assistance to those most in need, and give people tools and training to cultivate their field or rear their livestock. Our teams help maintain essential services, such as primary health care, water and sanitation, since better health and hygiene are crucial to fighting malnutrition.

Present in or near communities affected by conflict, we focus on the people living in the most remote, hard-to-reach areas, which are often under the control of armed groups. In places like Colombia, Somalia or Ukraine we are able to help communities that nobody else can.

All our actions are carried out in partnership with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (hereafter, the Movement).

PREVENTING FOOD INSECURITY THROUGH INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Our exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. We also endeavour to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening IHL and universal humanitarian principles.

IHL plays a crucial role in protecting food security during armed conflicts by setting legal obligations for warring parties to safeguard civilians' access to food. IHL prohibits the use of starvation as a method of warfare and protects objects essential for survival, including crops, livestock, water sources, and food supplies. It also requires that humanitarian organizations be granted access to deliver food and other necessary aid to affected populations. Violations of these principles—such as the deliberate destruction of agricultural infrastructure, blockades preventing food deliveries, or attacks on humanitarian convoys—exacerbate food insecurity and contribute to famine. Upholding IHL is thus essential to mitigating the devastating impact of conflict on food security, including in the long-term, as well as to ensuring that civilians remain able to meet their nutritional needs.

Central African Republic, 2024.
Wherever we operate, we work
to ensure all parties to the
conflict understand and respect
IHL, through training and
dissemination sessions.



PROTECTION: UPHOLDING THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE IN CONFLICT

When a conflict breaks out, we remind the authorities and parties to the conflict of their responsibilities and obligations, towards the civilian population and those no longer participating in the fight. As a neutral and impartial organization, we look to see if the safeguards embedded in IHL are respected and endeavour to stay present in areas where civilians are particularly at risk. If we observe a violation of the rules of war, we engage in confidential dialogue with the warring parties to address the incident and encourage measures to prevent its recurrence. More broadly, we seek to strengthen the protection of people affected by armed conflict and other violence by reducing the risks they face, stopping abuse and ensuring their rights are upheld.



Syria, 2024. Abo Mohammad, a 70-year-old farmer with a gentle spirit, shares his story with our staff and the Syrian Red Crescent. He is among more than 200 families who returned to villages across Idlib and who received a cash grant from us and the National Society, to help him start afresh.



Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2024. In Minova, an isolated area accessible only by lake, thousands of families receive food and essential items during our joint activity with the National Society. With easily disrupted supply routes and the influx of displaced people, pressure on local communities has dramatically increased.

LEVERAGING THE WORLD'S LARGEST HUMANITARIAN NETWORK

As part of the Movement, we work closely with a vast and unparalleled network of National Societies established in nearly every country. Within the Movement, we lead efforts to prevent and address food insecurity related to armed conflict and other situations of violence, while ensuring that the collective response is coordinated, complementary, and guided by the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence. National Societies' deep knowledge of the affected communities and regions allows for tailored and contextually appropriate responses to food insecurity.

This cooperation amplifies our collective impact and reinforces our ability to address food insecurity at scale, leveraging the unique strengths of the ICRC and the National Societies. The global-local partnership is not only a cornerstone of our humanitarian response but also a vital element in ensuring that communities affected by violence and food insecurity are supported wherever they are.

2025 TARGETS



more than 2.2 million people
will have adequate food



more than 3,700 people will be supported to
improve capacities of food-security institutions



nearly 6 million people
will produce food more sustainably



431 primary-health-care centres
will get material and technical aid



over 1.1 million people will restore,
protect or increase their household income



over 32 million people will benefit from
improved access to essential water, energy and/
or sanitation infrastructure



around 1.5 million people
will improve their living conditions

HOW WE DO IT: A COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE TO FOOD INSECURITY

We stand out as a food security actor in conflict zones through a comprehensive approach, centered on people's protection needs and concerns, in line with our fundamental principles. Our interventions adapt to the specific nature of armed conflicts, spanning from emergency interventions during and after acute episodes of violence to combining individual-, community- and systems-level programming aimed at protecting people's livelihoods and promoting their resilience if a conflict becomes chronic.

- We contribute to the prevention of acute food insecurity, and effective response when such crises nevertheless occur, by promoting respect for IHL.
- We respond to emergency food, nutrition and other essential public-health needs of conflict-affected people in the hardest-to-reach areas.
- We build sustainable solutions for food and economic security in conflict-affected countries to strengthen resilience at the household, community and systems level.

Colombia, 2024. For more than 50 years, we have been working to raise awareness of IHL and its implementation in Colombia. We have maintained an ongoing bilateral dialogue with armed groups and the authorities, with a view to promoting respect for IHL and to position us as a source of protection for civilians and other people affected by armed conflict.



WE PREVENT AND PROTECT

The way a conflict is fought can both directly and indirectly impact food security. Parties to the fighting have the primary responsibility to ensure that civilians in areas under their control can meet their basic needs.

Promoting the laws that will enable people to safely access food and essential services

Our prevention work aims to influence attitudes and behaviours, and contain the inevitably harmful effects of conflict, keeping them to a minimum. To do so, we interact with the people and groups who determine the fate of victims of armed conflict or who can obstruct or facilitate our action and safe access. These include the armed forces, police, security forces and other weapon bearers, decision-makers and opinion-leaders at local and international levels and, with an eye to the future, teenagers, students and their teachers. Our activities include raising awareness, promoting IHL through teaching and training, and supporting the integration of IHL into official legal, educational and operational curricula.

Engaging in confidential and bilateral dialogue

Through our privileged dialogue and role as a neutral intermediary, we help parties in conflict to understand and fulfil their responsibilities and obligations under IHL. This includes allowing and facilitating rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access, and ensuring that objects and systems vital to civilian survival are protected. For example, we advocate for people's safe access to markets and the protection of crops and critical infrastructure.

Monitoring compliance with the law

During conflicts, we monitor and promote compliance with IHL, directly discussing alleged violations with the parties to the conflict. These allegations may be collected from affected people or based on our own observations on the battlefield. Through these bilateral discussions, which are confidential but frank, we recall the rights of people not or no longer participating in hostilities – including specific groups like children, women, detainees or displaced people – to encourage greater respect for IHL during and after hostilities.

Mitigating risks

We aim to protect people from further harm by stabilizing their livelihoods and reducing their exposure to risks. Our help enables people to avoid negative coping strategies – like selling critical productive assets (e.g. land, animals); taking children out of school; being forced to beg or engage in survival sex; exposing themselves to danger as they try to meet their basic needs. We analyse the root causes and impacts of protection risks, integrating the findings in our programme design. In doing so, we aim to reduce people's exposure to risks and threats while helping them to cope and adapt. In 2024, 87.4% of households newly supported by ICRC livelihood projects reported not having to resort to negative coping strategies to meet their essential needs – a heartening result.

WE RESPOND TO EMERGENCIES

Our well-established presence and proximity to communities in conflict zones all over the world enables us to rapidly assess and respond to emergency needs. Timely intervention may mean the difference between a family starving or surviving another day.

We carry out vital interventions to prevent, detect and treat malnutrition among children, pregnant and lactating women. Our unparalleled access to places of detention also allows us to support penitentiary authorities in addressing malnutrition among detainees – who are often overlooked or ignored – including those detained in relation to armed conflicts.

Access to food in a crisis

We help people obtain nutritious food, particularly those who have been displaced from their homes or who are living in areas that are hard to access. This includes distributing food parcels, providing hot meals or supporting community kitchens. In Sudan, we plan to distribute rations to enable up to 150,000 people to meet their dietary needs. We also provide cash or vouchers so that people can purchase food locally: this way, people retain the agency to decide how they want to provide for themselves, and support local markets at the same time.

During crises, people's living conditions often deteriorate. They are forced to flee their homes; camps providing refuge may nonetheless not offer more than cramped, temporary shelters—potentially squalid conditions. We provide financial or material assistance to improve people's shelter and the basic hygiene and sanitary conditions in which to prepare food and otherwise live with dignity.



Lebanon, 2024. “During the air strikes, we hid inside and couldn’t go out, even to buy food. It was terrifying,” shares a 70-year old beneficiary of our assistance. “Today, many stores have still not reopened. What I miss most during this period is being able to sit outside with my neighbours.”

At a Palestinian refugee camp in Baalbek, we distribute food, blankets and hygiene products to the people living there, to help them cover their immediate needs.



Nigeria, 2024. Baby Sabina and her mother, Godiya, receive plumpy nut food rations from one of our staff members. Sabina was diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition and admitted for treatment at the ICRC-supported Stabilization Centre in Mubi Hospital. After receiving treatment for three days, Sabina's health began to improve, much to her mother's relief.

Admissions of severely malnourished children in ICRC-supported health facilities in north-east Nigeria increased by 24% between the third quarters of 2023 and 2024. We expanded our efforts to curb malnutrition rates by supporting additional health centres for malnourished children like Sabina. This allowed medical teams to provide a range of key services including consultations, nutritional screenings, and treatment for malnourished children with complications.

Preventing and treating malnutrition

We seek to respond to and prevent malnutrition by working with communities to improve access to and the availability of nutritious food. During distributions of food rations, we provide households with nutrient-enriched food (e.g. corn-soya blend, BP-5) to help supplement the diet of malnourished family members and keep others from becoming malnourished themselves.

We support community management of acute malnutrition. This involves working with ministries of health, National Societies, and communities to identify people who are malnourished and referring them to specialized services at health centres or hospitals. We focus specifically on children under five years old, pregnant and lactating women, who are most at risk of malnutrition. Working with communities helps ensure that malnutrition is detected earlier, and people are supported as they recover. In north-east Nigeria, we work together with the National Society to combat malnutrition using Tom Brown, a porridge inspired by a traditional Nigerian recipe made from local grains for weaning children, empowering communities through training and engagement to lead the fight against hunger.

As malnutrition's causes go far beyond the food that is consumed, preventing it entails taking into account other essential services including water, sanitation, health care and education. We work to spread behaviours that promote good nutrition, especially for children and pregnant and lactating women. Key messages are passed on through community leaders, radio spots, theatrical pieces, mother-to-mother support groups and cooking demonstrations. We also educate people about nutrition alongside our other activities, such as when we distribute food, run animal-vaccination campaigns or install water-supply infrastructure.



Somalia, 2025. Thousands of detainees join Muslims around the world in ushering in the holy month of Ramadan. In spite of their circumstances, they will still be able to partake of a traditional iftar menu, with our help, as we give them dates, milk powder, groundnuts and biscuits and provide kitchens in detention facilities with sugar, tea leaves, lentils, tomato paste and vegetable oil. We will also be donating hundreds of goats to places of detention.

“Ramadan is a sacred time of reflection, compassion and community for Muslims worldwide and can be particularly challenging for those deprived of their freedom,” says Antoine Grand, the Head of the ICRC in Somalia. “Supporting detainees during this period has become an annual tradition for the ICRC in Somalia and in many other countries — a gesture to ensure they do not feel left out.”

Nutrition in detention

Detainees can easily become malnourished because they have no control over their diet or conditions of detention. Overcrowding and a lack of proper sanitary facilities spread diseases that cause malnutrition. We closely track prisons’ food supply chains, from the budget for feeding detainees all the way through to what people get on their plates. Where we identify issues that prevent detainees from eating enough nutritious food, we work with the authorities to take action, for example topping up food rations, treating acutely-malnourished detainees with ready-to-use therapeutic food or providing fortified flour to supplement people’s daily food intake. In Syria, up to 1,400 detainees suffering from malnutrition – including those receiving treatment for tuberculosis – will be provided with food or nutritional supplements. Wherever possible, we support agricultural, livestock projects or microeconomic initiatives to boost local food production and help make detainees’ diets more nutritious.

WE BUILD RESILIENCE

We keep people at the centre of our response, consulting communities on what they need from us to improve their self-sufficiency amidst armed conflict and food insecurity. We can then tailor our food production and livelihood-support initiatives to address the specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of conflict-affected households. Regular, ongoing engagement with affected people helps to ensure that they have a meaningful role in the programmes that address their challenges.

Generating income and improving market access

We work to restore people's ability to earn an income and feed their families. With vocational training, supplies, equipment, small business grants and other support, and by improving access to markets for local production, we help people and communities get back on their feet after a crisis, building self-sufficiency and reducing their reliance on humanitarian aid. In Iraq, we aim to raise the income of up to 7,700 people – including people with physical disabilities and missing people's families – through our livelihood programme. Across 2023–2024, 85% of small businesses supported by us became profitable six months after being set up, while 82% of people trained by our economic-security teams in 2024 said that they improved their skills and were able to apply best practices to their work.



Myanmar, 2024. “I used to feel overwhelmed with worry thinking about the loss of our property and life back in our village. But ever since starting this shop, there is no time to dwell on negative thoughts. I start each day by cooking for my family and then I get ready for business. Even though my days are long, I don’t feel exhausted,” shares Ma Thae Thae, who fled from her home in the Sagaing Region to escape armed conflict.

Since 2022, we have been distributing food and other supplies to displaced people in Mandalay. But we recognized a need for a more sustainable solution for these people to earn a livelihood and to live with dignity. So, in 2023, we introduced a pilot project providing cash grants and training to violence-affected people like Ma Thae Thae to help them start small businesses.

Support for farmers, herders, fishermen and other food producers

We seek to directly support farmers, herders, fishermen and other food producers to enhance both their food security and income-generation potential over the short and long term. Depending on their specific needs, this support includes providing high-quality seed, farming tools, irrigation equipment, livestock and fodder, as well as training on best farming practices – for example, more sustainable agricultural techniques in the face of environmental changes. As a result of our agriculture assistance in 2024, 81% of supported households said they were able to maximize their agricultural production. We also help farmers and herders cope with increasing variability in rainfall and periods of water scarcity by supporting the renovation of irrigation systems, and the production of animal feed or seed and its storage in community-managed silos. By providing veterinary care such as vaccination, treatment and breeding services, we help livestock owners maintain their herds and ensure a steady supply of food. In Mali, we plan to vaccinate livestock and supply fodder to more than 104,000 herding households and donate solar-powered vaccine refrigerators to local animal-health services.

Strengthening essential services

A key aspect of our work involves strengthening services provided by local partners, institutions and systems. Because we aim for our activities to be sustainable even after we leave, we emphasize communities' resilience, organizing workshops, coaching or on-the-job learning; strengthening or developing formal training programmes; and providing materials or equipment when needed.

We support seed banks and cooperatives, working with ministries of agriculture to improve seed quality and seeds systems more broadly. We work closely with community animal-health workers and ministries to facilitate people's access to health services for their animals, too, in areas affected by armed conflict. In South Sudan, we



Colombia, 2024. Communities in Bajo Calima were displaced and lost their crops because of armed conflict. We distribute plantain seedlings, tools and other supplies to help them increase their food supply.



Ethiopia, 2025. Hundreds of thousands of livestock are vaccinated with our support. Maintaining healthy and productive livestock safeguards livelihoods and food security of pastoral communities.

will train more than 600 people – animal-health workers, fisherfolk and others – in veterinary services, animal husbandry, fishing and nutrition and provide veterinary medicine for a laboratory run by the ministry of fisheries and animal resources. Combining these activities with livelihood support programmes maximizes our impact.

Water, sanitation and energy

Households need stable supplies of water and energy to produce food and restore their income. These services are also critical to prevent malnutrition and stem the spread of diseases, which would further weaken food-insecure communities.

To support adequate water and sanitation, we repair and upgrade public infrastructure damaged or destroyed by hostilities and, sometimes, build the infrastructure ourselves. Renovating water pumping and treatment stations, piped networks, and irrigation systems all help alleviate water stress and can reduce water loss. In some rural areas where shallow wells are increasingly drying up during the dry season, we drill boreholes into deeper aquifers – without exceeding their sustainable yield.

Where possible, we use renewable technology to help reduce communities' reliance on costly or scarce energy sources. We work closely with local authorities, organizations, communities and others so that they can take over and maintain public services that address food and economic security in conflict-affected areas. In Yemen, we aim to improve water-supply and solar-powered systems serving nearly 1.4 million people in rural and urban areas, as well as provide training and support for local technicians in charge of operating and maintaining water and sanitation facilities.

Lastly, we conduct hygiene-promotion sessions in communities to share best practices in preventing the spread of infectious diseases.



Ukraine, 2025. Violence-affected communities in Kryvyi Rih have better access to clean water after we delivered 5,400 meters of pipes to aid in the rehabilitation of the city's water transmission system. We will provide more supplies and infrastructural support to help enhance the city's water supply and pumping capabilities. These activities are part of our response to the humanitarian challenges faced by the population because of the international conflict, particularly disruptions in basic services such as water supply.

JOIN US IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Armed conflict and food insecurity are deeply connected. When violence breaks out, fields are abandoned, markets collapse, and supply chains break down—leaving millions without access to food. Families who once farmed their own land are now displaced, relying on scarce aid to survive. The urgency of this crisis cannot be overstated. Every day, our teams witness the devastating effects of conflict-driven hunger. Yet, we also see the power of action. In Sudan for instance, the ICRC, together with the Sudanese Red Crescent Society, supported eight community kitchens providing two hot meals per day for around 10,000 newly displaced people in the Zamzan camp.⁷ In Colombia, in the Valle de Cauca Department, we delivered 14,000 plantain seedlings to 220 families that recently returned to their homes after being displaced or confined for more than two years.⁸

With your support, we can deliver emergency food assistance, help farmers restart their livelihoods, and ensure that those caught in war are not left to starve. Food should never be a weapon. We urgently call on you to join us in this life-saving mission. Your support can provide vital relief and hope to those facing unimaginable hardship.

— **Pierre Krähenbühl**, ICRC Director General

While the needs are immense, we can address them by acting together. We are committed to protecting and assisting people at increasing risk of food insecurity on top of the other threats of armed conflict, and to addressing the root causes of these issues.

Your support would enable us to continue our work in conflict-affected regions that others often cannot reach: delivering life-saving aid to hungry families, strengthening community resilience by reinforcing food production capacities, and improving access to essential services for millions of people in dire need.

2025 BUDGET: CHF 586 MILLION*

For more information or to make a contribution, please contact us at resourcemobilization@icrc.org.

Together, let's make a difference.

***DISCLAIMER:** The information on the ICRC's operations in this document has been taken from the [ICRC's Appeals 2025](#) published in December 2024 and does not include any updates beyond that date.

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Cover photo: Israel and the occupied territories, 2024. For more than a year after the start of the hostilities, we donated bulk food and other supplies to collective kitchens in the Gaza Strip, enabling them to provide daily cooked meals to 25,000 individuals in Rafah and over 72,000 individuals in Khan Yunis and the Middle Area. (Z. Burduli/ICRC)



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