

# The Four Famines Fact Sheet

## July 2019

In 2017, Famine was declared in Northeast Nigeria, South Sudan, Yemen and Somalia. This is the first time that famine has been declared in four countries at the same time. The United Nations called it **“the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the United Nations.”** The international community has been mobilized to respond to the crisis, but the risks and the needs are still very high.



## Famine Cases and Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP) Response

### NIGERIA

The Nigerian government has been engaged in violent conflict with the militant Islamist group Boko Haram since 2009. As of April 30, 2019, almost 2 million Nigerians have been displaced within the northeast states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, and 239,031 Nigerians have fled to the neighboring countries of Niger, Cameroon and Chad to escape the violence.<sup>i</sup> In Northeast Nigeria,

- 3 million people are entirely dependent on food assistance for survival;
- 943,000 children under 5 are acutely malnourished.<sup>ii</sup>
- 10,000 cases of cholera were recorded in 2018 due to a lack of basic sanitation facilities and hygiene in displacement camps, where
- 1 latrine could be shared by almost 500 people.<sup>iii</sup>

The northeast region is one of the agricultural hubs in Nigeria, specializing in the production of cereals, vegetables and livestock. However, since Boko Haram has become active in the area, agricultural production has been significantly jeopardized. People have had their property and livelihoods taken from them and have been displaced from their ancestral homes and farmland. Many are living in makeshift groups or camps, and those who have returned to their homes have few resources to begin again.



### Response in Nigeria

In partnership with the Nigerian grassroots organization **Civil Society Coalition for Poverty Eradication**, in 2019, the Presbyterian Hunger Program has supported farmer households in the Michika Local Government Area (LGA) of Adamawa State with seeds and improved water access. Farmer households were organized into five-person groups. Each group of five received one water pumping machine for irrigation farming, 10kg of rice seedlings, vegetable seedlings such as amaranth and okra, and agricultural training. *(Photo by CISCOPE)*

“TRULY I TELL YOU, JUST AS YOU DID IT TO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE WHO ARE MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY, YOU DID IT TO ME.”

—MATTHEW 25:40

## SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan is a very new country, gaining independence in 2011, after three decades of civil war between northern and southern Sudan. Unfortunately, South Sudan’s independence did not lead to peace. By 2013, civil war erupted between different factions within South Sudan and continues today. Before the civil war started, South Sudan was already one of the poorest nations in the world, lacking infrastructure and extremely underdeveloped. Between the end of 2013 and early 2018, close to 400,000 people died as a direct result of the conflict there.<sup>iv</sup> Forced to flee the violence,

- 2.2 million are internally displaced;
- 2 million are refugees in other countries.<sup>v</sup>
- Nearly 7 million people—more than half the population of South Sudan—is at risk of acute food insecurity during the 2019 lean season (May-July).<sup>vi</sup>

The conflict, coupled with long periods of drought, followed by crop disease and pests, continues to constrain food production and access to alternative food sources.

Adding further to the suffering, rape is being used as a weapon of war - victims are targeted based on their ethnicity. South Sudanese women are typically in charge of securing food for the household. As women are obliged to travel further and further into remote locations in search of food and firewood for the family, they often encounter gender-based violence on their journey. In November 2018, in 10 days, more than 125 women and girls were raped in broad daylight on their way to food distribution sites.<sup>vii</sup>

### Response in South Sudan

In partnership with the grassroots organization **Restoring Hope South Sudan**, PHP is working to empower rural women and girls through farming, promoting positive coping mechanisms and improving on their resilience. Providing women with access to land and the necessary tools and skills to produce food at home liberates them from many of the safety risks posed by food insecurity. Women and girls are provided with seeds and tools and trained in farming, record keeping, food processing, post-harvest management and gender-based violence prevention. The capacity building activities will ensure that women and girls have improved attitudes, knowledge and skills to protect themselves from violence. Community engagement strategies and trainings engage target beneficiaries in developing action plans that address the social norms which condone gender-based violence within the communities and work towards establishing confidential reporting processes and systems of accountability. *(Photo by Restoring Hope South Sudan)*



Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has also been responding to needs in South Sudan. Through a long-time partnership with the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, PDA is helping strengthen the work of improving maternal and child health through water, sanitation, and health support.

## YEMEN

After the Arab Spring uprising in 2011 and the resulting fall of Yemen's long-time ruling dictator from power, political instability led to civil war between the Houthi Shia Muslim rebel movement and the Yemen military. In 2015, Saudi Arabia and allies, including the U.S., joined the war and escalated the conflict by initiating air strikes against the Houthis. More than 10,000 civilians have been killed in the conflict.<sup>viii</sup> 3.9 million have been internally displaced by the violence.<sup>ix</sup> In 2017, the Saudi-led coalition imposed a blockade on sea, land and air routes into Yemen; this prevented Yemenis from accessing necessary food, medicine and fuel supplies, which led to high price inflations, the depletion of supplies, and delayed humanitarian assistance.<sup>x</sup>

- 7.4 million require assistance to treat or prevent malnutrition;
- 17.8 million lack of access to clean water and sanitation, which has led to
- 1.3 million suspected cholera cases.<sup>xi</sup>
- Estimated 85,000+ children under 5 died from starvation April 2015 - October 2018.<sup>xii</sup>



### Response in Yemen

In partnership with the grassroots Yemeni organization **Generations Without Qat**, Presbyterian Hunger Program and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance are assisting vulnerable Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returnees and host community households in four areas of Bani Alhakam Sub-district, Dhubab District, Governorate of Taiz, Yemen. The intervention aims to ensure that the targeted conflict-affected communities have continued and regular access to food through the distribution of fishing kits (food production inputs) and production capacity trainings. The focus is on saving lives, alleviating immediate suffering, and supporting low livelihoods and weak coping capacities of conflict-affected people by protecting, restoring and promoting their livelihoods. *(Photo by Generations Without Qat)*

## SOMALIA

Cyclic droughts and floods, perpetual food insecurity and violent conflict primarily between Al-Shabab militants and Somali government forces has led Somalia to be in a constant state of crisis since 1991.<sup>xiii</sup> Successive poor harvests, disruption of normal activities due to continuing civil strife, and devastating flooding in 2018 further exacerbated an already precarious food situation. More than a thousand people died in the flooding, and several hundred thousand people were displaced. The flooding was so bad that 22 nutritional centers treating more than 6,000 acutely malnourished children had to be shut down.<sup>xiv</sup> Property, infrastructure, crops and livestock suffered extensive damage. As food prices continue to rise dramatically, hunger, malnutrition and disease are expected to take a fatal toll on human lives. Currently,

- 5.4 million people are food insecure;
- 1.2 million children are expected to be malnourished in 2019;
- 2.6 million people have been internally displaced.<sup>xv</sup>
- 808,802 have fled as refugees to neighboring countries.<sup>xvi</sup>





## Response in Somalia

PHP is partnering with the Somali grassroots organization **Kaalmo Relief and Development** to provide emergency food assistance through food vouchers to provide immediate access to food from local vendors. Each food voucher permits each beneficiary family to receive 50kg of rice, 8.5kg of beans, 6 liters of oil, 0.9kg of salt, and 4kg of sugar. Food vouchers work well for beneficiaries in Somalia because they minimize theft, reduce reliance on foreign food aid, and support local economies. *(Photo by Kaalmo Relief and Development)*

In times of famine and extreme hunger, emergency food is a necessity, but pre-packaged food relief from foreign agencies can undermine local food systems, contributing to long-term issues of food insecurity. The vouchers offered through our partner in Somalia provide enough food to feed a family of four for a month and can be redeemed with local vendors, helping to nourish the population and strengthen the area's food system.

## TAKE ACTION

### Urge Congress to:

- Advance global nutrition: <http://bit.ly/breadletter19>
- Support peacebuilding in South Sudan: <http://bit.ly/sudanpcusa>
- End U.S. military participation in Yemen: <http://bit.ly/yemenpcusa>
- Oppose further cuts to the International Affairs Budget, so that the U.S. can continue to respond to the famine and other global hunger crises. Contact your U.S. representative at (202) 225-3121 and your senators at (202) 224-3121.

**Give, learn more, and find current actions:** [www.pcusa.org/phpfamine](http://www.pcusa.org/phpfamine)



<sup>i</sup> UNHCR. [“Nigeria Situation.”](#) Accessed 5-9-19.

<sup>ii</sup> World Food Program. [“NorthEastern Nigeria Emergency Situation.”](#) Accessed 5-9-19.

<sup>iii</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council. 2019. [“Nigeria is steering towards another deadly Cholera outbreak.”](#)

<sup>iv</sup> Health in Humanitarian Crises Centre. 2018. [“South Sudan: Estimates of crisis-attributable mortality.”](#)

<sup>v</sup> Relief Web. 2018. [“South Sudan: 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan \(HRP\) January-December 2019 \(December 2018\).”](#)

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vii</sup> International Peace Institute. 2019. [“Gender-based Violence in South Sudan: Prevention for Peacebuilding.”](#)

<sup>viii</sup> Graham-Harrison, Emma. 2018. *The Guardian*. [“Famine in Yemen could become one of worst in living memory, UN says.”](#)

<sup>ix</sup> World Health Organization. [“Yemen crisis in numbers.”](#) Accessed May 13, 2019.

<sup>x</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council. 2018. [“Yemenis in free fall one year since blockade.”](#)

<sup>xi</sup> World Health Organization. [“Yemen crisis in numbers.”](#) Accessed May 13, 2019.

<sup>xii</sup> Karasz, Palko. 2018. *New York Times*. [“85,000 Children in Yemen May Have Died of Starvation.”](#)

<sup>xiii</sup> USAID. 2019. [“Somalia – Complex Emergency: Fact Sheet #1, Fiscal \(YR\) 2019.”](#)

<sup>xiv</sup> UN News. 2018. [“From drought to floods in Somalia; displacement and hunger worsen, says UN.”](#)

<sup>xv</sup> OCHA. 2019. [“Somalia: Failed Gu’ rains push Somalia into severe drought.”](#)

<sup>xvi</sup> UNHCR. [“Horn of Africa Somalia Situation.”](#) Accessed May 10, 2019.