

Famine knocking at the door of 41 million worldwide, WFP warns

Famine is already present in four countries but millions more people are at risk, the World Food Programme (WFP) warned on Tuesday, underscoring the need for urgent funding and humanitarian access to reach those in need.

Recent analysis by the UN agency reveals 41 million people in 43 countries “are teetering on the very edge of famine”, up from 27 million two years ago.

Help needed now

“I am heartbroken at what we’re facing in 2021. We now have four countries where famine-like conditions are present”, WFP chief David Beasley told its Executive Board on Monday, according to a press release.

He described the situation as “just tragic”, as “these are real people with real names.”

WFP said 584,000 people are already experiencing famine-like conditions in Ethiopia, Madagascar, South Sudan and Yemen.

Nigeria and Burkina Faso are also of particular concern as they have pockets where famine-like conditions are present.

“In Somalia in 2011, 260,000 people died of hunger - and by the time the famine was actually declared - half of that number had already died,” Mr. Beasley recalled. “We can’t debate the numbers to death when people need our help now.”

Conflict, climate change and currency depreciation

Hunger has risen due to conflict, climate change and economic shocks, WFP said. However, soaring prices for basic foods have also compounded the situation, with the global cost of maize rising almost 90 per cent year-on-year, for example.

In many countries, currency depreciation is also a factor, the agency added. This has driven prices even higher, stoking food insecurity in places such as Lebanon, Nigeria, Sudan, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

WFP is this year mounting its biggest operation ever, targeting 139 million people. With sufficient funding and access, the agency said it can provide them with lifesaving food and nutritional assistance.

Mr. Beasley underlined the urgent need for support.

“I want to emphasize just how bad it is out there. Today, 41 million people are literally knocking on famine’s door. The price tag to reach them is about \$6 billion. We need funding and we need it now,” he said

Source: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/06/1094472>

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