



## Levels of Concern for Countries Struggling with Food Insecurity



-  Critical concern
-  High concern
-  Concern
-  Tracking

The number of people facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity has risen sharply by 35% since 2021 and is now affecting **258 million people across 58 countries and territories**. This means that, at best, families are depleting essential livelihood assets or taking on desperate coping strategies. Every day, people must answer questions of survival: Do I leave home to find work and food? Do I skip meals so my children can eat? Do I trust a stranger for help? In Somalia and parts of the Sahel, many families face starvation, destitution, extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition, and death.



Health workers measure a child's height at a CRS-supported clinic in Somalia, where four consecutive failed rainy seasons, coupled with conflict, political instability and financial repercussions of COVID-19 have created famine-like conditions in several areas. An estimated 7.1 million people—half of whom are children—need emergency aid.

*Photo by Omar Faruk for CRS*



**579**

**CRS LOCAL PARTNERS ARE RESPONDING TO THE FOOD CRISIS ACROSS THE WORLD.**

Areas of urgent concern include East Africa and the Sahel. East Africa—particularly Somalia—is enduring the worst drought in 40 years, leading to severe hunger and malnutrition. In the Sahel, the crisis has also led to worsening conflict and mass displacement. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network predicts that by December 2023, Yemen, Nigeria, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan will have the greatest number of people in need of humanitarian food assistance.<sup>1</sup>

### CRS and Partner Response

CRS is working with 579 local partners across the world to respond to immediate needs and strengthen resilience. We recognize the urgent need to prevent famine and devastation of livelihoods, and prioritize localized cooperative approaches that enhance social cohesion and a community's ability to respond to future crises.

We design our priority efforts so that:

- People have sufficient, equitable access to quality, nutritious food and enough nutrition for their bodies to absorb the food they eat.
- From producer to consumer, global and local food systems—including crop and livestock production, food processing, transportation, functioning markets and security—enable sustainable access to nutritious food.

### Seeking Transformational Change

With CRS teams and partners often being from the countries in which we work, we benefit from local relationships, perspectives and experience to address today's challenges in innovative ways.

CRS is investing strategic funds in efforts that focus on underlying causes of the food crisis, including:

- Rehabilitation of landscapes and adaptation to climate change in fragile environments.
- Market systems that ensure families can access the nutrition they need.
- Data systems that provide accurate and timely information needed to deliver food security, track markets and identify vulnerable communities.

The global food crisis has demonstrated how interconnected our food and market systems are. When one part of the system breaks down, the whole is no longer healthy. A war in one part of the world might result in starvation in another. CRS recognizes that transformational change starts with a healthy local market system. This includes healthy landscapes in which food and livelihoods can flourish; proactive programming that prepares communities for crisis; safe, affordable and equitable access to food; and healthy bodies that can absorb the food they eat. When one of these components collapses, the foundation of people's stability and well-being fractures, placing communities at even greater risk.



Rahama Zakari leads women in a presentation on nutrition and hygiene at a health center in Niamey, Niger. CRS supports partners in Niger in activities to prevent malnutrition through awareness sessions like these.

*Photo by Emmanuel Etim for CRS*

Shifting the paradigm starts with investing in local food systems to address the root causes at their source. With more sustainable farming practices, farmers can restore their land to produce more food, which in turn increases their income and allows their families to grow healthy and strong. In the United States, we are advancing legislative priorities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of international food assistance. With investment in local farmers and their land and markets, we can transform conservation and livelihoods, and reverse the trend of global hunger and food crises, with nourished land and lives.

See the impacts of the crisis and CRS' response in Somalia, [here](#).

<sup>1</sup> Famine Early Warning Systems Network. June 2023. [Food Assistance Outlook Brief](#). [fews.net](#).