

Already unprecedented food assistance needs grow further; risk of Famine persists

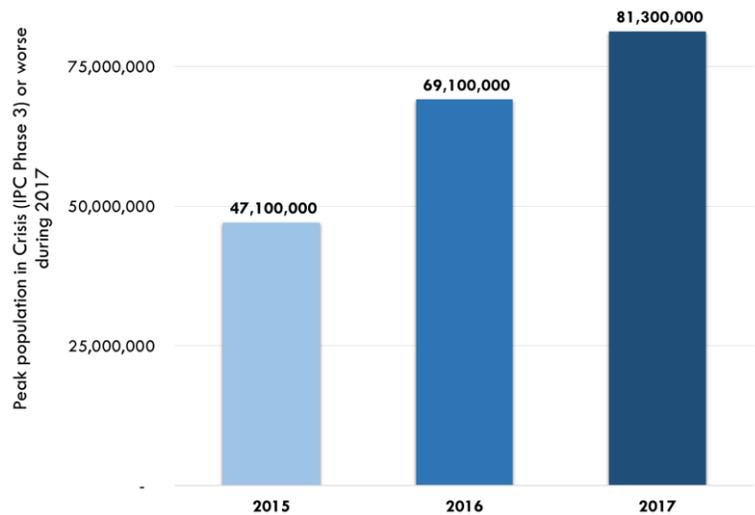
Since January, the international community has committed nearly \$2.2 billion to emergency food security programming (OCHA/FTS), protecting lives and livelihoods in many of the world’s most food insecure countries. Nevertheless, an unprecedented 81 million people are in need of emergency food assistance during 2017 (Figure 1), and a credible risk of Famine persists in Somalia, Yemen, Nigeria, and South Sudan (Figure 2). This risk of Famine is primarily driven by conflict and restrictions on humanitarian access. Additional contributions to emergency appeals, particularly in these four countries, are urgently needed to prevent large-scale loss of life. However, Famine risk will not fully recede until substantive efforts are made to resolve ongoing conflict and improve access.

In [early 2017](#), FEWS NET estimated that 70 million people would require emergency food assistance over the course of the year, primarily due to the impacts of conflict and drought on households’ access to food. Since then, a number of key events have occurred, including:

- In the Horn of Africa, the March to May rainy season was much drier than anticipated. Rainfall totals were more than 30 percent below average across large areas of Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya, and more than 50 percent below average in the worst-affected areas of these countries.
- Conflict continues to have negative impacts on livelihoods, market functioning, and humanitarian response in South Sudan, Yemen, northeast Nigeria, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, CAR, Afghanistan, and DRC.

- Severe outbreaks of cholera, acute watery diarrhea, and other communicable diseases are ongoing in Somalia, Yemen, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Nigeria, contributing to elevated levels of acute malnutrition and mortality.

Figure 1. Estimated population in need of emergency food assistance (2015-2017) across 45 countries



Sources: FEWS NET, OCHA, Southern Africa RVAC

Note: The 45 countries include 38 countries covered by FEWS NET, four additional countries in Southern Africa affected by the 2015 drought, and Syria, Pakistan, and Iraq.

Figure 2. Famine risk countries

Country	Areas of greatest concern	What might tip these areas into Famine?
South Sudan	Central Unity State, northern Jonglei	Significant interruption to current food assistance flows (Unity), absence of additional food assistance to Jonglei, lack of effective response to disease outbreaks, continued lack of access to some displaced populations (Leer Islands)
Nigeria	Inaccessible areas of Borno State	Continued restrictions on population movement and humanitarian access
Somalia	Bay Agropastoral and Northern Inland Pastoral	Significant interruption to current food assistance programs, lack of effective response to disease outbreaks
Yemen	Western governorates reliant on Hudaydah ports	Significant interruption to current food assistance and trade flows, including closure or interruptions at Hudaydah ports

Source: FEWS NET

- In Afghanistan heavy February/March snowfall has eliminated precipitation deficits, significantly improving wheat harvest prospects, though erratic spring rainfall will depress yields in some lowland areas.
- New data from large-scale food security assessments in Yemen, South Sudan, and Somalia have allowed analysis to be updated and refined, improving estimates of the food insecure population.

Given the developments outlined above, FEWS NET has revised its estimates of peak 2017 food assistance needs from 70 to 81 million people. This revised estimate is 70 percent higher than 2015, and 20 percent higher than last year (Figure 1). Note that peak needs occur at different times of the year in different countries. Peak 2017 needs in Southern Africa and Central Asia (21 million people) occurred between January and March and have now declined substantially due to ongoing harvests. However, peak needs have either persisted (e.g., Yemen, northeast Nigeria) or are expected in the coming months in all other regions (60 million people). At the country level, the largest number of people in need of emergency food assistance during the remainder of 2017 are in Yemen, Syria, South Sudan, and Ethiopia (Figure 5).

Needs in 2017 are not only uncommonly large but the severity of food insecurity is extreme in the worst-affected countries. As of early June, a credible risk of Famine during 2017 persists in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria (Figure 2). These four countries, along with Ethiopia, are already experiencing Emergency (IPC Phase 4). Emergency is characterized by extreme food gaps, very high levels of acute malnutrition, and excess mortality, particularly among children.

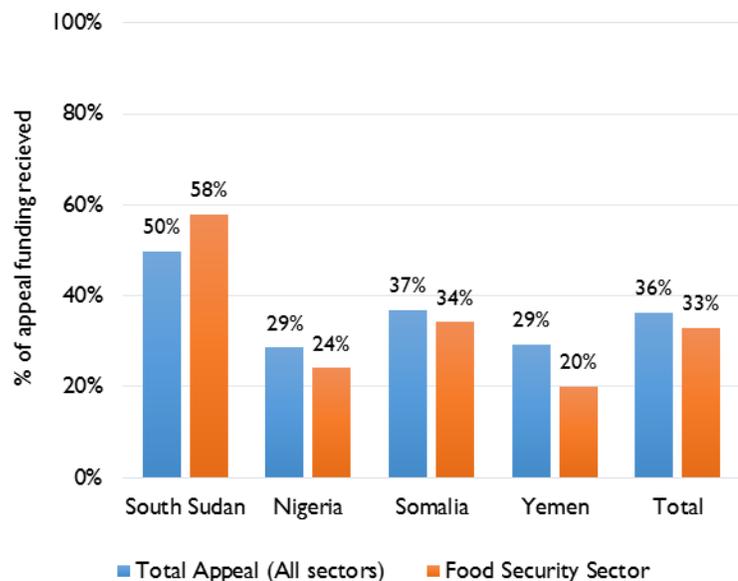
Since the beginning of the year, emergency food assistance has ramped up significantly in many of the worst-affected countries (Figure 3). This increase has been especially notable in Somalia and in South Sudan’s Unity State. Nonetheless, large gaps remain. On average, halfway through 2017, humanitarian appeals are only 36 percent funded in the four countries at risk of Famine. Funding for food security programming is especially low in Nigeria and Yemen, where contributions to date cover only 24 percent and 20 percent of needs, respectively (Figure 4). Additional resources are urgently required to fund critical food, nutrition, WASH, and health responses. Nonetheless, the primary driver of Famine risk is ongoing conflict and the related restrictions on humanitarian access. Until parties to the conflict make substantive efforts to end fighting, the possibility of Famine is likely to persist.

Figure 3. Changes in emergency food assistance provision between January and April 2017

Country	Jan 2017 population reached by food assistance (% of total pop)	Apr 2017 population reached by food assistance (% of total pop)
Koch, Mayendit, and Leer, South Sudan	3,000 (1%)	134,000 (41%)
Northeast Nigeria	1.6 million (10%)	1.9 million (12%)
Somalia	500,000 (4%)	2.65 million (22%)
Yemen	2.9 million (10%)	3.7 million (13%)

Source: WFP, Food Security Cluster

Figure 4. Status of appeal funding in countries at risk of Famine



Source: OCHA/FTS accessed June 19, 2017

Figure 5. Estimated peak size of the population in need of emergency food assistance during 2017

