



# 2024 EMERGENCY WATCHLIST



## NO MYTHS JUST FACTS

CHARTING A COURSE THROUGH  
A NEW CRISIS LANDSCAPE

- 01 SUDAN
- 02 OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY
- 03 SOUTH SUDAN
- 04 BURKINA FASO
- 05 MYANMAR
- 06 MALI
- 07 SOMALIA
- 08 NIGER
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- 10 DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



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**COVER:** A man sits by a destroyed shack in a flooded area in northern Sudan. Torrential rains have destroyed more than 450 homes in the area.  
**LEFT:** Adama Wudaa cradles her daughter in her lap at an IRC stabilization clinic in Nigeria for children with acute malnutrition.

# FOREWORD

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) Emergency Watchlist started as a tool to support internal management. It helps the IRC determine where to focus our emergency preparedness efforts, successfully predicting on average 85-95% of the 20 countries facing the worst humanitarian deteriorations. It continues to play this role in helping us prepare and pre-position for next year's crises, but this document is now published because what we are seeing needs to be understood by a much wider audience. The stories told here are not just IRC's problem; they are the world's problem.



IRC President and CEO David Miliband talks with mothers and children in Amman, Jordan.

For many of the people the IRC serves, this is the worst of times. The number of people in humanitarian need increased fourfold between 2014 and 2023. These lives are often marked by extreme danger, continuing insecurity, and very high levels of poverty. This Emergency Watchlist is full of statistics, but the IRC never forgets that behind these numbers are individuals. The figures in the report are shocking—the human misery, even more so.

It is impossible to discuss humanitarian needs around the world today without thinking about the conflict in Gaza and Israel. At the same time, we cannot forget massive, and growing, challenges globally. It is noteworthy that unlike any previous year, 8 of the Top 10 countries are in Africa and that, for the second year in a row, an African country—this time, Sudan—tops the list. This Emergency Watchlist describes the factors that drive these challenges, the myths that warp action, and the tangible solutions needed.

Today, we are seeing an overwhelming concentration of humanitarian crises in Watchlist countries, pushed by factors including the rise in violent coups, the failure to uphold international humanitarian law, exposure to climate risk, and increase in public debt matched with diminishing international support. While only accounting for about 10% of the world's population, Watchlist countries account for 86% of all people in humanitarian need globally and approximately 70% of displaced people, and those suffering from severe food insecurity—and a growing share of global extreme poverty. What were once separate circles of crisis are now a Venn diagram with an expanding intersection. Three decades ago, 44% of conflicts happened in climate-vulnerable states. Now that figure is 67%.

While the figures are shocking, the trends need understanding. Watchlist countries are a lens through which

to understand what is happening globally—and why. There are very hard questions raised by this Emergency Watchlist, about the relationship between states and nonstate actors, the role of international institutions, about the way the humanitarian sector works, and, above all, about what is to be done to help millions of people—in fact, hundreds of millions of people—fulfill the dream of a life of dignity and humanity.

There are plenty of “answers” that are decidedly wrong. They are myths, obscuring the emerging geography of global crisis and how to navigate it. Section 3 lays these out clearly. It is a myth to claim that wealthy countries have taken their fair share of refugees, or that cutting emissions alone will spare the worst impacts of climate change, especially in countries already at the sharp end.

Alongside the myths, there are ideas that could work better. This is the focus of our recommendations. They are practical, sober, but also a stretch. They call on states, civil society, multilateral organizations, and the private sector to do things differently. The interacting crises of climate, conflict, and economy need a new approach. That is why we highlight new measures in areas like climate adaptation, social safety nets, and women's empowerment, without forgetting the wider politics of conflict. The debate about these ideas is urgently needed, and real answers even more so.

**David Miliband**  
IRC President and CEO



**THERE ARE PLENTY OF “ANSWERS” THAT ARE DECIDEDLY WRONG. THEY ARE MYTHS, OBSCURING THE EMERGING GEOGRAPHY OF GLOBAL CRISIS AND HOW TO NAVIGATE IT.**

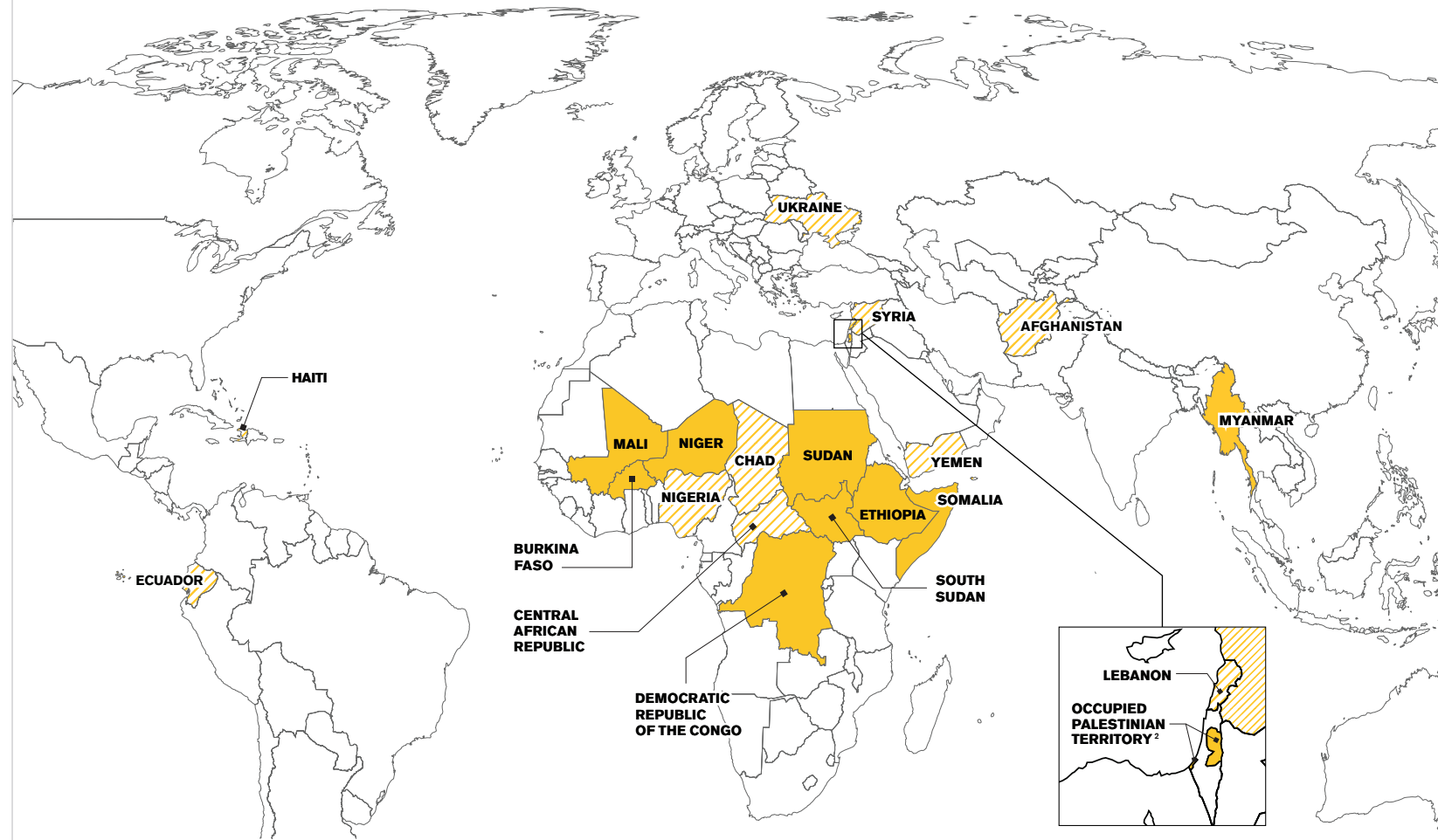
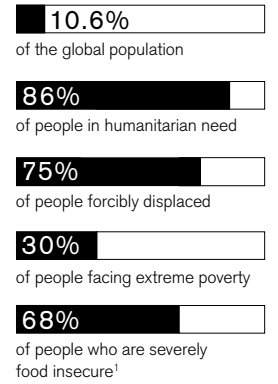
# AT A GLANCE

The Emergency Watchlist report is the IRC's assessment of the 20 countries at greatest risk of new humanitarian emergencies each year. It is based on an analytically rigorous process that deploys 65 quantitative and qualitative variables, as well as qualitative insights from the IRC's experience of working in more than 50 countries around the world to identify which countries to include on the list and where to rank them.

- RANKED TOP 10
- UNRANKED SECOND HALF

For the past decade, this report has helped the IRC determine where to focus our emergency preparedness efforts, successfully predicting on average 85-95% of the 20 countries facing the worst deteriorations. It is also where we share our analysis of how global humanitarian crisis is evolving, why, and what can be done to reduce the impact on affected communities.

**THE 20 WATCHLIST COUNTRIES ACCOUNT FOR:**



<sup>1</sup> Severely food insecure refers to **IPC 3** or worse levels of food insecurity.  
<sup>2</sup> We use “occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)” in this report because this is the term used by the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).



# NEW EXTREMES

## OF HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Humanitarian crises upend people's lives, threaten their very survival and deny them the ability to recover and rebuild their lives. There are many causes of humanitarian crisis, though armed conflict, climate change and economic shocks are the most common. And crises look different in different places, depending on what threats people face, whether they have routes to flee to safety, and more. But the effects are the same. Immense, avoidable suffering that lasts long after a crisis has dropped out of the headlines. And communities denied the resources they need, leading to reliance on the IRC and other humanitarians to offer assistance and protection as resources to do so dwindle.

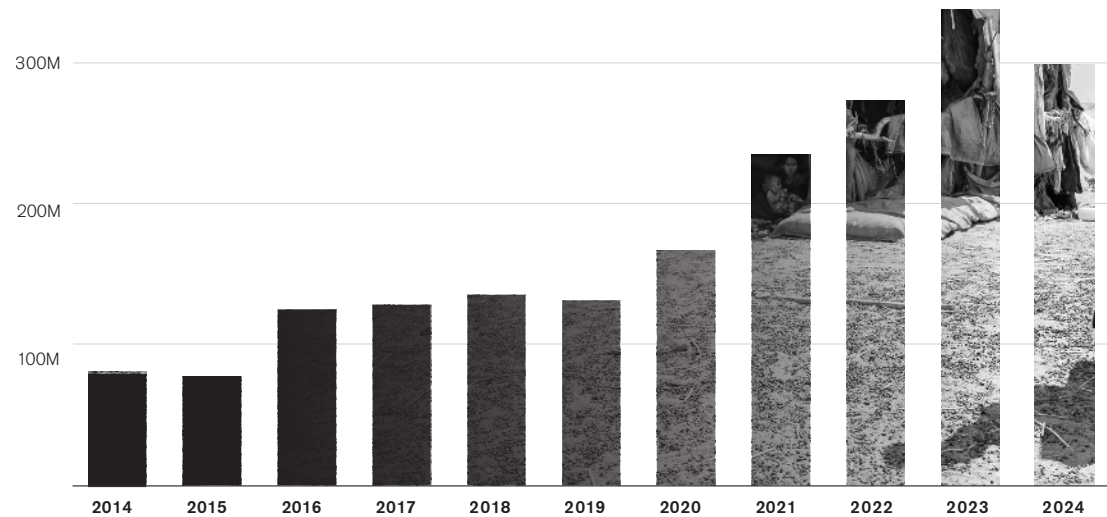
Watchlist countries are home to only **10.6%** of the world's population but carry a disproportionate burden of global humanitarian crisis. While the total number of people in humanitarian need globally drops slightly

in 2024, we are seeing record levels of humanitarian crisis on other key metrics.

- **299.4 million** people are in humanitarian need in 2024, and **86%** of them (258 million) are in Watchlist countries. Communities in need of humanitarian assistance and protection face threats to their life and health, physical security, rights and dignity, and—without agencies like the IRC—would not have access to the services they need to survive, recover and rebuild their lives. The total number of people in need in 2024 is 17.5% lower than the record **363 million** in 2023. However, the number of people in need in non-Watchlist countries dropped 43%, whereas the number of people in need in Watchlist countries remained steady, hardly changing from 260 million in 2023 (a drop of 1%). And the number of people in



### The number of people in need increased more than fourfold between 2014 and 2023



Source: Global Humanitarian Overview

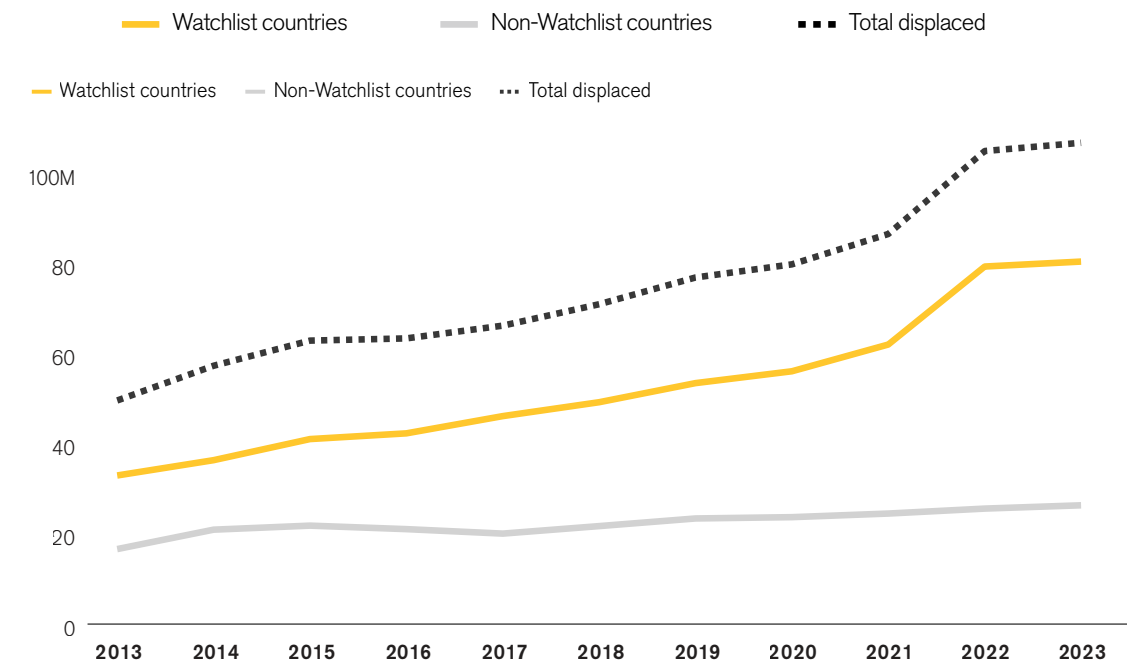


Nadia Mohammed Fadhl and her family, including her son Abdullah, fled violence in Taiz, Yemen. They now live in a temporary shelter outside of Aden.



**86%**  
OF PEOPLE IN  
HUMANITARIAN  
NEED GLOBALLY  
ARE IN  
WATCHLIST  
COUNTRIES

### Watchlist countries make up the majority of the rise in global displacement since 2013



Source: UNHCR

need in Watchlist countries has more than doubled in just the last six years—a **130%** increase.<sup>3</sup>

- **110 million** people are forcibly displaced worldwide, **75%** of whom are from Watchlist countries, whether they have since fled across a border or have remained within their country of origin.<sup>4</sup> The number of forcibly displaced people is at a record high and has more than doubled since 2013. Leaving one's home—although a last resort—is a reality for our clients. Internally displaced people remain the majority of those displaced in the world—nearly 62%—highlighting needs for assistance and protection within Watchlist countries.
- **237.8 million** people globally are experiencing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+), **68%** (162.8 million) of whom are in Watchlist countries. All of the more than 128,000 people experiencing catastrophic levels (IPC 5) of food

insecurity worldwide are in Watchlist countries. When families are experiencing crisis levels of food insecurity (IPC 3), they cannot buy enough food to meet their needs, children are thinner than they should be and people are more susceptible to disease as their immune systems weaken. Urgent action is required to save lives once food insecurity reaches emergency levels (IPC 4). At catastrophic levels of food insecurity (IPC 5), people starve to death every day, with children dying at twice the rate of adults. Children in Watchlist countries are nearly **twice** as likely as children in non-Watchlist countries to experience impaired physical and cognitive growth and be shorter than they should be for their age due to inadequate access to healthy food.

- **659 million** people are living in extreme poverty today, according to World Bank estimates, and **30%** of them are in Watchlist countries.<sup>5</sup> While the rest (70%) are concentrated mostly in India

<sup>3</sup> IRC analysis of Global Humanitarian Overview data for 2023 and 2024.

<sup>4</sup> According to the latest accessible **United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees (UNHCR) data** broken down by country.

<sup>5</sup> According to the latest accessible World Bank Group Data per country. Where recent (post-2011) data is not available for a country, we identified alternative sources for extreme poverty estimates in two countries—Venezuela and Syria—that have seen very significant changes in poverty levels. For all other countries with recent missing data, we used the regional averages that the World Bank provides.



(25%) and non-Watchlist African countries (29%), there is a particularly high rate of extreme poverty in Watchlist countries. On average, 31% of people living in Watchlist countries experience extreme poverty as compared to 12% in India. The World Bank **defines** extreme poverty as living on less than \$2.15 per day, but poverty is more than just access to income. People living in extreme poverty face severe **lack of access** to basic needs necessary for their survival, such as drinking water, health care, sanitation and education.

It is well recognized that extreme poverty is increasingly concentrated in the **list** of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings (FCS)—up to **two-thirds** of the global population living in extreme poverty will be in these settings by 2030. Extreme poverty has surged over **42%** in Watchlist countries in the past three decades while the rest of the world has slashed poverty by over **64%** during the same period. Extreme poverty cannot be eradicated globally unless we take actions that target the specific challenges facing Watchlist countries.

### THESE GLOBAL TRENDS PRESENT PARTICULAR THREATS FOR SPECIFIC COMMUNITIES WITHIN WATCHLIST COUNTRIES

All but **three**<sup>6</sup> Watchlist countries are in the bottom 25% of countries in the Women, Peace and Security Index. This means that Watchlist countries fall behind in **providing** safe, just and inclusive lives for women and girls. Women and girls in Watchlist countries are at heightened risk of gender-based violence during conflict. Rape and sexual violence cases in Sudan, for example, escalated massively in the first few months of the war and reached **136** documented cases by September 2023, but the number is very likely much higher. Women and girls in the Top 10 Watchlist countries are almost **twice** as likely to experience intimate partner violence compared to non-Watchlist countries.

of women in low-income Watchlist countries are employed as compared to 68% in non-Watchlist low-income countries.

**Over half of Watchlist countries score in the bottom 25% of countries in the LGBT Equality Index.** This means that Watchlist countries perform the worst on **public attitudes** towards LGBTQ populations while at the same time failing to protect their rights and ensure their safety. During periods of crisis and armed conflict, LGBTQ populations face **heightened risks** of imprisonment, interrogation, displacement, torture and sexual violence by governments and armed groups due to their perceived or actual sexual orientations and gender identities. Even while LGBTQ communities seek safety within or outside Watchlist countries, they face **risks** of abuse and exploitation by actors including security and immigration authorities, as well as traffickers and smugglers. They also often end up in new settings with similar or even greater risks.

Different communities within the LGBTQ population face different risks and have different needs across Watchlist countries. But across these countries, anti-LGBTQ attitudes and legislation mean that humanitarian aid organizations cannot conduct safe risk assessments and provide services tailored to their needs. The limited availability of data and the risk of disclosing one's LGBTQ identity limit both the ability of organizations to offer services to LGBTQ clients and the ability of LGBTQ clients to access those services.

**WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE TOP 10 WATCHLIST COUNTRIES ARE ALMOST TWICE AS LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE COMPARED TO NON-WATCHLIST COUNTRIES.**

Women in Watchlist countries also face significant barriers to establishing livelihoods and independence. They have completed an average of just **4.8** years of education compared to almost 9 years in non-Watchlist countries. Only 46% of women in Watchlist countries are employed, compared to nearly 60% in non-Watchlist countries. This contrast is even more extreme in low-income countries;<sup>7</sup> 44%

<sup>6</sup> Ukraine, Ecuador and Lebanon are the only three not in the bottom 25% of the WPS Index but they are in the bottom 50%.

<sup>7</sup> IRC analysis of data from Women, Peace and Security Index.

# EIGHT FACTS

## EXPLAINING THE EXTREME LEVELS OF HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The overwhelming concentration of global humanitarian crisis in Watchlist countries allows us to use these countries as a lens through which to understand what is happening globally—and why. While the crises in each country on the Emergency Watchlist are shaped by local political, economic and security dynamics, there are eight facts we observe across the 20 countries that explain the growth and spread of crisis:

**Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index** of vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges). Only **9.4%** of the world's population live in these 14 countries, but they represent **69%** of humanitarian need globally, **65%** of crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+) and **62%** of displacement.

The overlap between conflict-affected and climate-vulnerable countries is growing, primarily because of an increasing number of conflicts erupting in climate-vulnerable countries. More than **half** of the conflicts that erupted since 1995 were concentrated in the 25% of countries already most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and least prepared to face them—60% of these new conflicts in climate-vulnerable countries since 1995 are in Watchlist countries. The percentage of conflicts taking place in climate-vulnerable countries increased from 44% to 67% over the past three decades.

### FACT 1

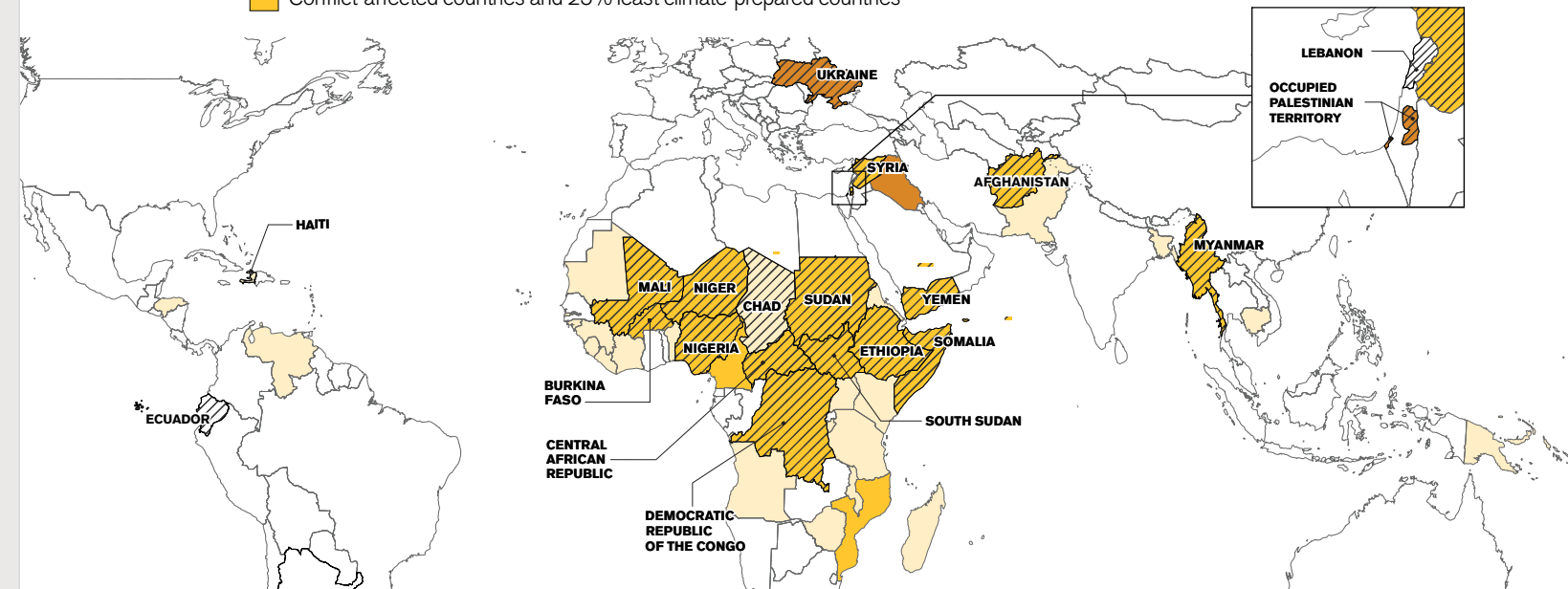
**Armed conflict and climate change are increasingly converging in the same places at the same time.**

Fourteen Watchlist countries are among the 16 countries globally (shown in the map below) where armed conflict intersects with vulnerability to climate change (as defined by appearing in the bottom 25% of countries on the



### Countries that are experiencing both armed conflict and climate vulnerability are at the epicenter of global humanitarian crisis

- Conflict-affected countries
- 25% least climate-prepared countries
- Watchlist countries
- Conflict-affected countries and 25% least climate-prepared countries



Source: Administrative boundaries from GADM; Conflict-affected countries from World Bank, FY24 list; Climate-vulnerable countries from ND-GAIN Index (2021). Notes: ND-GAIN does not have data on South Sudan but we count South Sudan as climate-vulnerable because it's ranked second on INFORM Climate Risk Index (2022).



**FACT 2**

**Civilians are caught between states and the growing influence of armed groups—whether organized along political, communal, criminal or any other lines.** Weak state capacity and legitimacy is **one** of the key factors leading to protracted conflicts and humanitarian crises. Weak governance **creates** space for nonstate armed groups to control and influence territories and resources. Armed groups trigger new conflicts and intensify old ones, driving further needs, displacement and food insecurity from South Sudan to Mali and Haiti. And governments at times are turning to foreign armed groups—including mercenaries like the Russian-based **Wagner Group** in multiple places across Africa—as in Burkina Faso, Mali and Central African Republic (CAR).

The number of armed groups in Watchlist countries is higher than ever before. Since 2010, the number of armed groups involved in conflicts in Watchlist countries has increased by **167%**, complicating efforts to resolve the resulting crises. The result is **longer and harder-to-resolve** conflicts. Over the past decade, Watchlist countries have on average experienced **7.6** years of conflict; seven Watchlist countries haven't seen a single year without conflict.<sup>8</sup> Long conflicts risk more civilian lives and wreak havoc on local health care, food and economic systems. The war in Sudan, which pushes that country to the top of the Watchlist for the first time, started off with fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid

Support Forces (RSF). But many nonstate armed groups quickly **joined** the fighting, complicating efforts to negotiate an end to the conflict and contributing to a steep rise in violence and civilian harm—including mass killings—along ethnic lines in the Darfur region.

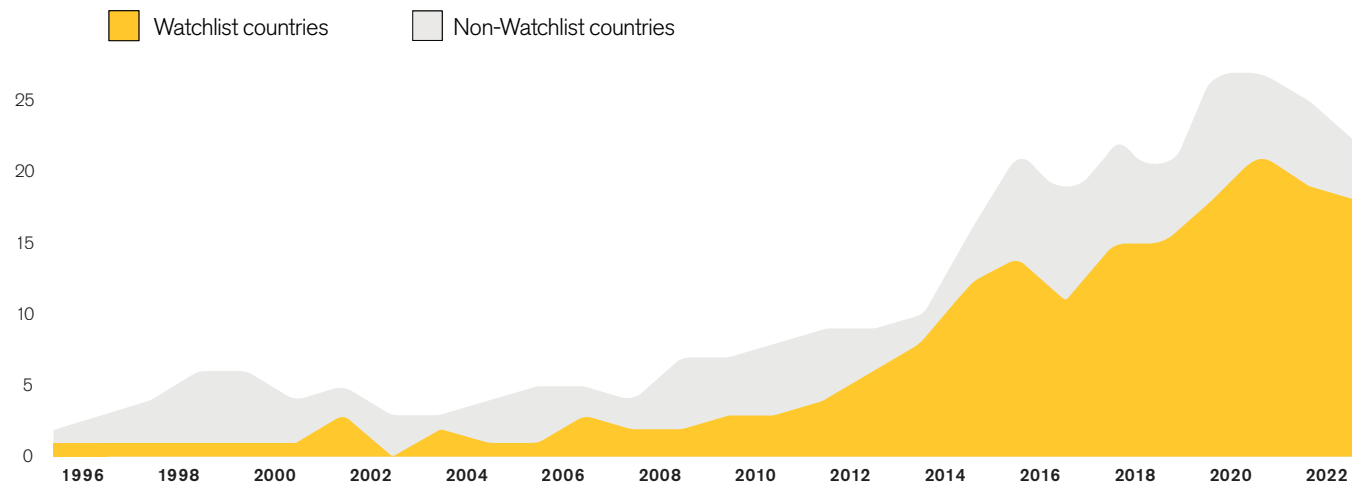
**FACT 3**

**Regional and global powers are intervening to drive and intensify conflicts, not calm them.** And even when they try to mediate conflict, their efforts are proving ineffective. Sudan is a case study in how **external intervention** can drive escalation, with multiple countries equipping parties to conflict with weapons and supplies rather than pushing for peace. But there are many examples from across the Emergency Watchlist, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Syria.

Of the 15 countries experiencing internationalized internal conflicts in 2022—where foreign states have intervened directly through deploying troops in support of domestic parties to conflict—11 are on the Emergency Watchlist. Watchlist countries accounted for 79% of major<sup>9</sup> internationalized internal conflicts in 2022, an increase of **137%** since 2000. These conflicts are typically **harder to resolve**. Internal wars that have become internationalized are nearly **3.8** times less likely to end than internal wars that have not.

<sup>8</sup> Afghanistan, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria and Yemen.  
<sup>9</sup> Conflicts that result in at least 1,000 battle-related deaths.

**Watchlist countries account for the growing number of internationalized conflicts globally**



Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)

**FACT 4**

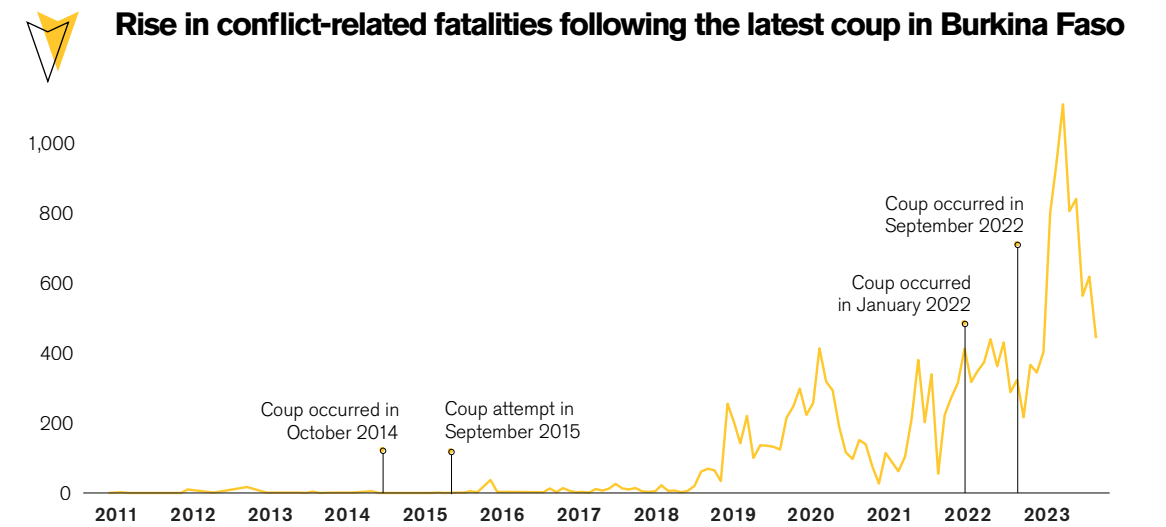
**Violent and unconstitutional leadership transitions are increasing the risk of crisis.** Five of the Top 10 countries—Mali, Sudan, Niger, Burkina Faso and Myanmar—have experienced coups in the last three years. The widely reported **resurgence** in military coups—particularly in Africa—is driving up social and political unrest that then leads to **insecurity** and, in turn, humanitarian crisis. Conflict fatalities, humanitarian needs and internal

displacement all increased following the September 2022 coup in Burkina Faso and the May 2021 coup in Mali, when comparing the year before the countries experienced coups and the year after.

But these unconstitutional changes in power do not just increase the risk of armed conflict. Donors often subsequently cut off the new government from aid and funding for social protection programs, increasing the impact of crises.

**SINCE SEPT. 2022 COUP IN BURKINA FASO:**

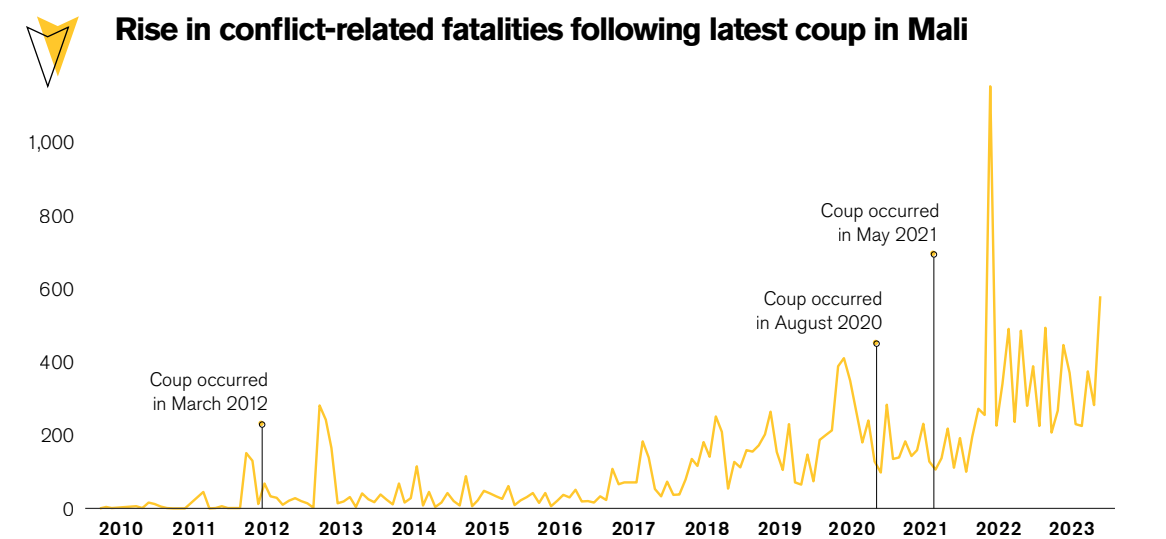
**+190%**  
 CONFLICT FATALITIES  
**+21%**  
 INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT  
**+31%**  
 HUMANITARIAN NEEDS



Source: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

**SINCE MAY 2021 COUP IN MALI:**

**+71%**  
 CONFLICT FATALITIES  
**+22%**  
 INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT  
**+11%**  
 HUMANITARIAN NEEDS



Source: ACLED

**FACT 5**

**Civilians and the infrastructure they depend on are increasingly unsafe as international law fails to protect them from the actions of warring parties.**

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) obliges warring parties to take steps to mitigate the impacts of war on civilians, but this is happening neither consistently nor reliably. IRC teams around the world see this **Age of Impunity** in the crises affecting the communities we serve.

Whether parties to conflict are directly targeting civilians, just not doing enough to distinguish military targets or failing to respect specific IHL protections for hospitals, the effect is the same: **90%** of casualties during conflicts are civilians. With the number of people killed in state-based armed conflict hitting a record **205,168**<sup>10</sup> in 2022, the most since **Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)** records began in 1989, the statistics bear out what IRC teams are seeing: the civilian impact of armed conflict is devastating and growing.

- In Burkina Faso, 46 locations across the country were under siege by armed groups in July 2023, limiting access to food and other humanitarian aid supplies, health and education services, and land for farming and grazing cattle. Such sieges have affected one million people since 2019, according to **Amnesty International**, which has also accused armed groups of killing civilians, abducting women and girls and attacking civilian infrastructure.
- In the western Darfur region of Sudan, civilians have seen a surge of violence, displacement and killings along ethnic lines. **Amnesty International** has accused armed militias of carrying out atrocities against non-Arab minorities, pushing more than **450,000** people into eastern Chad as of November 2023. Across Sudan, the failure of parties to the conflict to protect hospitals means that **80%** were out of service as of mid-2023.
- In Gaza, **U.N. experts** and **Amnesty International** have alleged that Israeli forces carried out a number of “indiscriminate” airstrikes as part of the military operation that followed Palestinian groups’ massive incursion into Israel on October 7, 2023. They cited evidence that the strikes failed to observe the IHL obligation to distinguish between civilians and military objectives. In the October 7 attack, Palestinian armed groups targeted both

military sites and civilians near Gaza, killing 1,200 people, the significant majority of whom were civilians, and taking around 240 more hostage.

- In northwestern Syria, over **65** civilians—including 30 women and children—were killed in October 2023 in aerial and artillery attacks carried out by Syrian and Russian forces, including on civilian facilities like schools, medical centers, markets and camps for internally displaced people.

War without law has long-term impacts. As parties to conflict destroy the health, food and other systems that communities rely on, the effects of war grow and last ever longer. In wars since the 1990s, for each person killed in the fighting, between **3 and 15** have died from starvation, preventable diseases and other consequences of the conflict.

**FACT 6**

**Parties to conflict are failing to uphold their responsibility to protect humanitarian access.**

Instead, they are restricting humanitarian access and targeting humanitarian personnel without facing diplomatic or legal consequences. The Top 10 Watchlist countries face high humanitarian access constraints—an average of **4.1** out of 5—meaning that people in need and humanitarian organizations face high constraints accessing each other.

Humanitarian access faces a range of obstacles, not least related to conflict dynamics. In Mali and Burkina Faso, nonstate armed groups regularly besiege entire cities, cutting off towns from food and water and imposing near-complete blockades of humanitarian access. More than **100** U.N. aid workers were killed in Gaza in the first month of airstrikes during the Israel-Hamas conflict, the largest number of U.N. aid workers to ever be killed in such a short time span, illustrating the scale of security threats that prevented aid workers from delivering programming. The presence of landmines regularly restricts movements in Central African Republic.

Diplomatic and bureaucratic issues can impede access. In Syria, the U.N. Security Council failed to renew the cross-border aid mechanism that allows for passage of humanitarian aid to territories outside the control of the Syrian government. And humanitarian access can face physical and environmental barriers too. In Somalia, floods in March-May 2023 damaged roads and supply routes in Galmudug State, hindering delivery



**90%**  
**OF CASUALTIES  
IN CONFLICTS  
ARE CIVILIANS**

<sup>10</sup> UCDP data accessed on November 22, 2023. The **Top 10** countries with the most battle-related deaths in UCDP datasets are all Watchlist countries, with Ethiopia, Ukraine and Somalia being the Top 3.



**ABOVE:** Saada Sheik tends to her goats in drought-stricken Ethiopia.

of assistance to IDPs in flood-affected areas. Whatever the cause, the end result of access constraints is to deny crisis-affected communities access to the services they require to survive, recover and rebuild their lives.

**FACT 7**

**Heightened exposure to climate risks is threatening lives and livelihoods right now—and El Niño could exacerbate these risks in some Watchlist countries.**

Communities in Watchlist countries contribute the least to climate change—only **1.7%** of global carbon emissions in 2021. Yet, they are facing a disproportionate burden of the climate crisis. In 2021, people in Watchlist countries were **2.75** times more likely to be affected by natural hazards than those in non-Watchlist countries. And the number of climate shocks has increased by **356%** in Watchlist countries since 1980, compared to 222% in other countries.

Climate change contributes to displacement, destroys people’s livelihoods and disrupts people’s access to food. Climate change is expected to raise food prices by **20%** by 2050 and weather-related hazards displace around **21.5** million people per year. Conflict-affected states often lack the resilience to withstand threats that other states can—as demonstrated by the catastrophic impact of drought in Somalia that killed approximately **43,000** people in 2022 alone, half of whom were under the age of 5. Between 1995 and 2021, there was

a more than **sixteenfold** increase in the number of people affected by natural hazards in Watchlist countries, compared to a decrease of 66% in non-Watchlist countries. Climate change also **interacts** with conflict to exacerbate humanitarian crisis. Land degradation in Mali had fed into grievances by communities dependent on agriculture, leading to a violent uprising that contributed to Mali’s current humanitarian crisis.

At the same time, El Niño—the periodic global climate pattern—is already pushing precipitation and temperature levels toward **extremes** in some Watchlist countries, with impacts on food insecurity expected between late 2023 and early 2024. In Ethiopia and Somalia, above-average rains could cause displacement, losses in livestock and crops, increases in food insecurity, and higher incidence of livestock and human diseases.

**FACT 8**

**The global increase in public debt is preventing some governments from investing in the systems and services to prevent and address humanitarian crisis.**

**Twelve** out of 20 countries on the Emergency Watchlist are either in debt distress already or are at moderate to high risk of falling into it, meaning that they **lack** the resources to meet their financial obligations. While global debt has **decreased** in the past two years, it’s still higher than the levels before the COVID-19 pandemic and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts that global debt may return to its long-term rising trend. The global rise of interest rates on loans has made borrowing **more expensive** for middle- and low-income countries (including all Watchlist countries). These countries have already been facing economic turmoil as they recovered from the negative economic impacts of the **COVID-19 pandemic** and the war in Ukraine, which drove up fuel and food prices.

**Fourteen countries** on the Emergency Watchlist were in urgent need of debt relief in 2022, according to the U.N. Watchlist countries are facing the convergence of climate change and armed conflict, yet their debt crisis is preventing them from investing in systems that mitigate these crises. As large portions of their budgets are spent on debt servicing, they have **fewer** resources to spend on social and protection services, health care, education and **climate resilience**, feeding into vicious cycles that led them to borrow in the first place. Somalia paid more than **95%** of its government revenue on repaying its debt in 2022—the highest percentage in the world—preventing the country from investing in systems that could have averted the catastrophic food security crisis that year.

## WHY ARE COUNTRIES IN AFRICA SO DISPROPORTIONATELY REPRESENTED IN THE 2024 EMERGENCY WATCHLIST?

These facts help to explain the scale of humanitarian crisis and unmet needs in the world. But they cannot, alone, explain why African countries represent over half of all countries on the Emergency Watchlist and 8 of the Top 10 at a time when large swathes of Africa are booming and its middle class is growing rapidly. Nor can these facts explain why an African country—Sudan—ranks first on the list this year and another, Somalia, topped it last year.

Looking at the 11 African Watchlist countries as a set, we can see that security, political, climate and economic challenges are converging to intensify the risk of humanitarian crisis. And, lying behind the converging challenges in these countries, is a crisis of governance. Governments in Watchlist countries in Africa score **-1.36** out of 2 on World Bank's Governance indicators—compared to 0.14 in non-Watchlist countries globally—indicating that they lag far behind on the ability to provide public services and ensure political stability. Non-Watchlist African countries fare better, with an average score of -0.52, while some countries in southern Africa, for example Namibia and Botswana, score higher than the global average.

Limited effective governance in the 11 African Watchlist countries is tied to, but not an inevitable consequence of, their history. All but Ethiopia experienced long periods of European colonialism and many were exposed to the worst excesses of the slave trade. Post-colonial leaders, in most cases, did little to reform the highly centralized governing structures they inherited, especially in West Africa, leading to the continuation of extractive policies and dangerous underdevelopment of institutions, economics and politics.

Limited effective governance is one of the key factors that has allowed a vicious cycle of conflict, climate vulnerability and economic turmoil to take hold, increasing the frequency of the shocks that drive humanitarian crisis—while actively disrupting efforts to strengthen governance.

Key symptoms of limited effective governance in African Watchlist countries today include:

- **The spread of nonstate armed groups exploiting** weak governance to extend their influence and control over territories where governments are absent. The number of armed groups active in African Watchlist countries has increased from 29 to 74 (by **155%**) between 2010 and 2022. Some states in African Watchlist countries struggle to control their territory. In 2022, the state in Burkina Faso controlled around **60%** of the country, and Malian state authorities controlled as little as 15% of Mali.
- **Overdependence on climate-vulnerable sectors in remote areas** as centralized state structures—inherited from colonial



A Malian mother feeds her child with therapeutic milk at a clinic. Photo: UNOCHA/Michele Cattani

governments—concentrate economic investment in capitals. The lack of investment in remote areas leads people to depend on subsistence agriculture and livestock, exposing their livelihoods to climate risks. The same central Sahel areas **neglected** during colonial and post-colonial periods are today suffering from the worst effects of climate change.

- **The spread of coups as militaries exploit popular dissatisfaction with current governments to control the state and their institutions.** Nearly half of the African Watchlist countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Sudan) have had unconstitutional transfers of power in the last **three** years; some have had two. High **popular dissatisfaction** with ineffective governance has led some people to support incoming military governments. In a number of cases, international outcry at coups has led to sanctions and cutting off international aid. For example, the **European Union**, France and the **United States** have cut off Niger from at least \$1 billion in aid following the July 2023 coup.
- **Dependence on debt and imports as backbones of some African economies**, leading to economic turmoil and exacerbation of humanitarian crises. Inflation rates in Africa are as high as **18.5%**, nearly triple the world's average of 6.9%. Governments in Africa are also struggling to find resources to afford public services as the public sector debt-to-GDP ratio in sub-Saharan Africa stands at **almost 60%**, and high percentages of their revenues are spent on repaying **debt**. These challenges are particularly pronounced for African Watchlist countries because they face slower GDP growth (**2.9%** in 2021) than either non-Watchlist African countries (**5.2%**) or the global average (**6.0%**)—a rate that many non-Watchlist countries in Africa, like Morocco, Senegal, Eswatini and Botswana, surpassed in 2021. As a result, **10** African Watchlist countries—all but Nigeria—are facing moderate or high risk of debt distress, or are already in debt distress.

## THE MYTHS OBSCURING REAL AND PROVEN SOLUTIONS

The international community should know how to respond effectively to the human impact of the crises in Watchlist countries by now, even if it cannot resolve the root causes. Conflicts in Watchlist countries have lasted an average of **13** years. The growing scale of humanitarian needs in these countries shows that the international community is still unprepared—and sometimes even unwilling—to respond effectively to these crises.

Governments of wealthy countries, the U.N., regional bodies, and private and institutional donors have a unique power and responsibility to prevent and address humanitarian crises. However, a set of myths has taken hold of the policy and media discourse about these crises. As a result, decision makers in these bodies are turning to the wrong solutions. In some cases, they are becoming overwhelmed by daunting statistics and assume that there are no solutions at all. The result is insufficient, ineffective or even counterproductive action, which can make crises worse.

These myths are superficially attractive because they are often politically expedient, shift the burden of responsibility to others, or excuse countries and communities with power and resources from their legal, moral and ethical obligations to communities in need. Busting these myths and replacing them with facts opens the doorway to better solutions that respond more effectively and break the cycle of crisis.

### **MYTH 1: Humanitarian access can be measured in truckloads of supplies alone.**

**FACT:** Meaningful humanitarian access is about communities having ongoing access to the services they require to survive, recover and rebuild their lives. When reporting focuses purely on the number of trucks on the move, not what they are delivering or the feasibility of effective humanitarian action at the other end, it becomes harder to make the case for meaningful access.

**Humanitarian access** is both the ability of humanitarian actors to reach populations affected by crisis and the

ability of affected populations to access humanitarian assistance and services. Moving trucks of supplies will never be enough if they are not carrying the right supplies or humanitarians cannot deliver programming at their destination. Delivering bags of flour to a community will achieve nothing if families lack water to make bread or fuel to cook it. And a truckload of medicines will not help people in a town where airstrikes have destroyed all the hospitals.

Timeliness of assistance is also critical. When an earthquake struck Türkiye and Syria in February 2023, it was vital to get humanitarian assistance to where it was needed, via the fastest possible routes. **Damage** to roads in both Türkiye and Syria meant that it wasn't possible to move enough aid through the Bab al-Hawa crossing that had provided a lifeline for **4 million** people living in opposition-controlled areas of northwest Syria before the earthquake. However, it took a **week** for the U.N. Emergency Relief Chief to secure agreement from the Syrian government to allow the U.N. and other actors to use two other crossings from Türkiye and to move supplies cross-line from government-controlled areas of Syria. As a result, many Syrians were denied lifesaving assistance when they needed it most.

Later in 2023, Israel **announced** a "complete siege" of Gaza after October 7, stopping all food, water and fuel from entering the area from Israel or via the Rafah crossing with Egypt. It subsequently resumed a limited water supply to southern Gaza and started to allow a few trucks of aid to enter Gaza via Rafah, **between** 10 and around 100 per day, from October 21. However, these truckloads of supplies had a very limited impact for two reasons. Firstly, Israel continued to block the entry of fuel needed to transport the aid onwards to where it was most needed within Gaza. Then, secondly, continued massive airstrikes throughout Gaza meant it wasn't safe for people to attempt to deliver or reach humanitarian assistance, and that no aid could reach the worst-affected areas in northern Gaza.

We have seen this misconception elsewhere in recent years, like in the Tigray conflict in Ethiopia. Reporting focused on the number of trucks allowed to enter Tigray.





But aid convoys only entered **after** the cessation of hostilities, not when they were most needed. Humanitarian assistance and protection are complex operations requiring ongoing engagement with communities to understand their needs, monitoring to ensure assistance is delivered correctly and timely, uninterrupted access to supplies and services. Pressure for parties to a conflict to allow meaningful humanitarian access risks dissipating if reporting focuses only on what can easily be measured—the number of trucks—not what is important: whether communities have the aid and services they need to survive and rebuild their lives. Allowing a few trucks through, but blocking essential supplies when most needed, is often a cynical ploy to reduce diplomatic pressure on parties to the conflict to allow meaningful access.

**MYTH 2: If you don't work with governments, you can't get anything done.**

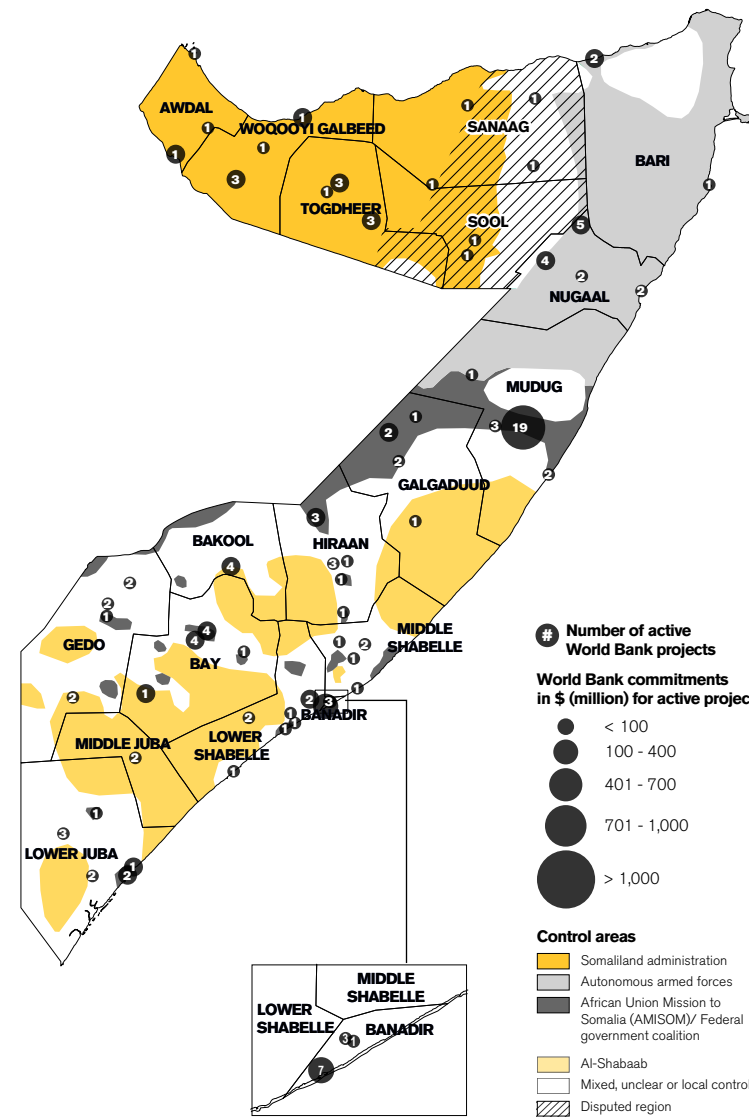
**FACT:** Governments are an important partner for promoting development, but it is critical to have other options when governments are unable or unwilling to play this role. Otherwise, whole communities—even some countries—are denied access to critical development opportunities.

National governments have primary responsibility to establish and maintain the systems and infrastructure to build resilience and protect their citizens from shocks. Understandably, therefore, the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral development actors rely on government-focused approaches for partnerships and implementation. This approach works well in many places, but not all.

Governments in many Watchlist countries may not have the intent or capability to partner with the World Bank, particularly in areas where nonstate armed groups (NSAGs) are active. IRC research **reveals** that World Bank projects in multiple Watchlist countries regularly face geographical restrictions, temporary suspensions or termination altogether, especially in areas under the control or influence of NSAGs. In Somalia, for example, armed-group activity and fighting led to restrictions in a water distribution project aiming at improving water access to 35,000 people. The map shows that World Bank projects are located mostly in areas under the control of the Somali government, systematically excluding other areas that **typically** have increased humanitarian and protection needs.

There are alternative solutions focused on expanding partnerships with non-governmental entities, as recognized by the World Bank's recent **Evolution Roadmap**. Such approaches are essential in areas experiencing conflict or are outside central government control. The number of people living in proximity to conflict has **doubled** between 2007 and 2020. Despite the growing need for approaches suited to these challenging contexts, solutions remain rare.

**World Bank projects and areas of control in Somalia**



Sources: Administrative boundaries - OCHA Humanitarian Data Exchange; Control areas (as of Dec 2021) - Council on Foreign Relations; World Bank Projects - The World Bank.

**MYTH 3: The U.S. and Europe are already hosting more than their "fair share" of displaced people and shouldn't be expected to receive any more.**

**FACT:** Watchlist countries and their neighbors are home to 79% of non-Ukrainian refugees and displaced people globally; the U.S. and Europe host just 8%—yet they are setting a tone that normalizes closing borders.

As violence drags on, needs grow, and livelihoods are destroyed by the convergence of conflict, climate change and economic turmoil, it is little surprise that

<sup>11</sup> As classified by the U.N.

growing numbers of people make the painful decision to flee their homes. The number of forcibly displaced people in the world passed 110 million in 2023 for the first time since records began.

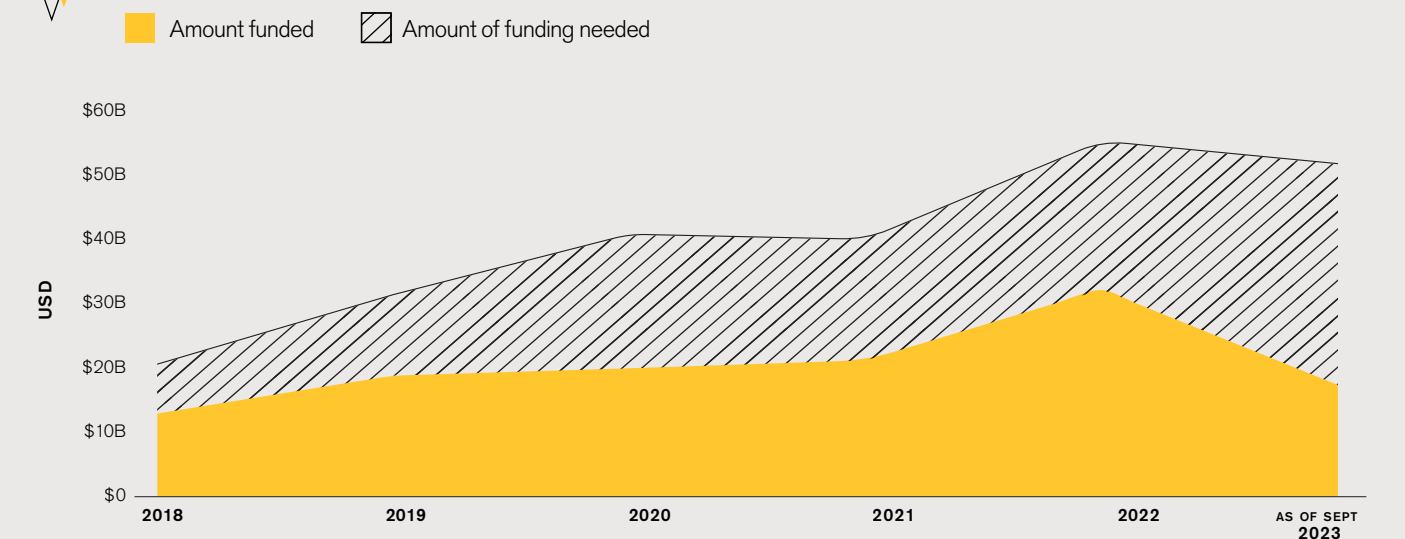
European countries<sup>11</sup> have demonstrated the effective role they can play in refugee assistance and protection by hosting **nearly 6 million** Ukrainian refugees. The response to the crisis in Ukraine sets a benchmark for what the world can do to respond to forced displacement crises. But the U.S. and Europe are not meeting this benchmark for people fleeing other crises. The U.S. and Europe host **99%** of displaced Ukrainians, but only 8% of all non-Ukrainian refugees and displaced people.

**HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLANS (HRPs) FOR WATCHLIST COUNTRIES REMAIN UNDERFUNDED AND THE FUNDING GAP IS GROWING EVER WIDER**

The global funding gap totaled **\$32.5 billion** in 2023, almost \$28 billion of which (86%) is unmet funding for Watchlist countries. The average HRP for Watchlist countries is 31% funded, compared to 40% for non-Watchlist countries. Unmet funding for HRP requirements has

increased by more than four times in Watchlist countries since 2018. The result is humanitarian responses that are failing to keep pace with the growth of humanitarian needs—particularly when they are forced to step in for the failures of government-first development approaches.

**Unmet funding for humanitarian response plans in Watchlist countries grows as funding for 2023 lags behind requirements**



Source: OCHA Financial Tracking Service



In the meantime, **79%** of non-Ukrainian refugees and displaced people globally are living in Watchlist countries and their neighbors, mostly less-developed countries. There are **51** displaced people per 1,000 in Watchlist countries and their neighbors, more than double the 23 per 1,000 in the U.S. and Europe.

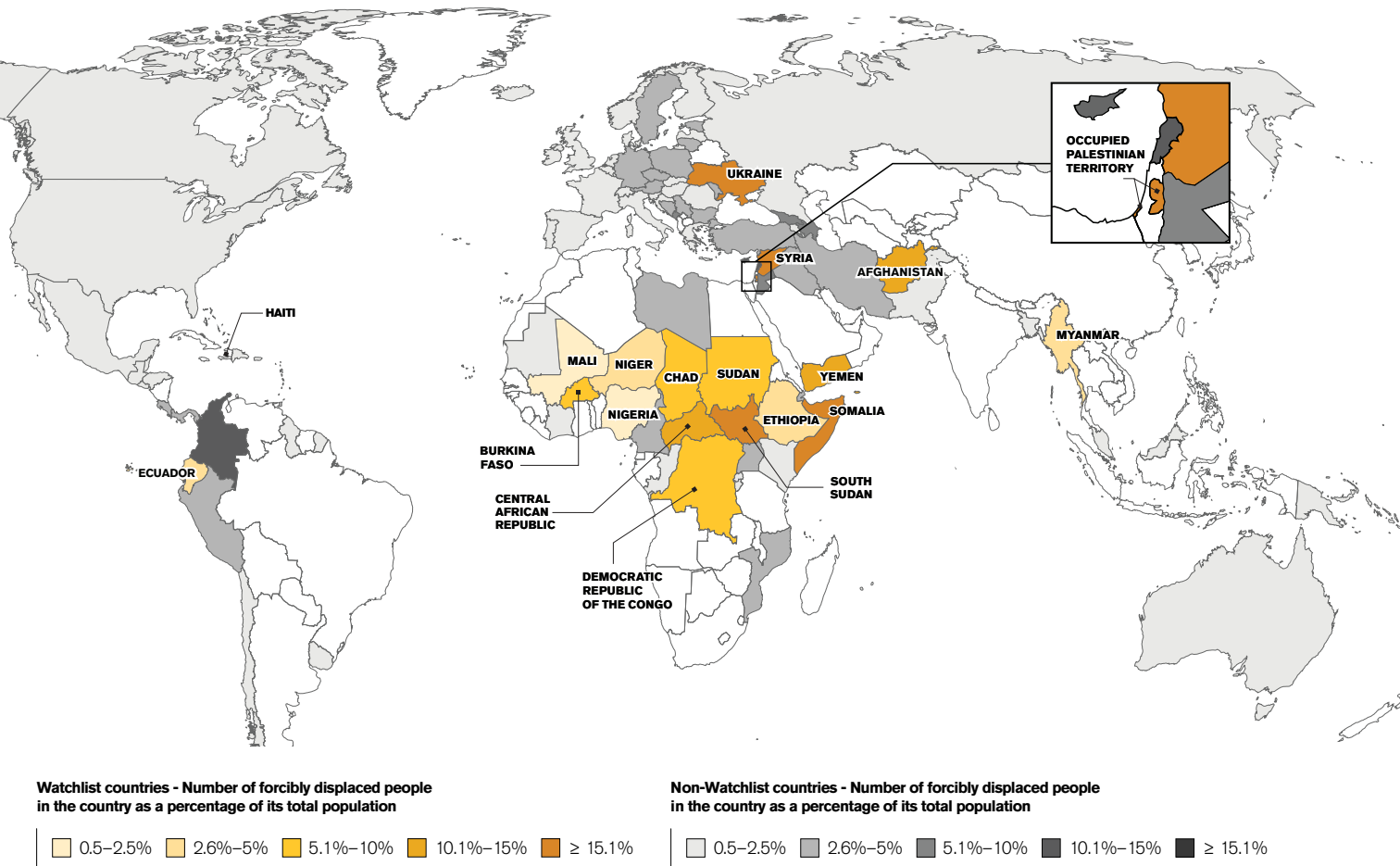
The myth that the U.S. and European countries are facing a displacement “crisis” is driven by rhetoric, not reality. But this rhetoric has a real-world impact. Instead of acting to address these drivers and improve the response to humanitarian crises, the world is enforcing harsh border controls and failing to provide safe havens for migrants. The U.S. and many European countries are enforcing ever-tighter border and asylum rules, providing cover for other countries to do the same. For example, as the conflict in Sudan escalated, Egypt made it ever harder for Sudanese people to flee to safety.

**MYTH 4: Cutting emissions and restricting the rise of global temperatures is so important that we can’t afford to spend money on adapting to climate change.**

**FACT:** Even if the world achieves its most ambitious goals of curbing global warming to 1.5°C and emissions to net zero, people in Watchlist countries will still have to live with the current climate crisis—particularly flooding and droughts. But this myth means that inadequate resources are being invested in supporting countries like those on the Emergency Watchlist to adapt to climate change.

The impacts of the climate crisis are already being felt in Watchlist countries, with the increasing frequency of cyclones in Myanmar and the record drought in East

**Watchlist countries and their neighbors carry the largest burden of global forced displacement**



Source: Administrative boundaries from GADM; Displacement data: refugees/external displacement from UNHCR (Oct 2023), internal displacement from IDCM 2022, occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) refugee data from UNRWA (Oct 2023).



**ABOVE:** A man carries his bike through a flooded street in N'Djamena, Chad.

Africa that finally came to an end in 2023. Our Earth is about 1.1°C warmer than pre-industrial levels—reaching **1.8°C** in September 2023—and Watchlist countries are already seeing the worst effects of the climate crisis. So even if global leaders achieve net zero and keep global warming to no more than 1.5°C, the impacts on Watchlist countries will continue to get worse and they will still need support adapting to these impacts.

Neglecting investments in adaptation efforts unjustly excludes Watchlist countries from building resilience to fight the climate crisis they face today. Only **7%** of

global climate financing is directed toward adaptation. The outsize impact of Cyclone Mocha when it hit areas outside government control in Myanmar demonstrated the importance of preparing even where it is hard to do so. Examples from the IRC’s work supporting **seed systems** in northeast Syria—an area outside of the government’s control—show it’s possible to make resiliency and adaptation solutions work for the reality of Watchlist countries.

**MYTH 5: Gender inequality is not a matter of life and death.**

**FACT:** Gender inequality is life threatening to women and girls. It blocks effective humanitarian action, particularly to meet the needs of women and girls.

Each crisis affects women and girls differently and disproportionately in ways that threaten their lives and livelihoods. There were **149.8 million more** hungry women than men in 2021. The U.N. Environment Programme **estimates** that around 80% of those displaced by climate change are women and girls. And too often, patriarchal gender norms prevent women and girls from accessing the services they need to survive. In December 2022, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA)—commonly known as the Taliban—barred Afghan women from working for NGOs. But given existing restrictions on the movement of Afghan women, humanitarian organizations depended on female staff to safely and effectively reach women and girls and conduct needs assessments in ways that their male colleagues cannot. This edict made it so impossible to perform the most basic tasks of service delivery that the IRC and other humanitarian organizations had to suspend operations. Since then, the IRC has resumed 80% of its operations, but they are dependent on informal and irregular IEA exemptions to the ban.

Despite these trends, programs targeting the needs of women and girls are still deprioritized as they are not considered lifesaving. Despite the fact that gender-based violence (GBV) affects **20-30%** of women in conflict settings and up to **70% of women** in some conflicts, GBV programming is the **least-funded sector** in coordinated humanitarian plans. Only **13%** of GBV programming requirements are funded, while other sectors are 27% funded on average. The pervasiveness of gender inequality means that any humanitarian or development intervention will fail unless it incorporates feminist approaches that will course-correct the gendered impact of the crisis.



# SIX PRIORITIES

## FOR ACTION TO ADDRESS UNPRECEDENTED GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The world is grappling with the confluence of catastrophic and unprecedented global challenges. Conflict and climate change are driving extreme levels of humanitarian need and displacement and concentrating extreme poverty across Emergency Watchlist countries while holding back progress toward the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals**—17 objectives designed to reduce global poverty and drive prosperity. In particular, the severity of conflict in climate-vulnerable contexts across African states in the Emergency Watchlist Top 10 demands clear and decisive action. If the systems and structures set up to eliminate poverty, build resilience and respond to humanitarian needs are not delivering in the most severe and urgent emergencies, they are not working.

A course correction is required. Without this, entire regions are at risk of being left behind.

These formidable trends are often perceived as insurmountable barriers, resulting in inaction or inappropriate action. The myths outlined above divert decision makers away from prioritizing credible solutions. We must not let these false narratives blind us to the existence of effective solutions.

The IRC's experience demonstrates that with the right approaches, we can change the lives of communities even in the most complex crises. Building on this success requires accepting that traditional institutions and tools designed to support the world's poorest have

**BELOW:** Salihu Yahaya is a livestock farmer in Nigeria. The IRC is working with his community to increase climate resilience through an anticipatory cash program.



THE IRC'S EXPERIENCE DEMONSTRATES THAT WITH THE RIGHT APPROACHES, WE CAN CHANGE THE LIVES OF COMMUNITIES EVEN IN THE MOST COMPLEX CRISES.

not kept pace with the changes outlined in this report. For the benefit of the more than 840 million people who call Watchlist countries home, and the clients we serve, it is incumbent upon us to call for change in the way we define and respond to global risks.

A vision exists to mitigate the worst impacts of conflict, climate change and economic shocks that drive humanitarian needs and displacement in Watchlist countries and begin to navigate out of this crisis. The following are our six first-order priorities for action:

### 1 Save lives in fragile and conflict-affected states by investing in climate adaptation, resilience and anticipatory action.

Watchlist countries are among the least responsible for climate change, yet they bear its worst impacts. The business-as-usual approach to climate action alongside weak and inconsistent support from the world's largest economies means these communities are the least supported to withstand the impacts of the climate crisis. We support better alignment of commitments to climate finance with those designed to meet humanitarian needs. Effective climate action in Watchlist countries requires a revised approach: one that prioritizes the most climate-vulnerable and conflict-affected communities through tangible investments in adaptation, resilience and anticipatory action.

Building community resilience to climate shocks, including droughts and floods, and supporting communities to adapt their lives and livelihoods, should be a priority for climate finance contributors. However, the global approach to climate finance investments is heavily skewed toward mitigation and emissions reduction. While crucial to prevent the worsening impacts of climate change, a focus on mitigation without adequate parallel investments in adaptation fails to address the immediate climate impacts faced by conflict-affected communities in Watchlist countries. While mitigation projects and those combining adaptation and mitigation are essential, addressing immediate climate-related needs and risks for conflict-affected communities requires testing and scaling innovative adaptation and resilience approaches.

To achieve this, **50% of all public climate finance to developing countries should be allocated to adaptation by 2025** in line with the U.N. Secretary

General's target. Adaptation finance dropped from **34%** in 2020 to 27% in 2021. In 2021, climate finance provided and mobilized by developed countries for developing countries amounted to **\$89.6 billion**, which, if appropriately allocated, would make \$44.8 billion available for adaptation. Additionally, adaptation funding needs to flow to where it is needed most. Conflict- and climate-affected states currently face immediate climate-related risks, and significant shortfalls in climate adaptation finance. Addressing the imbalance requires establishing a target for adaptation financing for these contexts—a target proportionate to their adaptation needs. The IRC estimates that conflict- and climate-affected states' adaptation financing needs currently represent 25% of all developing countries needs<sup>12</sup> and this should be the benchmark—currently 14% of adaptation financing goes to these contexts.

Finally, to increase finance for climate adaptation, reaching conflict-affected communities that are outside of government control requires reforms in finance and delivery mechanisms: **20% of all multilateral development bank (MDB) and other multilateral climate finance to conflict- and climate-impacted countries should be channeled via non-governmental organizations (NGOs)**, including local NGOs and women-led organizations.

Preparing communities ahead of climate shocks is far more cost effective and impactful than responding after the event. Further innovation in anticipatory action and community-based disaster risk reduction (DRR) will be vital. Experience from **IRC programming** shows that anticipatory cash programs can reduce losses and damages sustained by communities at the forefront of the climate crisis. To scale these programs, **a minimum 5% of humanitarian budgets should be spent on anticipatory action, with a strategy for further expansion by 2030.**

Investments in adaptation and climate innovations will also bolster economic resilience in Watchlist countries by creating green jobs and limiting losses and damages. However, these approaches alone will remain insufficient so long as climate finance continues to be inequitable and inaccessible. Climate finance contributors should therefore **fulfill the \$100 billion-per-year climate pledge** for climate action in developing countries with new and additional financing, while taking active steps to ensure funding is accessible to a diverse range of partners in conflict-affected countries.

<sup>12</sup> Based on estimates of conflict- and climate-impacted countries' adaptation needs costed in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as a proportion of all developing countries' adaptation needs costed in NDCs.



## 2 Tackle extreme poverty and economic drivers of rising humanitarian needs.

People in Watchlist countries are experiencing a worrying trend of rising extreme poverty while global levels are in decline, alongside increasing humanitarian needs driven by conflict, climate change and economic turmoil. The response to these trends requires creative thinking about the roles of both humanitarian and development actors, and the types of interventions needed. There is **growing recognition** that supporting basic services in conflict-affected states cannot be limited to specific sectors such as health and education. Additional support is required to ensure that assistance reaches those most in need and macroeconomic stability is maintained in the face of shocks and emergencies.

- **Increase the World Bank’s ability to work in complex emergencies through new partnerships.**

In Watchlist countries, where governments are sometimes unwilling or unable to deliver critical services, the World Bank’s government-first delivery model is not viable or effective. This contributes to a downward spiral: states are unable to fulfill their responsibilities to provide basic services to citizens, driving civil discontent, and in the worst cases contributing to conflict and the conditions that allow coups to take place. The World Bank’s

mandate confers on it a central role in the fight against extreme poverty, but additional reforms are needed to overcome its delivery challenge in fragile and conflict-affected settings. The Bank’s recent commitment in its **Evolution Roadmap** to reform its operating model and deepen its partnerships with civil society organizations is a welcome step.

Where governments can deliver, they should be supported. Where they cannot, the Bank should use its forthcoming **Partnerships Charter** to institutionalize new funding and delivery partnerships with a wider range of actors, including the U.N., I/NGOs and women-led organizations (WLOs). First, the Bank should establish a civil society consultation mechanism to guide the development and implementation of the Charter. The IRC has outlined **partnership models** that, alongside experience of national and local partners, could inform the Charter and ensure it drives meaningful changes in Bank operations. In addition, the Bank should seek endorsement for the Charter at the highest levels of leadership to ensure the approach is applied across all operations. Finally, as part of the Charter’s development, the Bank should establish an internal system (potentially housed in the Country Diagnostics or Risk Resilience Assessment) to map which U.N., I/NGO and WLO partners at country level are best able to support the design and delivery of basic services to formalize partnership programming in-country.

**BELOW LEFT:**  
Kumi Benjamin, 17, tends his family’s garden in South Sudan. After the family fled Sudan, the IRC gave them access to seeds and land where they could grow crops.

**BELOW RIGHT:**  
Women who work in sorghum fields in Niger meet with U.N., government and other partners to discuss their needs.



Partnerships with NGOs and local partners with established community relationships, access and unique expertise can help the Bank understand the needs of a population and address gaps during Bank project design and implementation. The Bank’s own reporting shows the effectiveness of this model. In Somalia, the **implementation review** of an infrastructure project noted that contracting out to civil society improved the project’s conflict sensitivity and service continuity, even in moments of high insecurity—due to civil society access and engagement with local communities.

- **Increase investment in social safety nets and cash responses.**

Roughly **36%** of those classified by the World Bank as “very poor” have escaped extreme poverty as a result of social safety nets. Yet, of the world’s poorest, **1 in 5** are still not covered by social protection schemes. As increasing **costs of living** exacerbate hunger and hardship in fragile and conflict-affected states, **donors and development banks should expand inclusive social assistance and cash support, with a particular focus on Africa.** In contexts where governments lack the capacity, willingness or resources to rapidly scale these mechanisms, humanitarian agencies can step in to support. Humanitarian agencies can utilize decades of experience delivering cash programs in the most challenging environments to work in partnership with governments to design and deliver cash support, or where needed, independently deliver it in the event of a crisis or an economic shock.

- **Establish a new mechanism to forecast the impacts of economic shocks for humanitarian needs and response.**

Macroeconomic trends, economic policy and volatility are driving humanitarian needs—and undermining responses to them. In Afghanistan and Venezuela, asset freezing contributed to the weakening of fragile economies, with resulting inflation leaving basic goods unaffordable for millions. In Somalia, the government spends more on servicing debt than investing in public services. U.N. Security Council resolutions on **Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and Afghanistan** all call for efforts to support state macroeconomic functions, but responsibility for action remains diffused and poorly defined.

To address this gap, U.N. member states should **establish and fund an inter-agency mechanism to address the humanitarian impact of**

**economic fragility**, housed in U.N. OCHA. This mechanism would fill a void in coordination between International Financial Institutions, Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), private sector actors, central banks and humanitarian actors. Collectively, partners could share and develop analysis, forecast national and global economic trends, predict the implications for humanitarian needs and response, and evaluate the capacities of national economic institutions to respond, considering the consequences of indebtedness. Ultimately, the group would identify recommendations, including expanding technical assistance, supporting civil servant salary payments, identifying opportunities to alleviate debt distress and unlock frozen assets, and encouraging early action through cash programs.

### ADOPT AND SCALE SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION

Millions of people living in Watchlist countries are facing the threat of acute food insecurity and malnutrition, requiring an urgent global response that brings proven and innovative solutions to scale. Evidence shows that humanitarian cash transfers delivered by NGOs and other operational actors are an effective means of increasing food security. However, despite the growing use of cash support, over **45 million** children globally still suffer from acute malnutrition at any given time. The vast majority of these children do not have access to effective treatment. Nearly 10 years of IRC research shows that a simplified approach to the treatment of malnourished children, using a shelf-stable, fortified peanut paste known as ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF), can help more than **90%** of children recover. The IRC assesses that an annual investment of approximately \$2 billion—equivalent to 0.02% of global health spending—could allow programs to reach a majority of children under age 5 in humanitarian settings with treatment and help save the lives of up to two million children.

### 3 Prioritize gender equality in crisis response, and shift power and resources to women-led organizations.

Women and girls are differently and disproportionately impacted by humanitarian crises. Gender inequality, including the prevalence of gender-based violence, exacerbates the risks of conflict and displacement, and undermines access to lifesaving and life-sustaining services. Efforts to address this inequality will continue to falter without strong, funded partnerships with women-led organizations (WLOs) to enable them to lead the design and delivery of humanitarian services.

Yet, only one-fifth of **Humanitarian Country Teams** (HCTs)—the operational decision-making and oversight group led by the U.N.-appointed Humanitarian Coordinator—have a plan to address gender inequality and engage local WLOs. Just **1.2%** of all humanitarian financing reaches WLOs, with much bilateral funding inaccessible to them. Key sectors, such as GBV prevention and response, received just **20%** of funding requested in 2022, while overall appeals were on average **58%** funded.

To support the prioritization of gender equality, all HCTs should be held accountable for developing plans to engage WLOs and involve them in response design and delivery. **Reforms to pooled funding should also be accelerated.** In 2020, U.N. OCHA's Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) piloted a **30%** benchmark for funding allocations to women-led organizations through a dedicated GBV response funding window. This model should be scaled to all CERF-supported GBV responses, as well as other sectors. In addition, **bilateral donors should increase the level of humanitarian funding they channel through feminist funds.** Global funds such as the **Equality Fund**, the **Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund**, regional funds such as the **Urgent Action Fund Africa** or national funds such as the **Ukrainian Women's Fund** are able to offer smaller grants with more flexibility to local partners, and can absorb some of the administrative burden between donor and grassroots grantees.

Availability of funding is not the only barrier WLOs face. **Rethinking approaches to compliance and capacity sharing is also critical.** Bilateral donors and U.N. agencies should provide more dedicated funding for equitable partnerships with WLOs to help build the expertise of less-established women's organizations and support them to compete for humanitarian financing. Donors



and U.N. agencies should also address the compliance and eligibility barriers that limit access to funds.

Finally, experience of existing programming shows what can be done to address gender inequality in humanitarian crises. Women and Girls Safe Spaces, for example, are a proven and effective tool to provide clients with a route to report protection concerns and access vital services. Investments are needed to ensure consistent quality as well as quantity of safe spaces to enable women and girls to play leadership roles in the design and delivery of services to meet diverse needs, such as those of adolescent girls. Women and girls who have attended safe spaces **reported** increased social support networks (96%) and knowledge of where to get help when experiencing violence (93%).

**ABOVE:** Women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cultivating land. Women, girls and children face particular risks of violence and discrimination during conflict, which marginalizes them from society.

### 4 Promote shared prosperity by increasing aid and tackling the debt crisis.

The levels of humanitarian and development aid Watchlist countries receive—and the debt they carry—affects their ability to manage the impacts of conflict and climate change. Over three-quarters of Official Development Assistance (ODA) currently goes to states *not* impacted by war or economic fragility. The average Humanitarian Response Plan for Watchlist countries is just 31% funded. Out of the 12 Watchlist countries either in debt distress or at risk of debt distress, 10 are in Africa.

This report calls for investments in climate adaptation, humanitarian response and poverty reduction—interventions that cannot be viewed in silos. Supporting basic services is key to reducing reliance on humanitarian aid, while humanitarian aid is needed to save lives in crises. However, in Watchlist countries, the responsibility for addressing rising needs falls disproportionately on humanitarians. In 2022, international humanitarian aid spending increased to **\$46.9 billion**, spread across a growing number of countries. It is therefore vital to ensure complementary development resources are made available. In 2023, the World Bank, for example, allocated a total of **\$72.8 billion** in 90 countries.

Targeting ODA to where it is needed most is an important step. The IRC is reiterating its call for OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors to **commit half of all bilateral ODA to fragile and conflict-affected states**—up from 25% disbursed now<sup>13</sup>—and for funding to be provided in grants and, when delivered via development banks, highly concessional financing. This commitment alone would see over \$30 billion<sup>14</sup> in additional funding made available to fragile and conflict-affected states—a sum equivalent to the funding gaps in all country-focused humanitarian response plans worldwide. But rearranging funding allocations is not enough. Funding must also be increased. Only **five**<sup>15</sup> DAC donors fulfilled their commitment to spend 0.7% of their gross national income on ODA in 2022. If G7 countries alone met their commitments, they would almost double the annual bilateral ODA by DAC countries, creating an additional \$168 billion.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Based on IRC analysis of 2021 OECD data of bilateral aid from DAC countries to World Bank-defined conflict-affected states.

<sup>14</sup> Based on IRC analysis of OECD data of DAC countries' ODA disbursements to developing countries in 2021 using the World Bank's classification of states as fragile or conflict affected.

<sup>15</sup> Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Denmark.

<sup>16</sup> Based on IRC analysis of G7 gross national income reported in 2021 compared to ODA committed by G7 countries in 2021 reported to OECD.org.

<sup>17</sup> Since 2020, IDA commitments totaled \$89,374,442,000. Of this total, LDCs unaffected by conflict received \$50,493,202,000, while conflict-affected LDCs received \$38,881,240,000.

Even if commitments are not met by G7 countries, donors should still expand the resources available to the World Bank to drive action against extreme poverty. Donors should strive for an ambitious IDA 21 (International Development Association) replenishment while also committing to triple IDA by 2030, in line with the Independent Experts Group **G20 recommendations**. The World Bank should also bring IDA commitments for conflict-affected states toward (at least) parity with non-conflict-affected states. IRC analysis demonstrates that over the last four years, this would have amounted to conflict-affected least developed countries (LDCs) receiving \$6 billion more of the share of IDA funding per year.<sup>17</sup>

Addressing the burden of sovereign debt in Watchlist countries requires long-term debt relief, including through the World Bank's **Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative**. In addition, creditors should explore current and new approaches to ease the burden of their debt stocks, to support investment in humanitarian response, climate adaptation and social protection. Any new agreements should be focused on canceling or restructuring—rather than rescheduling—debt. Crucially, precedents for this exist. The International Committee of the Red Cross **Rapid Disbursing Debt Conversion Mechanism** (RDDCM) allows pre-arranged debt agreements to release funds directly from governments of crisis-affected states to National Red Cross Societies. The **Egyptian-German Partnership for Sustainable Development** includes a €54 million debt swap to finance Egypt's transition to green energy. Innovations building on “debt for nature swaps” could help countries restructure outstanding sovereign debt, freeing up hundreds of millions of dollars for humanitarian purposes or climate adaptation.

### 5 Support and protect forcibly displaced people.

Asylum seekers in the U.S. and Europe face increasingly complex reception systems, often characterized by detention and other deterrence measures that cut people off from the support they require. The consequences are obvious—people risking their lives to



make dangerous journeys, rights undermined, asylum systems overloaded and rising costs. It is these trends that contribute to the narrative of an “asylum crisis.” Practical steps, responsive to different stages of displacement, are needed to support people fleeing conflict and persecution to rebuild their lives.

The IRC’s experience (see box below on Arizona Welcome Center) shows that investments in humane reception have clear benefits for asylum seekers and states. Governments should seek to **systematically apply a protection-centered approach to the design of reception processes** to allow asylum seekers to find protection and access services, and states to maintain safe and orderly processes at their borders, and in doing so, reduce pressure on asylum systems.

### SAFE AND HUMANE RECEPTION IS POSSIBLE

Since 2019, the IRC has run a **Welcome Center in Arizona** for asylum seekers crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. The center has now served 115,000 people, providing temporary respite, emergency medical services, COVID-19 testing, family reunification support and legal assistance. By focusing the reception response on the protection needs of asylum seekers, the center has become an entry point for access to essential services, reduced homelessness through virtually eliminating the practice of “street releases” by border authorities, and reduced deportations by ensuring asylum seekers understand and can participate in their own legal processes.



**LEFT:** Nyapar Kujiek waters her plants. She received support from the IRC women’s empowerment center to build her farming business.

But the majority don’t seek asylum in the U.S. and Europe. Most displaced people remain within, or close to, their own countries. And the regional responses to that displacement have shown what is possible. **Colombia** has granted extended temporary protection to 1.7 million Venezuelans, giving them access to work and basic services. Kenya’s **2021 Refugee Act** gives documented refugees access to government services and provides those from the East African Community (EAC) the possibility of opting out of refugee status and of living and working anywhere in Kenya as East Africa citizens.

For these initiatives to be replicated in other contexts, donors and multilateral development banks (MDBs) need to **drive support for initiatives that offer real opportunities for self-reliance**. Practically, this requires sustained financial and technical assistance to develop and deliver state-led regularization and integration plans, and establish services (including social protection, education and health) that are accessible to displaced people. Where necessary, donors and MDBs should also advocate for policy and legislative changes, including freedom of movement and the right to work, to facilitate inclusion and underpin self-reliance (in line with the ambitions of the World Bank’s **IDA20 funding cycle** and the Refugee Policy Review Framework).

Meanwhile, predictable, multiyear funding should be utilized to **support humanitarian and development interventions that meet the needs of displaced people and their host communities**. Such efforts must recognize the specific needs of displaced women. **Analysis** in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan found displaced women are poorer, face greater economic marginalization, often feel less free to move about, and face higher risks of violence.



**SIGNPOST HAS GROWN TO DELIVER 20 PROGRAMS IN 25 LANGUAGES ON 5 CONTINENTS, SUPPORTING 750,000 USERS A MONTH.**



**ABOVE:** An IRC staff member in Juárez, Mexico, shows a client the InfoDigna website, which has safe and reliable information for migrants. It is part of the IRC’s Signpost project.

### SIGNPOST

For all displaced people, access to information is vital to help them solve the complex problems they face. Information is often inaccessible and sometimes deliberately obscured or withheld, while misinformation is increasingly a concern, meaning people don’t know who to trust. In response, the IRC’s Signpost project delivers critical information through staff, digital and social media channels to equip people with the knowledge they need to access services and support, and make the most informed decisions for themselves and their families. Started in Greece in 2015, Signpost has grown to deliver 20 programs in 25 languages on 5 continents, supporting 750,000 users a month. In an environment in which resources to support displaced populations are limited, Signpost is a valuable technical solution to support people to meet their own needs.

## 6 Stem impunity and reinforce International Humanitarian Law.

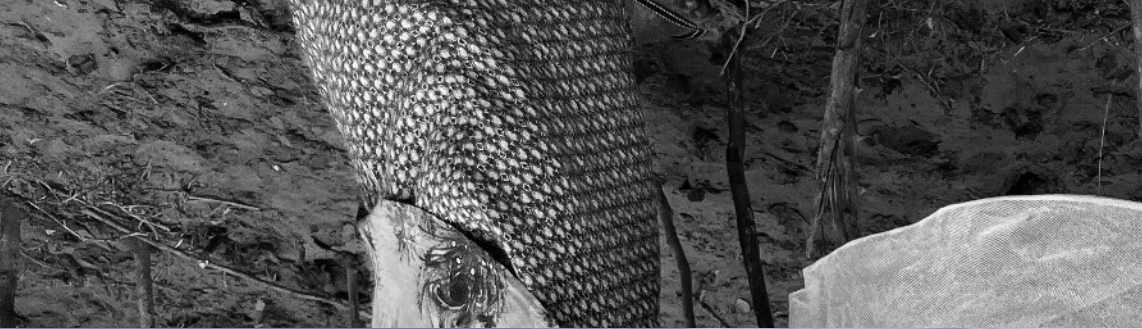
Conflict remains the primary driver of humanitarian need in Watchlist countries. Wars in these countries are increasingly fought with disregard for international law—with civilians bearing the brunt. The solutions outlined above are necessary, but alone they are insufficient if steps are not taken to reduce the impacts of conflict on civilians. Violations have become normalized: attacks on hospitals, schools and homes, denial of access to critical lifesaving aid, and mass killing with impunity. Without accountability, these trends will continue. The U.N. Security Council (UNSC) is charged with upholding peace, yet political divisions have left it paralyzed to act. Faith in the international system needs to be restored.

The response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine demonstrated that states **can** act quickly, and with unity, to investigate and bring forward prosecutions for violations of international law. With Council paralysis set to continue, states committed to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) should agree to **bring forward the same mechanisms authorized by the U.N. General Assembly, Human Rights Council and bilaterally in response to the invasion of Ukraine for new crises as part of a new “Accountability Menu.”** The mechanisms include, but would not be limited to, setting up a Commission of Inquiry to gather evidence on violations

of IHL, supporting a Joint Investigation Team to assess when war crimes and genocide have been committed, and deploying an Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group to document, preserve and analyze evidence of atrocities.

Crucially, when mass atrocities occur, the UNSC should be brought back into play. Council members should support the France-Mexico declaration to **suspend the use of the veto in the case of mass atrocities**, with the determination of what constitutes a mass atrocity made through an independent and neutral panel, as established by the U.N. General Assembly. This declaration has **support** across the General Assembly and would drive not only greater action on some of the most abhorrent crimes, but a renewal of the legitimacy of the Council itself.

Finally, the weaponization and denial of humanitarian access must be given increased diplomatic attention, alongside other violations of international law. Existing reporting mechanisms, including the *Protection of Civilians* and *Children and Armed Conflict* reports, give inadequate profile to the trends and impact of access denial. In a multipolar world, the diplomatic response to access denial also cannot be limited to the U.N. A new **Independent Access Organization (IAO) should be established** to improve reporting on access, raise awareness of its impacts, and catalyze action by global, regional and national-level policy makers.



# 2024 EMERGENCY WATCHLIST

## COUNTRY PROFILES

**LEFT:** Muslima Adow Abdirahman, 67, constructs a shelter in Amini Robow camp in Baidoa, Somalia. Her family was forced from their land because of extensive flooding caused by El Niño rains.



# 01 SUDAN

## Country on the verge of breakdown as an internationalized civil war escalates with devastating impacts on civilians

A still-escalating war propels Sudan to the top of the 2024 Emergency Watchlist and the country to the brink of collapse. Fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), rival factions of Sudan's military, has more than doubled humanitarian needs in less than a year of fighting, with at least **24.8 million** people in need compared to **15.8 million** before the conflict began in April 2023. Human rights groups have warned of a risk of genocide in the western Darfur region following mass killings and forced displacement along ethnic lines, which would further accelerate the rapid displacement of millions within Sudan and into neighboring countries. Amid the violence—which risks spreading within and beyond Sudan's borders—the massive destruction of critical infrastructure is driving total systems collapse, leaving millions with insufficient food and unable to access critical health and other services.

“Sudan has become the world's largest displacement crisis. The ability to deliver aid is hindered by the lack of humanitarian access and funds. The ethnic, tribal and regional polarization of the current war is further threatening the limited access currently available.”



**Dr. Elshafie Mohamed Ahmed**  
Emergency Response  
Coordinator, IRC Sudan

### KEY DATA

**24.8M**  
PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED (OVER HALF THE POPULATION)

**5.1M**  
PEOPLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED SINCE APRIL 2023

**1.3M**  
PEOPLE HAVE SOUGHT REFUGE IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES SINCE APRIL 2023

**5/5**  
SCORE FOR SEVERITY OF ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

**DISTRESS**  
IN DEBT

ABOVE: Aziza Ibrahim and her daughters are staying at a school that is operating as a shelter for people who have been displaced from Khartoum. Photo: UNOCHA/Ala Kheir

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **Sudan is set to face a devastating crisis through 2024, given limited prospects for an end to the conflict.** While fighting has been most intensely concentrated in Khartoum and Darfur—where human rights groups have warned of a risk of genocide following mass killings and forced displacement along ethnic lines—it is increasingly spreading to other parts of the country and drawing in a growing number of armed groups in addition to the SAF and RSF. Meanwhile, negotiations to end the conflict have repeatedly failed to gain traction and there are reports of regional powers actively supporting parties to the conflict. Amid the staggering increases in overall need, which have seen nearly 10 million more people requiring humanitarian aid since the onset of the conflict, humanitarian access has deteriorated significantly, with **ACAPS** rating constraints as “extreme” (5 out of 5). Bureaucratic restrictions imposed by conflict actors combined with the intensity of conflict have led to disrupted, inconsistent access to affected populations. Moreover, the relocation of aid operational hubs to Port Sudan given the severity of conflict in Khartoum has created significant challenges in coordination among aid agencies, further hampering the humanitarian response as needs continue to rise.
- **The health system is on the brink of complete collapse, exposing Sudan's population to growing risks of disease.** The intensity of fighting and failure of parties to minimize civilian harm has decimated critical infrastructure, while security risks prevent people from moving freely. The health care system is suffering from an acute lack of staff, funding and medical supplies in addition to repeated attacks, looting and occupation of medical facilities and hospitals. Widespread attacks on health care by warring parties have contributed to the closure or inoperability of **70%** of health facilities in conflict-affected areas. Population movements are placing further strain on the limited remaining health care, as well as water and sanitation services. Poor health and sanitation conditions have driven a new cholera outbreak in Gedaref since September 2023, with cases spreading across Khartoum, South Kordofan and Aj Jazirah. Additionally, a sudden outbreak of measles across the country has killed over **1,000** children. With high rates of malnutrition, a debilitated health system and low immunization levels, disease outbreaks will have catastrophic effects, particularly for children.



Men and women inspect the damage to a residential building in the Azhari district of Khartoum.



- **The conflict is destroying the economy and disrupting livelihoods, increasing poverty.** The conflict has decimated an already struggling economy, which is projected to contract by 18.3% in 2023. Additionally, unemployment has risen to affect almost half the population and the Sudanese pound lost at least **50%** of its value between April and October 2023 (IMF). In Khartoum, factories, banks, shops and markets have been looted or damaged, further reducing the population's access to goods, services and cash. Meanwhile, inflation is set to rise to more than **250%** and will remain high into 2024 even in the unlikely scenario that the conflict ends. Near-total trade disruption, looting and reduced agricultural output are also driving shortages of essential goods and price rises, meaning that many Sudanese already facing joblessness and financial hardship will see their purchasing power erode even further. Deepening poverty could also drive acute risks for children as at least **10,400** schools in conflict-affected areas are shuttered, leaving an estimated 19 million children without education and at risk of abuse or exploitation.



**42%**  
OF THE POPULATION (20.3 MILLION PEOPLE) FACING CRISIS OR WORSE (IPC 3+) LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY

- **Food insecurity will continue to deepen as conflict leads to rising prices and agricultural disruption.** Approximately **20.3 million** people are suffering from crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity, including 6.3 million facing emergency levels (IPC 4), where urgent action is needed to save lives. Large-scale displacement is driving labor shortages, while the costs of inputs such as fuel are also increasing—potentially leading to disruptions to agricultural production. This will potentially lead to reduced harvests, which will push food prices even higher as the conflict continues and inflationary pressures mount. Any additional expansion of the conflict into agricultural regions, particularly into Sudan's "breadbasket," Aj Jazirah State, would further impact food supply, **compounding** the food crisis significantly. Meanwhile, looting of businesses, markets and humanitarian food stores will further contribute to food shortages.
- **Extreme levels of internal and external displacement will persist, driving impacts across the region.** Almost **6.6 million** people have been displaced within and outside Sudan due to conflict; **5.1 million** of those displaced have remained in Sudan, bringing the total number of internally displaced people to more than **7 million**, the **largest** internal displacement crisis in



**THE TOTAL NUMBER OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE IN SUDAN IS MORE THAN 7 MILLION. THIS IS THE LARGEST INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT CRISIS IN THE WORLD.**

the world. Meanwhile, over **1.3 million** people—mostly women and children—have fled Sudan to neighboring countries, in some cases leading to tensions with host communities. As regional actors both face growing refugee crises and active conflict risks spilling over border regions—particularly with Chad and South Sudan—there is significant potential for the crisis in Sudan to develop into a regional one that engulfs multiple countries and drives catastrophic levels of need.



### THE IRC IN SUDAN

The IRC has adapted its programs and scaled up its response to address increased humanitarian needs in Sudan by refocusing on needs-based emergency responses to IDPs through integrated multisectoral economic recovery and development; health and nutrition; and water, sanitation and hygiene. The IRC also provides integrated protection services, including comprehensive services for women, girls and children, as well as empowerment services, including for gender-based violence survivors in Blue Nile, Gedaref, Khartoum and South Kordofan states.

The IRC has also established a new response in Aj Jazirah State and a logistics and coordination office in Port Sudan, and is also in the process of launching an emergency response in White Nile State through multipurpose cash assistance and water, sanitation and hygiene services to IDPs, refugees and host communities. In the coming period, the IRC aims to solidify its presence in new locations, such as Red Sea and Darfur, to address gaps in humanitarian coverage and expand its integrated multisectoral programs in response to the rapidly evolving context in Sudan. [Learn more](#) about the IRC's Sudan response.



## 02 OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

### Devastating re-escalation in Gaza will drive massive humanitarian needs long after the fighting eventually stops

Gaza enters 2024 as the deadliest place for civilians in the world. Residents of Gaza are enduring the brutal consequences of the latest round of conflict between Israel and Hamas, which is being fought without sufficient regard for the international laws and norms built to protect civilians even in the most dire circumstances. Israeli forces began airstrikes and ground operations after Palestinian armed groups launched a deadly ground incursion and rocket barrage on southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking over 200 hostages. Israeli operations have caused severe destruction and widespread death and displacement throughout Gaza, particularly in the north, killing over **18,000** people. As we write, Israel has begun major military action in southern Gaza as well. Diplomatic engagement brought about a temporary truce in late November 2023 and the release of some hostages, but fighting is likely to continue at least into early 2024. The occupied Palestinian territory rises to its highest-ever position on the Watchlist because the humanitarian emergency will persist long after the fighting eventually stops. The conflict in Gaza has also sparked tensions on Israel's border with Lebanon.



**In a matter of weeks, Gaza became the most dangerous place in the world for civilians. Tens of thousands of people have been killed, more than three-quarters of the population displaced and critical infrastructure destroyed. Right now, the people of Gaza need extensive humanitarian assistance to survive, but most of all the restoration of public services and the basic right to live free from fear."**



**Sam Duerden**  
Regional/Crisis Team Lead for the occupied Palestinian territory crisis, IRC

KEY DATA



**18K+**  
PALESTINIANS KILLED



**1.9M**  
PALESTINIANS (NEARLY 85% OF GAZA'S POPULATION) DISPLACED SINCE OCTOBER 7



**131**  
U.N. STAFF KILLED



**3.1M**  
PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED ACROSS THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

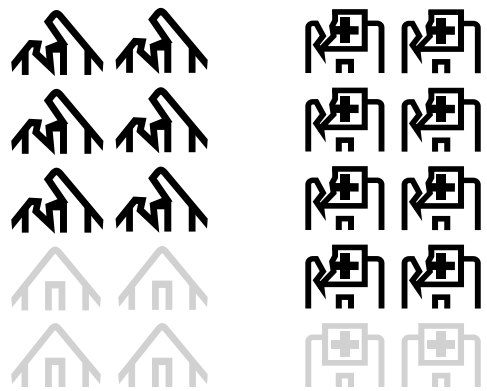
ABOVE: A Palestinian family mourns the death of eight relatives who were killed in an airstrike on Gaza City.



## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

○ **Airstrikes and fighting within Gaza have had a direct and devastating impact on civilians that will continue to grow as hostilities persist into early 2024, at least.** In the first two months of the conflict, Israel's offensive killed **over 17,000** Palestinians, of whom over **6,000** were children; nearly **1.9** million people were displaced, often sheltering in schools, hospitals and U.N. facilities without adequate provision of basic supplies or sanitation. Egypt, Qatar and the U.S. brokered a humanitarian truce in November 2023, contributing to temporary improvements in humanitarian access and civilian protection. As part of the truce, Hamas released **110** hostages (a **third** of them children), but an estimated 137 remained in Gaza. The numbers of Palestinians in need of assistance will continue to grow as fighting is likely to continue into 2024. Only an end to the fighting will offer civilians safety.

○ **Destruction of health, water and sanitation infrastructure leaves Gaza's health care system on the verge of collapse and accelerates the risk of infectious disease outbreaks.** Fighting has damaged and destroyed hospitals and clinics across Gaza. Across oPt, Insecurity Insight recorded **345** incidents of violence against health care (or where access to it was obstructed), the vast majority in Gaza, during the first seven weeks of the conflict. Hostilities and Israeli restrictions on allowing fuel to enter Gaza have left hospitals, particularly in the north, unable to function. Without an end to the fighting and sustained humanitarian support, access to health care will remain highly limited. Meanwhile, ongoing border closures will prevent patients from traveling to Israel, the West Bank or East Jerusalem for treatment. And a lack of fuel for water desalination has left **95%** of Gaza's population without access to safe water, increasing the risk of diseases like cholera.



**OVER 60%**  
OF GAZA'S HOUSING  
HAS BEEN DAMAGED  
OR DESTROYED

**OVER 81%**  
OF HOSPITALS ARE EITHER  
NONFUNCTIONAL OR  
MINIMALLY FUNCTIONAL

○ **People living in Gaza will struggle to recover and rebuild their lives long after the fighting ends.** Before October 7, **80%** of Gaza's population were reliant on humanitarian assistance. The disruption and destruction of hospitals and power and water desalination plants, combined with massive displacement and disruption of livelihoods, means that nearly all 2.3 million people living in Gaza will be in need of humanitarian aid in 2024, and with even more severe needs than before. Many will experience protracted displacement, given that around **60%** of Gaza's housing has reportedly been damaged or destroyed, reinforcing the importance of the rights of Palestinians—most of whom are already refugees—to return to their homes. Children will likely lose years of education, with schools damaged and staff killed or displaced, while a sustained mental health response will be required to address the levels of psychological stress and trauma.

### POTENTIAL FOR REGIONAL CRISIS

Hamas's attack and Israel's ensuing military operation have raised the risk of regional actors becoming entangled in the conflict. The Lebanese armed group Hezbollah, which holds considerable influence across southern Lebanon, has vocally supported Hamas and engaged in an escalating exchange of cross-border fire with Israeli forces since October 7. Over **100** people have been killed inside Lebanon and **55,000** displaced while, in northern Israel, at least **nine** have died (six of them soldiers) and **100,000** have reportedly evacuated their homes near the border. Both sides seem willing to maintain, but not increase, military activity, leaving the risk of unintended escalation or a shift in strategy. Such a development would likely trigger major displacement and a spike in humanitarian needs in Lebanon and Israel.

Elsewhere, in Syria, Israeli airstrikes reportedly targeting arms shipments to Hezbollah at Aleppo and Damascus airports have disrupted U.N. humanitarian aid flights. Iran-linked nonstate armed groups have also carried out a series of attacks on U.S. interests in both Syria and Iraq since October 7. In Yemen, the military forces of the De Facto Authorities in the north (also known as Ansar Allah or the Houthis) have launched missile and drone attacks on Israel and attacked shipping off the coast of Yemen, illustrating how the Gaza conflict is driving up tensions across the Middle East and increasing the risk of a regional crisis.



A woman and child pick their way through the rubble after an airstrike hits Gaza City.

○ **Access restrictions are compounding humanitarian needs and threaten to impede reconstruction once fighting stops.** Israel severely restricted the amount of aid entering Gaza after October 7 and cut off the supply of water, electricity and fuel. Before the war, **500** truckloads of aid entered Gaza daily—with needs increased, a huge uplift in aid will be required, but far less is actually arriving in Gaza. Aid delivery has been further constrained by the damage to roads, lack of fuel, the displacement and death of humanitarian aid workers. As of early December 2023, **131** U.N. staff have been killed—making Gaza the most dangerous place for aid workers in the world, and nearly all have been displaced. Constraints will continue so long as fighting persists. Moreover, Gaza's recovery after the fighting ends will depend on whether, and how intensely, Israel maintains its policy of preventing basic goods and services from entering Gaza.

○ **Escalating violence in the occupied West Bank will also drive humanitarian needs.** Throughout 2023, tensions rose in the West Bank. Since October 7, violence between security forces, settlers and Palestinians increased significantly, resulting in more than **250** Palestinians being killed, including 67 children, and a fivefold increase in displacements within the West Bank. Movement restrictions due to newly created checkpoints and roadblocks have also limited the availability of essential goods and medicines, as well as children's access to education.

### THE IRC IN OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

The IRC is closely monitoring and assessing the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, while we initiate a response to the current humanitarian crisis. The IRC has a team on the ground in Egypt and we are working with partners to deliver supplies and provide bespoke and specialist health services, water and sanitation, child and women's protection, and psycho-social interventions to the millions of people in desperate need of humanitarian assistance in Gaza. We will continue to look for opportunities to expand our response through local partners.

The IRC's response in oPt draws on our global experience and expertise in emergency response, as well as our longstanding presence in the region. In 2022, IRC teams across Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen and Libya helped 6.3 million people.



**345**

INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST OR OBSTRUCTION OF ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE ACROSS THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY SINCE OCTOBER 7



**3K+**

PALESTINIANS ARRESTED IN THE WEST BANK SINCE OCTOBER 7, INCLUDING 2,070 HELD WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL. **THIS IS A RECORD HIGH.**



# 03 SOUTH SUDAN

## Fallout from Sudan risks further spike in already high needs

South Sudan faces massive regional and domestic risks as it enters 2024. The war across the border in Sudan, which has pushed that country to the top of the Emergency Watchlist, threatens to undermine South Sudan's fragile economy and could add to political tensions in the already delicate period leading up to South Sudan's first-ever elections, scheduled for December 2024. These risks come on top of persistent instability that has blighted the country since independence from Khartoum in 2011 and extreme vulnerability to climate shocks; high levels of flooding are predicted for 2024, adding to the impact of four years of disastrous repeated floods.

“When my husband died during the conflict of 2016, it was very painful, and when he was gone, there was no other person that could support me, and I really suffered a lot. That is the reason I started moving from one place to another. With the emergence of floods, the house where we lived [in Payak] became submerged in water.”



**Nyatuoy Chan**  
IRC client in South Sudan

**ABOVE:** Riak Thon, 39, and his wife stand in front of their home in Jamjang, South Sudan. Riak participated in an IRC program that engages men on how they interact with the women in their lives.

### KEY DATA

**9M**  
PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED (72% OF POPULATION)

**2.3M**  
PEOPLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED; OVER 392K CROSSED THE BORDER WITH SUDAN SINCE APRIL 2023

**5.8M**  
PEOPLE FACING CRISIS OR WORSE (IPC 3+) LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY

**4/5**  
SCORE FOR SEVERITY OF ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

**HIGH RISK**  
OF DEBT DISTRESS

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **Insecurity may increase further ahead of the country's first-ever elections.** South Sudan is preparing to hold its first presidential elections since independence in 2011 following several delays. President Salva Kiir and Vice President (and Kiir's long-term rival) Riek Machar are both likely to run in the December 2024 elections. The rivalry between Kiir and Machar was a key factor in the civil war that broke out in December 2013 and formally ended with a 2020 peace deal. Any real or perceived delays or irregularities with the vote could drive social and political unrest, potentially spilling over into violence and exacerbating localized conflicts. Insecurity has already been **rising**—particularly in Upper Nile State, where intercommunal **clashes** have surged since August 2022. Increased violence could disrupt livelihoods and fuel further displacements. There are already **2.4 million** South Sudanese refugees, mostly in neighboring countries, and **2.3 million** people are displaced internally. Meanwhile, the chronically underfunded humanitarian response will face additional hurdles in meeting rising needs.
- **The continued arrival of refugees from Sudan will exacerbate needs in the border region.** As of late November 2023, nearly **400,000** Sudanese refugees and returning South Sudanese nationals have crossed into the country following the outbreak of conflict in Sudan in April 2023. With a resolution to that conflict unlikely in the coming months, the arrival of refugees and returnees into South Sudan is likely to continue to increase needs in border regions. People fleeing Sudan are likely to continue to experience limited access to shelter and basic services including health care. There is also a growing risk of communicable diseases spreading in overcrowded border transit centers, given the lack of water, sanitation and hygiene services. Food insecurity and malnutrition are also particularly high among refugees and returnees. According to the WFP, **90%** of returnees are facing critical food needs. In addition, most returnees and refugees are crossing into Upper Nile State, where fighting has been ongoing since August 2022—potentially exposing them to greater risk of violence.
- **A predicted fifth year of flooding could damage livelihoods and drive displacement.** South Sudan is particularly vulnerable to climate shocks and ranks the second highest on **INFORM's** climate risk index. It has already suffered from four years of devastating floods, which led to the displacement of **hundreds of thousands** of people, **“extreme”** levels of malnutrition, and outbreaks of waterborne illnesses. Increased rainfall due to El Niño will likely lead to further flooding from mid-2024 (**World Food Programme** (WFP)), disrupting livelihoods and putting additional strain on communities that have only been able to make a limited recovery from previous shocks. Damage from flooding will also reduce food production as agricultural lands are destroyed and people are displaced, compounding food insecurity.
- **Humanitarian access remains extremely difficult.** ACAPS notes access constraints in the country remain **very high** (4 out of 5), with bureaucratic requirements and insecurity representing particular impediments to humanitarian operations. **More** humanitarians came under attack in South Sudan in the first half of 2023 than in any other country, highlighting the serious threats already facing humanitarian actors. As such, growing violence between armed groups and any potential for the elections to drive instability could lead to increased risks for humanitarians responding to rising needs. Meanwhile, flooding could damage already poor roads, making it harder for humanitarians to reach affected communities.
- **A weakening economy and the spillover effects of the conflict in Sudan will deepen poverty and food insecurity.** Landlocked South Sudan is dependent on access to pipelines and ports in Sudan to conduct international trade and export the oil it produces. Should these trade routes **close**, South Sudan's economy will likely face a major crisis, with reductions in economic activity that will cause particular harm to the most poor and vulnerable. Already, the conflict in Sudan has disrupted food imports, increasing the cost of a food basket by **30%** in South Sudanese border towns, some of which are hosting refugees and returnees. The depreciation of the South Sudanese pound has also pushed up the price of basic goods and reduced people's purchasing power. As a result, **7.1 million** people are predicted to face crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity in April-July 2024, including 79,000 people experiencing catastrophic (IPC 5) levels of food insecurity.

## THE IRC IN SOUTH SUDAN

The IRC started working in South Sudan in 1989. With more than 900 full-time staff members, the IRC in South Sudan provides critical primary and reproductive health, nutrition, environmental health, protection, and economic recovery and resilience services to increasingly vulnerable internally displaced people, refugees, returnees and host communities. The IRC in South Sudan partners with national and state authorities and local partners to strengthen health systems and support displaced populations to obtain durable solutions. [Learn more](#) about the IRC's South Sudan response.



# 04 BURKINA FASO

## Increasing besiegement nationwide drives deepening needs as violence spreads

Burkina Faso enters the Emergency Watchlist Top 5 amid rapidly growing and spreading violence across the country as the Burkinabe military struggles to contain armed groups. Roughly half of the country is now outside government control, and nonstate armed groups including Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) are blockading cities and towns, preventing residents from accessing basic goods and services. As a result, food insecurity and poverty levels are surging in many parts of the country. The government's "security first" approach—which prioritizes retaking territory above filling other state functions—leaves basic services underfunded and out of reach for much of the population. Further, its reliance on support from "self-defense" militias risks heightening harm for civilians.

“Maternal and child health is at a crossroads in Burkina Faso today. More than 3.5 million people have been deprived of access to health care following the closure of 365 health facilities. The very difficult security situation has led to the closure or minimal operation of health centers, depriving thousands of Burkinabes of their health care needs.”



**Judith Ouedraogo**  
Health Nutrition Officer,  
IRC Burkina Faso

**ABOVE:** Saouta Oussemi, 40, lives in Kaya displacement camp with 26 members of his family. Originally a farmer, Saouta fled home in 2021 when two of his family members were killed. Photo: UNOCHA/Michele Cattani

### KEY DATA

**6.3M**  
PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED (27% OF POPULATION), UP NEARLY 40% SINCE 2023

**2.1M**  
PEOPLE (APPROX. 1 IN 10 PEOPLE) INTERNALLY DISPLACED, A 24% INCREASE IN 2023

**46**  
LOCATIONS UNDER SIEGE, AFFECTING AT LEAST 1M PEOPLE

**4/5**  
SCORE FOR SEVERITY OF ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **The increasing besiegement of towns by armed groups is driving skyrocketing humanitarian needs.** The government, which took power in a coup in 2022 motivated in part by the Burkinabe government's inability to contain insurgent groups, now controls only around half of the country. Armed groups are increasingly blockading cities and towns, **including** major population centers outside the capital Ouagadougou. Sieges by armed groups have affected over **a million** people across 46 locations, and are spreading to other areas. Blockades severely disrupt the population's access to key services and have curtailed trade and farming, destroying livelihoods. Some towns have gone several months without new supplies (**Famine Early Warning Systems Network**), leading to high levels of food insecurity. As armed groups continue to advance, conditions in already besieged towns will deteriorate and more towns may face blockades and supply restrictions.
- **Civilians are increasingly at risk amid growing violence between the government and armed groups.** More than **2.1 million** people—almost 1 in 10 people in the country—are internally displaced, and humanitarian needs are growing. JNIM and ISGS in particular have increased their activities across the country, with the number of killings by armed groups almost **tripling** in the 18 months after the first military takeover of the government in January 2022. Civilians are often caught between government forces and armed groups, with government and allied self-defense militias (VDPs) accused of human rights abuses. The killing of **at least 150 civilians** in Yatenga province in April 2023, allegedly by VDP members, was one of the deadliest violent incidents since the conflict began in 2015, highlighting the continued and severe risks facing civilians.
- **Harvests in 2024 are likely to be weak following poor rains in 2023, compounding the impacts of conflict and further deepening food insecurity.** The Burkinabe population already faces serious vulnerabilities, with **40%** of people living below the poverty line. Moreover, growing conflict, insecurity and climate vulnerability are affecting agricultural and livestock production and trade flows, further impacting livelihoods. Food availability may reduce further in 2024 as weak rains in 2023 will likely lead to **reduced** crop yields and less pasture for livestock while insecurity will continue to disrupt markets and food production. In turn, community tensions over limited resources such as grazing lands may escalate, driving localized violence as well.
- **Communities will have limited access to essential education and health services.** The government continues to divert public spending to defense, leaving public services unable to cope with growing poverty and humanitarian needs. Education has been particularly hard hit, with at least 6,000 schools—approximately 1 in 4—closed, impacting the education of approximately one million students and increasing protection risks for those not attending school (**UNICEF**). Meanwhile, a major dengue outbreak will continue to strain the health care system, which is already on the verge of collapse. As of June 2023, over 370 health facilities faced closure due to the conflict and disruptions to aid deliveries, affecting health care for **3.5 million** people.
- **Humanitarian action will be undermined by both funding shortages and constraints on access.** Despite rising needs due to the growing conflict, Burkina Faso's humanitarian response for 2023 was just **36.8%** funded. At the same time, the humanitarian response faces significant challenges, with **ACAPS** rating humanitarian access constraints across the country as "very high" (4 out of 5). **Médecins Sans Frontières'** temporary suspension of some operations in the country following the killing of two staff members in February 2023 highlights the growing threats to the safety of aid workers.

### THE IRC IN BURKINA FASO

The IRC started working in Burkina Faso through an emergency response in April 2019 before establishing a country program in mid-2020 in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the influx of internally displaced people due to the security situation. The IRC Burkina Faso has a main office in Ouagadougou and three field offices in Ouahigouya (North Region), Dori (Sahel) and Fada (East), with sub-offices in Djibo (Sahel), Segouenega (North) and Kaya (Centre North). The IRC implements lifesaving interventions and emergency assistance in health, nutrition, safety, education, economic recovery and power, with a particular focus on working with local partners, mainly women-led organizations. [Learn more](#) about the IRC's Burkina Faso response.



# 05 MYANMAR

## Sharp escalation in conflict risks further breakdown across the country

Myanmar enters the Top 5 of the Emergency Watchlist following a significant escalation in conflict. Myanmar has seen decades of conflict, mostly in rural areas, between government forces and nonstate armed groups organized along ethnic lines. Fighting intensified and spread after the military retook political power in 2021. In October 2023, three major armed groups resumed clashes with the government, putting state military forces under significant pressure and causing increased civilian harm. Over 335,000 people have been newly displaced since the latest escalation began, leaving more than **2 million** people displaced across the country. This latest phase in the fighting has seen security rapidly deteriorate, with severe impacts on civilians and their access to basic services and humanitarian aid which are likely to continue into 2024. Meanwhile, climate change means that communities in Myanmar are exposed to more frequent natural hazards, particularly cyclones.

“Myanmar has been experiencing dire humanitarian conditions for decades. The increase in conflict since February 2021, along with the devastation caused by Cyclone Mocha and the recent uptick in fighting since October 2023, has resulted in loss of lives and properties, economic breakdown, and failure of public services and systems across the country.”



**Soe Myint**  
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Coordinator, IRC Myanmar

**ABOVE:** Razia,\* who is eight months pregnant, sits in her home in Thae Chaung camp in Myanmar in the aftermath of Cyclone Mocha.

\*Name has been changed to protect the person's privacy.

### KEY DATA

**18.6M**

PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED (1/3 OF POPULATION), ALMOST 19 TIMES THE NUMBER BEFORE THE MILITARY TAKEOVER



**2M**

PEOPLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED, A 36% INCREASE IN 2023



**15.2M**

PEOPLE FACING MODERATE OR SEVERE LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY



**160TH/185**

COUNTRIES RANKED ON ND-GAIN'S INDEX FOR VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE



**5/5**

SCORE FOR SEVERITY OF ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **Civilians will pay the price as conflict intensifies and the military comes under increasing pressure.** At the end of October 2023, the Brotherhood Alliance—which formed in June 2019, before the change in government, and brings together disparate armed opposition groups—launched **Operation 1027** in Northern Shan State. The escalation has led to major fighting across the country and the displacement of more than **335,000** people in just one month of fighting. The level of coordination between various armed opposition groups suggests this latest development poses the biggest threat to the military government since it took power in February 2021. Meanwhile, the Arakan Army—which is part of the alliance—has launched an offensive in Rakhine State, ending a truce with the government. For its part, the military has **increasingly** relied on tactics including airstrikes in civilian areas, leading to significant civilian casualties. As the military comes under growing pressure and the conflict continues to escalate, Myanmar will see severe civilian harm and humanitarian impacts.
- **Critical services already impaired by conflict are at risk of collapse, leaving millions without access.** Health care and other social services are on the brink of collapse amid disruptions of communications, blockages of key transport routes and the continuation of martial law. A severe shortage of health care workers and resources is leaving vital facilities shuttered, while at least **287** attacks on hospitals, clinics and ambulances were recorded between January and mid-September 2023. Conflict is driving significant infrastructure damage, leading to prolonged electricity **blackouts**, particularly in urban areas—which will further hamper the ability of critical sectors to function. Many of the **2 million** displaced people within Myanmar are in rural areas, long distances from critical services. However, as nonstate armed actors seek to gain control of cities and towns, services in these areas are also at risk.
- **Economic challenges and climate risks will continue to drive high rates of food insecurity.** Although Myanmar's economy saw marginal growth in 2023, this does little to mitigate the significant economic contraction of 12% since February 2021. **Poverty rates** and **inflation** remain high, meaning that the prices of staple foodstuffs like rice, cooking oil and cereals have increased. The steady depreciation of the kyat has also pushed up the price of imported goods, to record levels in some cases, leading to reduced availability in markets (**The Food and Agriculture Organization**). Myanmar's heavy reliance on agriculture and extreme vulnerability to climate shocks further deepens the risk of food insecurity. Amid a reduction in domestic crop yields as a result of intensifying conflict, Cyclone Mocha in May 2023 further damaged crops, impacting the food production and livelihoods of at least **3.4 million** people. With **15.2 million** people already facing moderate to severe levels of food

insecurity, the impacts of the El Niño effect may drive erratic rainfall and higher temperatures, further affecting agricultural production and food availability (**ACAPS**).

- **Extreme humanitarian access constraints amplify the challenge of meeting rising needs.** Registration laws and other legal requirements introduced in 2022 have imposed greater restrictions on the operations of humanitarian agencies and their staff, not least the risk of detention. For example, **50** humanitarian workers were detained in the first half of 2023. In addition to bureaucratic requirements and restrictive policies, high levels of conflict activity across most states and regions and widespread armed opposition group checkpoints and governance structures are leading to **“extreme”** constraints to humanitarian access across Myanmar. The military's targeting of busy urban areas will also continue to expose humanitarians to extreme security risks. Meanwhile, the targeting of civilian areas and IDP camps has also pushed displaced people into forest areas and away from camps, making it even harder for them to access the services they require.

## THE IRC IN MYANMAR

The IRC began working in Myanmar in May 2008 with emergency response and early recovery interventions for communities affected by Cyclone Nargis. Since then, the IRC has broadened its portfolio with health; protection; water, sanitation and hygiene; and shelter programs aiming to support displaced, crisis-affected and vulnerable communities to survive, recover and gain control of their futures.

The IRC's current programming in Myanmar has a strong humanitarian focus and aims to reach people affected by the national crisis and escalating conflict that has spread across the country since February 2021, together with pre-existing caseloads of IDPs and marginalized and stateless communities. In addition to direct service provision, a critical component of the IRC's program strategy in Myanmar involves support to and through local partners, and the IRC's portfolio includes a range of local partners working across multiple sectors. The IRC currently works in Rakhine, Chin, Kachin, Northern Shan, Kayah, and Kayin States. [Learn more about the IRC's Myanmar response.](#)



# 06 MALI

## Expansion of conflict will exacerbate rising humanitarian needs

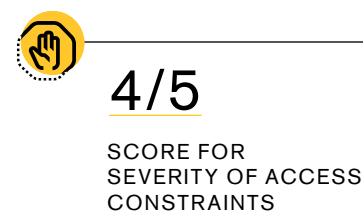
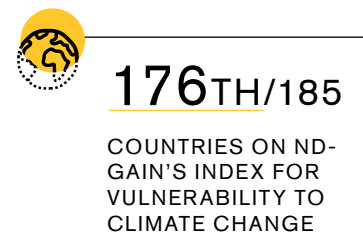
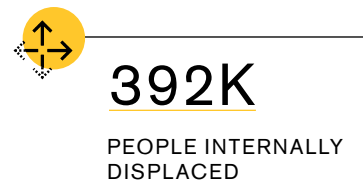
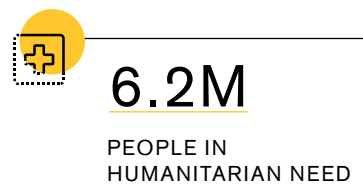
Mali moves up on the 2024 Emergency Watchlist as dual security and economic crises drive up civilian harm and humanitarian needs. The military government is contending with an array of armed groups including Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), who are increasingly adopting tactics that cause devastating civilian harm, including besieging urban areas and thus preventing residents from accessing basic goods and services. Meanwhile, the U.N.'s peacekeeping force in Mali is withdrawing from the country, raising concerns that insecurity and conflict will rise in northern and central regions in 2024. Mali is also highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and the potential persistence of dry conditions would worsen an already complex food security crisis.

**“Mali has been going through complex crises that are significantly affecting populations, particularly the most vulnerable, to meet their basic needs. Diplomatic tensions have led to the departure of international armed forces and the United Nations. The deterioration of the humanitarian situation, the erosion of the security situation and the adverse effects of climatic hazards is forcing communities to move.”**



**Dr. Salim Dembélé**  
Health and Nutrition  
Coordinator, IRC Mali

### KEY DATA



**ABOVE:** A woman in front of her tent in an informal displacement camp in Mali. Photo: UNOCHA/Michele Cattani

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

○ **Conflict between the military government and various armed groups will likely escalate and drive increased civilian harm in 2024.** Insecurity is growing as the government, which took power in a 2021 coup, faces growing threats from armed groups, particularly in central and northern Mali, and now controls as little as 15% of the country. A peace agreement with northern armed groups had largely held since 2015 but broke down in September 2023 following the withdrawal of the U.N.'s peacekeeping mission. The military's capture of Kidal, a strategic town in northern Mali, could signal escalating violence in the north as the government looks to reestablish its presence there. At the same time, armed groups like ISGS and JNIM have also increased their activities, competing for influence and territory, and leaving civilians at most risk from the expanding insecurity. Violence targeting civilians had already increased by **38%** in the first eight months of 2023 compared to the same time period in 2022—a pattern likely to worsen in the coming year as Bamako battles armed actors on multiple fronts and some originally pro-government groups ally with armed opposition groups.

➤ **VIOLENCE TARGETING CIVILIANS HAD ALREADY INCREASED BY 38% IN THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF 2023 COMPARED TO THE SAME TIME PERIOD IN 2022.**

○ **Climate risks and growing poverty will compound service gaps.** Many Malians continue to lack sufficient access to key services including education, health care, and water and sanitation. Poverty, which affects nearly half the population, is **rising** amid expanding conflict while sanctions imposed by the West African regional bloc the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) after the military seized power have disrupted trade flows in border areas. Additionally, Mali's **vulnerability** to the impacts of climate change could drive growing needs if drought conditions persist. Because Mali's population is heavily reliant on agriculture for food and livelihoods, the impacts of drought could not only fuel inter-communal violence over increasingly scarce resources like water and usable land for farming and herding but also drive an erosion of livelihoods—leading to growing poverty and inability to afford critical goods and services.

○ **Food insecurity is likely to worsen as conflict escalates and more cities come under siege.** U.N. agencies in September 2023 warned that nearly **a million** children under the age of 5 were at risk of acute malnutrition because of conflict, internal displacement and restrictions on humanitarians that limit access to affected populations. This includes some **200,000** children at

risk of dying if humanitarian aid is unable to reach them. Food insecurity is most severe in conflict-affected regions such as Ménaka in the east, where insecurity is severely disrupting the **availability** of critical supplies. Meanwhile, armed actors continue to impose blockades of key cities and towns (for example, Timbuktu since August 2023), restricting the transport of essential goods along road and river routes and leading to significant **shortages** of food and fuel. Populations under siege lack the means to produce their own food, and with armed groups increasingly resorting to such tactics, the population could face reduced availability and increased costs of food.

○ **Humanitarian access will worsen as fighting spreads and humanitarian actors face greater constraints.** Prior to the departure of the U.N.'s peacekeeping mission, **ACAPS** already considered access constraints to be “very high” (4 out of 5) in Mali. Escalating conflict between the military and various armed actors will further impede the delivery of humanitarian aid and services, particularly in northern and central regions and areas under blockade. As armed groups consolidate their control over the north and center of the country and conflict worsens, humanitarians could also face increased movement restrictions, including checkpoints and other logistical impediments.

## THE IRC IN MALI

Since 2012, the IRC has provided critical assistance to more than two million Malians displaced by conflict and facing severe food shortages in the areas of health; nutrition; economic recovery and development; education; water, sanitation and hygiene; and protection and governance. To help the country recover, the IRC is focusing our efforts on the Ménaka, Gao, Douentza, Mopti and Nara regions by providing emergency relief; supporting village savings and loan associations; and providing water, sanitation and hygiene services as well as health services. [Learn more about the IRC's Mali response.](#)



# 07 SOMALIA

## Heightened conflict and climate risks after record drought has eroded communities' resilience

New conflict and climate shocks will have a particularly severe impact in 2024 as the 2021-2023 drought, which saw a record five consecutive failed rains and followed a devastating drought in 2015, has eroded communities' resilience. Widespread flooding due to El Niño has already displaced more than 700,000 people and will likely continue into early 2024—highlighting the continued risks facing the population even with the end of the drought. Moreover, an ongoing government offensive against the armed group al-Shabaab risks driving civilian harm and displacement, while political unrest in other regions could also heighten humanitarian needs in 2024. The drought and food security crisis propelled Somalia to the top of the Emergency Watchlist last year, and while needs remain acute, keeping Somalia in the Emergency Watchlist 2024 Top 10, the levels of need are not predicted to deteriorate to the same degree in 2024. In fact, the total number of people in humanitarian need drops slightly, from **8.3 million** in 2023 to **6.9 million** in 2024.

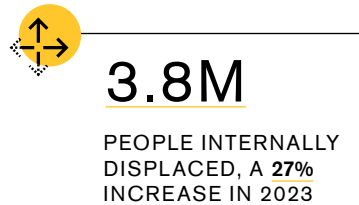
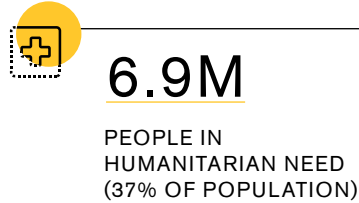
**“We have no house to live in. As you can see, it is dilapidated... When it rains, water comes through the roof and the running water floods the house. We have to keep shifting. We can't hang our items up and we can't keep them on the ground.”**



**Nura Isak**  
IRC client in Somalia

**ABOVE:** Community leader, Kulow, in the Arlaadi camp in Dhusamareb, Somalia. Many families migrated to Dhusamareb because of the drought that decimated their crops and livestock, while others sought to protect their children from the al-Shabaab militant group, which is known for recruiting child soldiers.

### KEY DATA



## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **Record drought has destroyed resilience and left communities more exposed to new crisis.** The most recent drought was the longest and most severe in four decades, leading to catastrophic food insecurity (IPC 5) for an estimated **727,000** people. While the number of people facing the most life-threatening stages of food insecurity (IPC 4 and 5) has now been reduced, some **4.3 million** people (25% of the population) continue to experience crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity. Meanwhile, hopes of economic recovery and resilience to new shocks have been severely eroded. At least **3.5 million livestock** (one-third of Somalia's total) died due to the drought, devastating livelihoods and contributing to high levels of displacement and urban migration. It will take an estimated **5-10 years** to restore livestock levels, and only if water and land conditions are adequate.
- **Flooding risks further exacerbating needs.** Intense flooding in late 2023 in central and southern Somalia displaced more than **706,000** people, demonstrating how El Niño could continue to bring further flooding through early 2024. Increased flooding will lead to further displacement and waterborne disease, particularly for displaced people and those without access to clean water and sanitation. Already, reported cases of diarrhea and cholera are on the **rise**. Damage from flooding will also lead to reduced agro-pastoral production and a higher risk of crop failures, driving decreased household purchasing power, high food costs at markets, a reliance on imports and ultimately increased risk of food insecurity. Flooding has already seen damage to bridges and roads, and further disruptions to **supply routes** could also push up food prices.
- **The ongoing government offensive against al-Shabaab is likely to cause further civilian harm and displacement.** Somali government forces launched a major offensive against al-Shabaab in August 2022, making limited territorial gains in central Somalia before pushing south into the armed group's traditional stronghold. The offensive has faced challenges but will continue, contributing to high levels of displacement already driven by food insecurity and climate impacts. As al-Shabaab comes under pressure from government forces, civilian areas will remain vulnerable to large-scale violence, and populations in areas under al-Shabaab control will likely face increased **tax collection**. Al-Shabaab may also seek to exploit the withdrawal of troops from the African Union Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in 2024. Meanwhile, the risk of al-Shabaab targeting civilians during local and regional elections scheduled for June and November 2024 remains high.
- **Broader political tensions could play out violently.** In February 2023, fighting broke out between Somaliland forces and troops affiliated with the Dhulbahante clan in the disputed

territory between Somaliland and Puntland State in northern Somalia. The conflict is rooted in tensions over governance of the Las Anod area, claimed by both the breakaway government of Somaliland and local clan authorities, and has displaced more than **150,000 people**. There is a possibility of continued violence in Las Anod, which could drive additional needs and displacements and strain critical services. Meanwhile, having been delayed since 2022, Somaliland presidential elections are now slated for November 2024, meaning there is potential for renewed unrest as elections approach, while deepening tensions over delayed elections in Puntland have also triggered **clashes** between opposition groups.

- **Access constraints and funding shortfalls stymie the humanitarian response.** **ACAPS** scores Somalia “very high” (4 out of 5) for humanitarian access constraints, underlining the continued severe challenges humanitarians face in reaching those in need. Areas under the direct control of armed groups will continue to be hard to reach, while access in areas in central and southern Somalia will remain challenging amid military and security operations against al-Shabaab. Despite the government's limited territorial gains, fighting along supply lines will prevent the delivery of critical services and pose security risks to humanitarians. Meanwhile, Somalia's humanitarian response plan is just **42.3%** funded for 2023, with shortfalls likely to persist in 2024—meaning humanitarian aid delivery will be reduced as nearly half the population continues to face needs.

## THE IRC IN SOMALIA

The IRC has been operational in Somalia since 1981, where it currently supports communities in Galmudug, Southwest and Puntland States, as well as in the Banaadir (Mogadishu) region. The IRC in Somalia is scaling up our programs to address drought and rising food insecurity, including expanding to new areas to meet severe needs. We provide health, nutrition, water and sanitation services; women's protection and empowerment; and cash assistance to drought-affected populations across the country. [Learn more about the IRC's Somalia response.](#)



# 08 NIGER

## Coup drives significant expansion of humanitarian crisis as critical funding and imports dry up

Niger moves into the Emergency Watchlist Top 10 in 2024 after a coup in July 2023 triggered massive instability that risks a rapid worsening of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country. Tensions have grown between the new military government and regional neighbors while western states have withdrawn security assistance, raising the risk of armed group activity growing. Any further increase in violence would drive displacement and humanitarian needs, as well as compound challenges for the humanitarian response. Meanwhile, cuts to international financial support, upon which Niger was highly reliant, have led to significant reductions in national spending by the new authorities—undermining critical service delivery at a time when food insecurity is reaching record levels and needs are deepening due to the compounding impacts of climate change and insecurity.

**“Faced with the challenges of conflicts exacerbated by the effects of climate change, Niger is facing chronic food insecurity, which accentuates the vulnerability of poor populations and thus requires adaptation measures to improve pastoral production and the incomes of affected communities—strengthening their resilience to food insecurity in a sustainable way.”**



**Boubacar Koura**  
Economic Response and Development  
Coordinator, IRC Niger

**ABOVE:** Fandaou Karam, 45, was forced to flee her village in Niger after an attack by Boko Haram. Thanks to cash assistance from the IRC, today Fandaou has a small business and is able to support her two children.

### KEY DATA



**4.5M**

PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED



**700K**

PEOPLE DISPLACED, INCLUDING REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS



**3.3M**

PEOPLE (13% OF POPULATION) FACING CRISIS OR WORSE (IPC 3+) LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY



**47%**

OF CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM CHRONIC MALNUTRITION

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **The withdrawal of western military support may embolden armed groups to expand their activities, raising the risk of increased civilian harm and displacement.** Niger saw a **fourfold** increase in attacks on civilians by Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) in the month after the coup. With assistance from western partners, Niger had been relatively successful in containing armed groups, but the political instability triggered by the coup introduced new security risks. After coming to power, the military government immediately demanded the withdrawal of French troops, while U.S. forces stationed in the country paused their support to the Nigerien military. The withdrawal of foreign forces, in combination with reduced financial assistance, will likely create a security vacuum that armed groups in the region will seek to exploit and fill—raising the risk that civilians will be caught in the middle and face increased risk of harm and displacement. At the same time, Niamey has imposed additional restrictions on international NGOs and U.N. agencies—including a requirement for military convoys to accompany them in certain regions. This will further limit the ability of humanitarian actors to reach populations with the greatest needs.
- **Niger will continue to face some of the highest levels of food insecurity globally due to conflict, climate shocks and the economic effects of border closures.** Niger is prone to variable rainfall and frequent drought—risks that the El Niño effect could exacerbate. Any climate shocks will compound the effects of conflict, which is already driving some of the **highest** food needs in the world. **3.3 million** people were facing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity before the coup, with a further 7.3 million people at risk of falling into this category. Diplomatic tensions with Benin and Nigeria, after the governments of both countries vocally opposed the military's seizure of power, means that the borders with both remain closed, limiting imports of food and other goods, leading to price rises. The closures are also disrupting economic migration and livelihoods in border areas, making it harder for families to afford the food they need.
- **Border closures are also disrupting efforts to respond to growing needs.** Convoys of trucks containing thousands of tons of goods, including nutritional aid and medical supplies, are stuck at Niger's southern border. Niamey has encouraged humanitarians to use alternative routes through Burkina Faso, but these present additional security challenges and would cause significantly higher costs. Furthermore, Nigeria previously provided **70%** of Niger's electricity supply but it cut off exports following the coup—making critical services like health care more expensive to run as they are now reliant on generators. The U.N. has warned that power cuts could also lead to the spoiling of **millions** of vaccines, potentially leading to surging health needs, particularly among children.



**40%**

OF STATE SPENDING CUT BY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT, STRAINING ESSENTIAL RESOURCES



**70%**

OF NIGER'S ELECTRICITY SUPPLY CUT FROM NIGERIA FOLLOWING THE COUP, NOW RELIANT ON GENERATORS

- **Economic and financial sanctions are likely to further disrupt the delivery of already strained public services.** The July 2023 coup led by General Abdourahmane Tchiani has resulted in a sharp deterioration in Niamey's relations with many regional and global partners. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) levied significant economic and financial sanctions on the country, including the freezing of foreign assets and suspension of financial assistance, while the EU, U.S. and World Bank all cut financial support. At the same time, the military government has cut state spending by **40%**. Given Niger's reliance on foreign funding and the fact that the government is likely to increase military spending to confront security challenges, key public services such as health care will become more strained, cutting people off from essential care.

## THE IRC IN NIGER

The IRC started working in Niger in 2013. The IRC operates primarily in the Diffa and Tillabéri regions and is one of the largest humanitarian organizations in the country, supporting over 270,000 people last year and playing a leading role in the rapid response mechanism. The IRC's services include cash distribution, seed distributions to farmers, support to health centers so that children are protected from malnutrition, and support to schools to improve children's literacy. The IRC also builds and rehabilitates water supply infrastructure and provides protection programs for women and children. [Learn more about the IRC's Niger response.](#)





# 09 ETHIOPIA

## Multiple conflicts and climate shocks compound humanitarian risks

Ethiopia remains in the Top 10 of the Emergency Watchlist 2024 as communities across the country, whose livelihoods were decimated by three years of failed rains, now face the twin threats of multiple conflicts and the likelihood of El Niño-induced flooding. The November 2022 ceasefire between the Government of Ethiopia and Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) continues to hold in northern Ethiopia, but other conflicts, particularly in the central Oromia region and in Amhara in the northwest, are fueling humanitarian needs and raising the risk of a return to large-scale fighting. So while the total number of people in humanitarian need drops by around **8 million** compared to 2023, many Ethiopians continue to face major challenges, further deepened by persistent inflation that will make it hard for millions already facing food insecurity to afford staple foods.

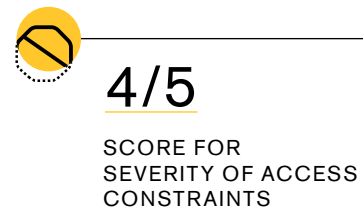
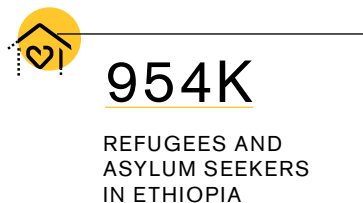
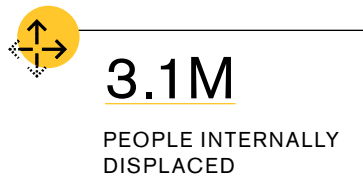
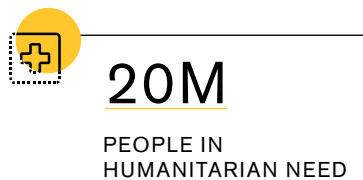
“It rained for three days and we planted seeds, but the flood completely destroyed the planted seeds. Now, we can't produce anything. We are still in danger. We're in trouble when it comes to food.”



**Mengesha Bale**  
Community representative and IRC client in Ethiopia

ABOVE: 3-year-old Kindessa walks with his parents near their home in Keyra IDP site in Deder, Ethiopia.

### KEY DATA



## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

○ **Climate shocks linked to El Niño will compound the effects of years of drought.** The record 2020-2023 drought significantly eroded the resilience of many communities, particularly in southern Ethiopia. Herding communities will need at least **5 years** to rebuild their herds and begin earning from their livestock again. Though an updated food assessment has not taken place, most northern, southern and southeastern regions are projected to face **emergency** or worse (IPC 4 and 5) levels of food insecurity in 2024, indicating the vulnerability of the population to new shocks and the importance of ongoing humanitarian assistance. Now, El Niño is **likely** to bring heavy rains to the same regions, some of which experienced **flood-ing** in September and October 2023. Further flooding could kill livestock and cause crop losses, adding to the risk of food insecurity. Heavier rains will also contribute to the spread of water- and mosquito-borne diseases like the ongoing nationwide cholera outbreak.

➤ **WITH THE GOVERNMENT FACING MULTIPLE CONFLICT RISKS, INCREASED VIOLENCE (INCLUDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE) WILL CONTINUE TO CAUSE CIVILIAN HARM AND DRIVE HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AS PEOPLE ARE FORCED TO FLEE THEIR HOMES AND LIVELIHOODS ARE DISRUPTED.**

○ **Escalating violence and tensions with neighboring countries threaten a return to wider conflict.** While the end of active hostilities between the Government of Ethiopia and the TPLF has led to relative peace in Tigray since November 2022, **concerns** over transitional justice and the continued tensions over the status of Western Tigray persist, suggesting conflict could resume. At the same time, conflict and tensions in both Oromia and Amhara have grown, illustrating the prevalence of localized conflicts. Regional tensions may also increase if Ethiopia looks to gain access to the sea and due to the conflict in Sudan. With the government facing multiple conflict risks, increased violence (including gender-based violence) will continue to cause civilian harm and drive humanitarian needs as people are forced to flee their homes and livelihoods are disrupted. Already, **ACAPS** considers access constraints to be “very high” in Ethiopia (4 out of 5) and the threats to humanitarian action that is needed by millions of people across the country will grow if instability spreads.

○ **Economic pressures will drive food insecurity.** Two years of conflict in Tigray have weighed heavily on Ethiopia's economy, restricting growth. Any escalation in fighting in Oromia, Amhara

or other parts of the country will also limit prospects of economic recovery. Despite some slowdown in price rises of essential goods, food inflation is likely to remain high in 2024, placing staple foods out of reach. The government's September 2023 decision to remove a fuel subsidy is also likely to drive up the price of fuel and, in turn, food. Female farmers, who are already vulnerable to **climate** and economic shocks, are likely to be even more adversely affected by economic pressures given their limited access to productive assets, information, credit and technology.

○ **The flow of refugees and returnees from neighboring countries will continue to drive humanitarian needs in border towns.** More than **90,000** refugees and Ethiopian returnees have crossed into Ethiopia from Sudan since fighting erupted there in April 2023, putting pressure on refugee camps in the border region of Benishangul-Gumuz. Meanwhile, the number of Somali refugees in Ethiopia has increased as Somalia also faces risks related to persistent drought, floods and ongoing conflict. **Close to 100,000** people—including those fleeing conflict in Somalia—have crossed into drought-affected areas of Ethiopia, placing further pressures on services and resources there. Any further deterioration in the humanitarian situation in neighboring states will drive further population movements into Ethiopia, exacerbating already high existing needs.

## THE IRC IN ETHIOPIA

The IRC began its programming in Ethiopia in 2000, aiding refugees from neighboring countries and Ethiopians in crisis-affected and underserved communities. Ethiopia continues to grapple with conflicts and climate shocks that are taking a toll on its vulnerable populations. In response, the IRC has adopted a multifaceted approach, combining emergency relief with long-term resilience-building initiatives.

The organization's programming encompasses emergency response; water, sanitation and hygiene; health and nutrition; education; protection; and economic recovery. This approach ensures that communities receive both immediate assistance and sustainable solutions, fostering self-reliance and resilience in both local communities and refugee camps. [Learn more about the IRC's Ethiopia response.](#)



# 10 DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

KEY DATA



25.4M

PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED, THE LARGEST NUMBER IN ANY COUNTRY GLOBALLY IN 2024



6.9M

PEOPLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED, A 25% INCREASE IN 2023



25.4M

PEOPLE FACING CRISIS OR WORSE (IPC 3+) LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY



120+

ARMED GROUPS OPERATE IN EASTERN DRC



182ND/185

COUNTRIES RANKED ON ND-GAIN'S INDEX FOR VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE

## Growing conflict risk in the east as both political and regional tensions grow

Since October 2023, a resumed offensive by the M23 armed group is driving up conflict levels and humanitarian needs in eastern DRC, keeping the country on the Emergency Watchlist for more than 10 years in a row. Even before the resurgence of M23, which previously fought a major insurgency in 2012-2013, weak state capacity exposed many Congolese to one of the world's most protracted crises, driven by conflict, economic pressures, climate shocks and persistent disease outbreaks. Adding to the risks, political tensions grew throughout the past year ahead of presidential elections in December 2023, increasing the risk of unrest just as international peacekeepers are withdrawing from the country and regional tensions are growing.

“Armed conflicts and natural disasters in 2023 displaced 1.26 million people in the eastern provinces of the DRC—over 60% of whom are children. Associated with armed groups, separated from their parents, victims of gender-based violence but also sexually and economically exploited, children pay a heavy price for the cyclical outbreaks of violence that impacts their future.”



**Pamela Embee**  
Child Protection  
Coordinator, IRC DRC

ABOVE: 23-year-old Mapendo Zabonimpa runs a potato business from her makeshift shelter in Don Bosco Ngangi displacement camp outside of Goma, DRC.

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **The humanitarian crisis in eastern DRC is intensifying amid escalating conflict.** Intense fighting has continued in the east, primarily in North Kivu province, following the breakdown of the March 2023 ceasefire between the government and M23 in October. The escalation has driven a **surge** in internal displacement. More than 5.6 million people (out of **6.9 million** IDPs nationwide) are already displaced in the east, creating one of the world's **largest** displacement crises. M23 is one of more than **120** armed groups operating in eastern DRC, making the country a case study in how weak governance can allow nonstate armed groups to take hold. Indeed, Islamic State-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) have **escalated** attacks in eastern DRC throughout 2023, with **reports** of increased civilian killings and sexual violence. More displaced people are seeking shelter in displacement camps, where existing communities already face precarious and insecure living conditions and limited access to services, with women and girls facing particular threats to their safety.
- **Political tensions could drive a further expansion in violence involving regional actors.** The run-up to elections scheduled for December 2023 sparked greater political tensions within DRC and came amid escalating tensions with the country's neighbors, particularly Rwanda. Kinshasa and Kigali continue to accuse each other of supporting armed groups within one another's borders, suggesting a risk of wider conflict in 2024. Indeed, the U.N. has voiced concerns about the **possibility** of a direct confrontation between the two countries. Meanwhile, the U.N. is **winding down** its peacekeeping mission in DRC amid pressure from the government and persistent protests due to its perceived failure to improve security conditions, particularly in the east.
- **El Niño may increase the risk of flooding, spread of waterborne illnesses and food insecurity.** DRC is already vulnerable to flooding, for example due to reductions in land absorption due to deforestation and rising water levels in Lake Albert—which led to flooding in eastern Ituri province in May 2023. El Niño is expected to bring above-average rainfall in 2024 in the northern and central regions in particular, however, **flooding** risks remain high across DRC. Such events may trigger large-scale displacements and exacerbate the spread of communicable diseases, particularly as the country is already experiencing one of the largest cholera outbreaks in the world. More than 41,000 cases have been reported as of October 2023, with particular impacts in eastern DRC (**World Health Organization**). Overcrowded IDP camps where access to water and sanitation services is limited may also amplify the spread of these diseases at a time when the health sector is at **risk of collapse**. Moreover, DRC already hosts one of the **largest**

populations of food-insecure people, and the combined impact of conflict and flooding on livelihoods and food production will lead to **worsening** food needs.

- **Humanitarian action will be undermined by lack of funds and access constraints.** Amid rising needs, the humanitarian response plan for DRC is just **38.2%** funded for 2023, leaving major shortfalls. Meanwhile, **ACAPS** notes that humanitarian access has deteriorated since 2022, with DRC now seeing “very high” (4 out of 5) access constraints, particularly in the eastern conflict-affected regions. Bureaucratic constraints, such as restrictions on the issuance of visas, have grown, and insecurity has led some humanitarian actors to scale back or temporarily suspend their activities in the east. Protests against the U.N.'s peacekeeping mission are also heightening, reflecting suspicion of international actors, including humanitarians, which could further impede the delivery of critical services at a time when needs are likely to grow.

## THE IRC IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The IRC has been operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) since 1996. We deliver emergency assistance to individuals affected by recurring crises while fostering social cohesion within communities through collaborative efforts with Congolese institutions. We also provide essential health services, including primary health care, sexual and reproductive health, infection prevention and control, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene.

We reinforce violence prevention and support survivors of gender-based violence through comprehensive interventions, including providing psychosocial support, facilitating economic recovery, and ensuring access to essential services (such as legal and medical assistance), particularly in eastern DRC where there is a severe protection crisis. Our approach involves collaboration with communities and their institutions to promote social cohesion aimed at conflict reduction and support to primary and secondary schools. [Learn more](#) about the IRC's DRC response.



# AFGHANISTAN

UNRANKED

## Economic isolation means humanitarian needs will remain high

Afghanistan continues to face some of the highest levels of humanitarian need in the world, with **23.3 million** people—just over half of the population—in need of assistance. The extent of the humanitarian crisis reflects the economic unraveling that followed the collapse of the Republic and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) taking power. The country is also exposed to earthquakes and climate shocks like flooding. Additionally, regional neighbors are increasingly forcing Afghan refugees to return home. Humanitarian need drops from **29.2 million** in 2023 to 23.3 million in 2024, but over half of the population remains in humanitarian need. The economy has also now settled at a low-level equilibrium and, with crises in many other countries deteriorating rapidly, Afghanistan drops from third on the Emergency Watchlist 2023 to the unranked second half this year.

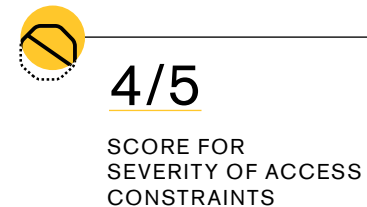
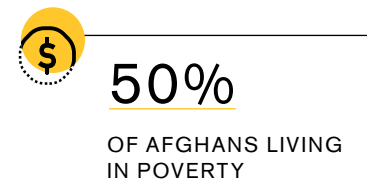
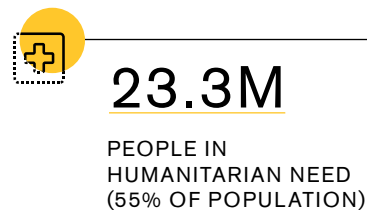
**“In the last year, the economic crisis in Afghanistan has stabilized, but the consequences of decades of conflict have left a lasting impact. Seventeen million people face acute hunger in 2023. Meanwhile, conditions for women are continuing to deteriorate as barriers to work and education continue. Without urgent action, Afghanistan stands on a knife’s edge.”**



**Abdul Khaliq Sediqi**  
Communications  
Coordinator,  
IRC Afghanistan

**ABOVE:** Rahmanullah Zarjan’s family of eight doesn’t have enough money to live on. Selling pickles in the bazaar is their only source of income.

KEY DATA



## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **Economic pressures will continue to be the primary driver of poverty and humanitarian need.** Afghanistan’s economic crisis continues to cause some of the highest rates of humanitarian need worldwide. Growth is being held back by the country’s economic isolation, particularly the suspension of most development funding (which previously subsidized Afghanistan’s spending on public services by an estimated **75%**), the lack of progress on unfreezing the Afghan central bank’s frozen funds (held in a Swiss-based trust fund), and the impact of sanctions and international restrictions on foreign financial inflows. The economy stabilized slightly in 2022 but saw **negligible** growth in 2023. The nearly **50%** of the population that lives in poverty will therefore continue to experience economic hardship. Moreover, **funding** for Afghanistan’s 2023 humanitarian response plan was lower than in 2022, undermining humanitarian action.
- **Climate shocks risk driving food insecurity and severe malnutrition—all while food aid has been cut.** Three years of drought and the coldest winter in 15 years in 2023 have **exacerbated** Afghanistan’s food crisis. Though an estimated **15.3 million** people—35% of the population—continue to suffer from crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity, funding shortfalls forced WFP to cut food assistance for some **10 million** people in 2023. Moreover, reduced groundwater levels and increased desertification are leading to lower crop yields and reduced food availability in a country highly dependent on agriculture. At the same time, the El Niño phenomenon will likely bring **wetter-than-normal** conditions in 2024, which could lead to an increased risk of floods—particularly in the north and northeast—further affecting crop production and food supplies.
- **Amid tense diplomatic relations with neighbors, returns of Afghan refugees risk exacerbating needs.** Islamabad announced the planned expulsion of 1.7 million allegedly undocumented Afghans in Pakistan in October 2023. At least **448,000** Afghans have likely already returned, with thousands more expected to do so in 2024, particularly if Islamabad **expands** this policy to also expel 2.2 million documented Afghan refugees. Tehran is similarly threatening to deport millions of Afghans it deems to be living illegally in the country. The arrival of hundreds of thousands of people into Afghanistan will strain services, particularly in border regions.
- **Security risks persist despite the end of large-scale conflict.** Conflict activity has significantly reduced since August 2021. Still, some armed groups remain, and their activities mean that localized insecurity will continue in 2024. The National Resistance Front (NRF) continues to stage limited and localized attacks, with low impact on civilians, while Islamic State Khorasan Province (IS-KP) has carried out several deadly bombings and killings, many of which have caused significant

civilian fatalities. Any increase in IS-KP activity, even if limited to some areas, would pose a significant risk to civilians, particularly minority Shiite, Hazara, Sikh and Hindu groups, and lead to localized displacements.

- **Humanitarian access remains restricted and uncertain across the country.** The IEA has issued a number of national decrees on aid delivery that will continue to complicate humanitarian operations, even if enforcement varies as humanitarian actors have negotiated regional improvements. For example, restrictions on women aid workers require ongoing negotiations between humanitarians and the authorities to maintain services. Meanwhile, winter conditions and other environmental hazards such as earthquakes and floods—as well as ongoing conflict risks—will also continue to hamper humanitarian efforts to reach affected populations, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas.

## THE IRC IN AFGHANISTAN

The IRC began work in Afghanistan in 1988, and now works in thousands of villages across twelve provinces. Since August 2021, the IRC has significantly improved the health care landscape by enhancing the capacity of nine static health facilities and establishing 35 mobile health teams. The IRC has conducted more than 627,400 mobile health consultations; delivered over 27,000 emergency health kits, with a focus on vulnerable groups; and conducted almost 300,000 consultations for severely and moderately acutely malnourished children.

Those suffering from malnutrition have been enrolled in the Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition program, achieving a remarkable 93.5% cure rate during treatment. Finally, IRC Afghanistan has sub-awarded 23% of its total budget to partners, with the aim of allocating 25% of confirmed funds to partners in 2024. [Learn more](#) about the IRC’s Afghanistan response.



# CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

UNRANKED

## Conflict, economic and political risks drive displacement and humanitarian needs

The Central African Republic has experienced a protracted humanitarian crisis since 2013 when conflict broke out between government forces and a coalition of armed groups. As a result of widespread insecurity, CAR continues to experience persistently high humanitarian need—keeping it on the Emergency Watchlist. The government continues to battle armed groups for control of large swathes of the country, putting civilians at risk, driving displacement and limiting access to essential services. Tensions over a July 2023 referendum on constitutional reform risk igniting a new political crisis that could drive further unrest and violence—which armed groups could exploit. The government will continue to rely heavily on humanitarian organizations to deliver these services, but shortfalls in funding and access challenges will impede delivery of aid, particularly in hard-to-reach areas.

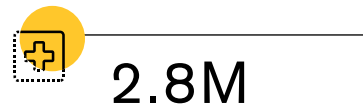
“The activities of several unstructured and structured armed groups are forcing civilians to leave their communities to seek refuge from the violence. The humanitarian situation is worrying. This calls for the mobilization of resources to provide appropriate responses to humanitarian needs.”



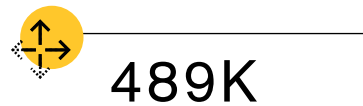
**Martial Gabby Mongba**  
Base Manager,  
IRC Bocaranga

ABOVE: A mother holds her child at a health clinic in Bangui, Central African Republic. Photo: UNOCHA/Siegfried Modola

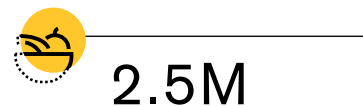
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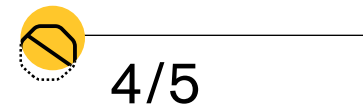
PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED (NEARLY HALF OF POPULATION)



PEOPLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED



PEOPLE (41% OF POPULATION) FACING CRISIS OR WORSE (IPC 3+) LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY



SCORE FOR SEVERITY OF ACCESS CONSTRAINTS



OF DEBT DISTRESS

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **Continued fighting between government forces and armed groups is likely to fuel additional displacement.** Although the government—with support from Rwandan forces and the Russian private military company Wagner—has regained control of some territories during 2023, armed groups continue to resist government operations in most of CAR's northern and eastern regions. Ongoing efforts to retake territory will drive displacement and constrain access to already limited public services, particularly for people on the move. According to **OCHA**, 1 in 5 Central Africans is already displaced internally or externally. The persistence of armed group activity has also given rise to increased banditry and insecurity, putting civilians at further risk of harm and displacement.
- **President's efforts to extend time in office risk driving violence and political instability.** In July 2023, CAR passed a constitutional referendum that abandoned presidential term limits, allowing President Faustin-Archange Touadéra to seek **re-election** when his current term expires in 2025. Touadéra's moves to seek re-election, given low voter turnout for the referendum and a boycott by opposition groups, suggests that the already divided political class could become increasingly polarized. In turn, political tensions could result in political demonstrations or clashes with armed groups. Local elections in 2024 could also act as a catalyst for political unrest and localized tensions, increasing the risk of violence and civilian harm.
- **Continued conflict will likely strain CAR's weak economy, increasing the risk of food insecurity.** While the economy showed very marginal recovery in 2023, increased political instability and insecurity could see inflation rise, leaving much of the population—**70%** of CAR's population experiences poverty—even less able to afford basic goods such as food. Approximately **2.5 million** people (41% of the population) are projected to experience crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity in the 2024 lean season, including 521,000 needing urgent lifesaving action (emergency, or IPC 4). CAR also has one of the highest rates of chronic malnutrition in children in the world, affecting approximately **40%** of children under 5.
- **Central Africans will continue to face extreme challenges accessing critical services amid funding shortfalls for the humanitarian response.** Despite increasing territorial control, the government doesn't have the capacity to restore or expand critical services in most areas where it has retaken control. At the same time, only a third of the population has access to clean water, and many IDP sites lack sufficient sanitation services. With the health system facing a major shortage of skilled health workers, medical equipment and basic medicines, malnourished children will struggle to get treatment. The state will continue to rely heavily on humanitarians to deliver critical services, all

while donor support for the humanitarian response in CAR is **waning**. Insecurity will also continue to impede humanitarian operations across much of the country, where ACAPS considers humanitarian access constraints as **"very high"** (4 out of 5).



39-year-old Georgine and 43-year-old Joachim with their five children. Their kitchen is a simple straw hut. They are from Kabo, Central Africa Republic, and have been living in an internally displaced persons camp for seven years. Photo: UNOCHA/Anita Cadonau

## THE IRC IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The IRC has been operating in the Central African Republic since 2006. We aid conflict-affected and internally displaced communities through emergency relief, food distributions, health care, psychosocial support to women survivors of violence, and the building and restoration of clean water sources. We also support children's well-being by building and supporting schools and safe spaces for children to learn and play. [Learn more about the IRC's CAR response.](#)



# CHAD

UNRANKED

## Regional crises risk compounding internal instability and fueling insecurity

Chad enters 2024 amid a delicate political transition, with conflicts affecting multiple parts of the country and persistent economic and climate pressures exacerbating the ongoing humanitarian crisis. The April 2023 war in Sudan has compounded these challenges, while political and cultural linkages between the two countries means continued conflict in Sudan could trigger instability and conflict in Chad. If the long-anticipated constitutional referendum or presidential elections are further delayed, political tensions will deepen and potentially trigger broader unrest and insecurity. With numerous domestic threats now compounded by regional dynamics, Chad remains on the Emergency Watchlist for the second year in a row.

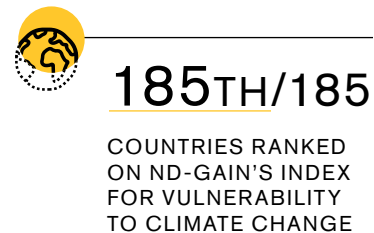
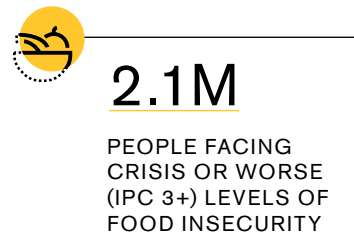
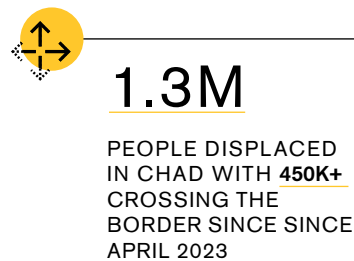
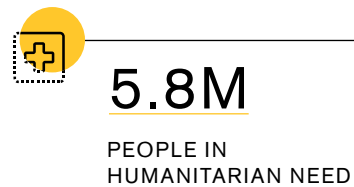
“Chad is facing several simultaneous humanitarian crises. Internal political instability is exacerbated by regional crises, notably the conflict in Sudan as well as crises in Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and the Central African Republic. Today, Chad is home to the largest number of refugees in Central Africa.”



**Martine Naigna**  
Youth and Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Supervisor, IRC Chad

**ABOVE:** These three siblings are new arrivals at Gaga refugee camp in Chad. They and their parents fled Sudan just a couple of days before the photo was taken.

### KEY DATA



## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **The war in Sudan could exacerbate political tensions in Chad.** Chad is in the midst of a stalled political transition sparked by the death of President Idriss Déby in April 2021. While the transitional authorities scheduled a constitutional referendum for December 17, 2023 and presidential elections for October 2024, election deadlines have already been pushed back and the transfer of power to a civilian government has faltered. Insecurity linked to the conflict in Sudan could provide the government with a justification to extend the transitional period again, even though this could provoke further political and civil unrest.
- **Instability and insecurity may increasingly spread across the border into Chad.** The shared border between Chad and Sudan is extremely porous, allowing armed groups and fighters to move freely between the two countries. Because violence in Darfur is falling along predominantly ethnic and tribal lines that are also present in eastern Chad, actors in Sudan could seek to leverage ethnic and political linkages in Chad to support their efforts in Sudan. Given that some Chadian communities and political figures have strong links to Sudan, there is also a risk that the conflict in Sudan will add to communal and political tensions. Sudanese actors might even seek to intervene in Chadian politics to empower their allies. Moreover, massive insecurity in Sudan's western Darfur region means it could increasingly become an attractive base for Chadian armed groups who could seek to stage attacks from there.
- **Conflict in Sudan will continue to push waves of refugees into Chad, increasing needs in eastern regions and raising local tensions.** UNHCR has recorded more than **450,000** people—mostly women and children—arriving from Sudan since April 2023, making Chad the largest recipient of people fleeing the conflict there. However, funding shortages and already overstretched services suggest that the humanitarian response will struggle to cope with further arrivals. Access to food will remain a significant challenge into 2024 while medical services are ill-equipped to cope with the often severe health conditions faced by many of those arriving in Chad, which include acute malnourishment. UNHCR estimates that people in refugee camps in the east of the country have access to around a **quarter** of their daily requirements of water, raising the risk of waterborne and other communicable illnesses. This risk is further heightened by the fact that many camps are in areas prone to flooding. Moreover, the establishment of new settlements on land used for agriculture and by Chadian livestock herders raises the risk of tensions with refugees, and amplifies existing tensions between herding and farming groups.
- **Longstanding conflict and resource tensions in the Lake Chad Basin continue to drive needs.** Lac province in western Chad experiences persistent insecurity due to the presence of armed groups in the border areas with Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria. At the same time, Chad is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, ranked **last** on ND-GAIN's climate vulnerability index. The **shrinking** of Lake Chad in recent decades has threatened the resources and livelihoods of those living in the region, who are predominantly reliant on subsistence farming. Competition for resources, migration and other social tensions could drive further insecurity, particularly as armed groups present in the region could seek to exploit these tensions—leading to additional displacement and humanitarian needs, including food.
- **Regional fallout, economic pressures and poor harvests will continue to drive food insecurity.** Before the conflict in Sudan began, nearly **1.8 million** children under 5 in Chad were already acutely malnourished. Malnutrition and food insecurity are likely to rise amid increased demand for already strained food assistance programs for refugees. Moreover, regional developments—not least the conflict in Sudan and the closure of Niger's borders with some members of the West African ECOWAS bloc following Niger's July 2023 coup—have had significant knock-on effects on Chad's economy. Chad is heavily dependent on imports and will therefore continue to experience reductions in food supply, leading to shortages and higher prices at a time of increased demand. Amid already pervasive poverty, inflation—which rose to **13.2%** in 2023 and will remain high in 2024—will continue to erode the purchasing power of families and limit access to food.

### THE IRC IN CHAD

The IRC has delivered vital humanitarian programming in Chad since 2004 in response to the refugee crisis from neighboring Darfur. Today the IRC works across the country to deliver integrated interventions in health, including maternal and child health, reproductive health, nutrition and water and sanitation, mental health; women's protection and empowerment, with a focus on fighting against gender-based violence; and economic recovery, with an emphasis on cash transfer and income-generating activities. [Learn more about the IRC's Chad response.](#)



# ECUADOR

UNRANKED

## Growing criminal violence compounds economic and climate risks

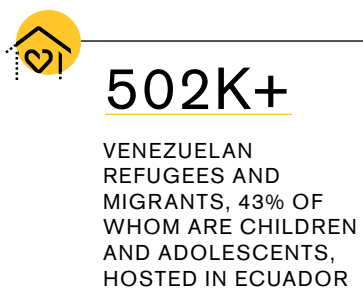
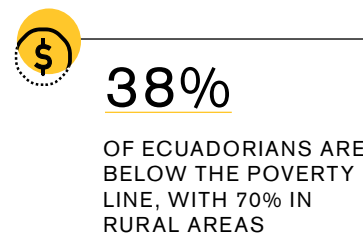
Ecuador, a historically peaceful country, enters the Emergency Watchlist for the first time as a result of skyrocketing levels of violence, primarily involving criminal armed groups. Combined with persistent economic pressures since the COVID-19 pandemic, violence is likely to erode livelihoods and drive increasing rates of poverty and needs in 2024. State-led militarized responses to crime risk further fueling insecurity and displacement and undermining the ability of rural communities and Venezuelan refugees to access services and afford basic goods. Moreover, the crisis in Ecuador will continue to contribute to historic levels of regional displacement and migration as people seek safety or economic opportunity elsewhere.

“Ecuador provided sufficient stability in recent years to serve as a safe haven for displaced people, particularly Venezuelans and Colombians. However, today, the country stands on the brink of a humanitarian crisis fueled by increasing violence and vulnerability to climate change. This is risking the livelihoods of both Ecuadorians and members of migrant communities.”



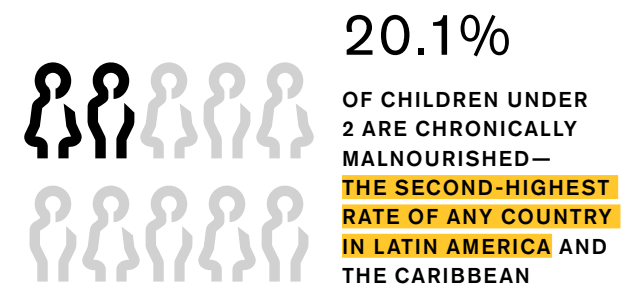
**Bélgica Álvarez**  
Deputy Director of Programs, IRC Ecuador

KEY DATA



## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

○ **Civilians will face growing threats to their safety as conflict escalates between government forces and criminal armed groups.** Criminals from Mexico, Colombia and Europe are increasingly competing for control of drug-trafficking routes, compounding existing rivalries between local gangs and driving extreme levels of violence. Ecuador is thus on track to have one of the world's highest murder rates. Homicides increased by **245%** from 2020 to 2022, and the first half of 2023 saw **75%** more homicides than the first half of 2022. Killings of political leaders are also on the rise, with presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio killed ahead of elections in August 2023. Newly elected president Daniel Noboa has proposed a hardline military response to escalating violence. However, given widespread corruption and the political influence of armed groups, Quito will likely struggle to improve security before the next election in May 2025. Militarized efforts to control criminal groups risk driving more violence, civilian harm and displacements as people flee their homes to find safety.



○ **El Niño could lead to increased flooding.** Above-average rainfall is predicted in 2024 due to El Niño, exposing the 50% of Ecuador's population who live in floodable areas to the risk of disrupted livelihoods, displacement and increased spread of disease, as illustrated by the outbreak of dengue fever following floods in northwestern Ecuador in June 2023. Flooding in the eastern and southern regions may also erode agricultural land degraded by recent drought, driving food insecurity into 2024. Already, **20.1%** of children under 2 are chronically malnourished—the **second-highest** rate of any country in Latin America and the Caribbean. Further, the western regions most at risk due to El Niño also host the largest populations of Venezuelan refugees, who typically have **less access** to services and employment that would help them to withstand new shocks.

○ **Increased violence may strain Ecuador's already fragile economy.** Ecuador's economic growth is projected to slow further in 2024 to less than **1%**. Protests against the pollution of indigenous land, in addition to a March 2023 earthquake,

disrupted the oil production and exports on which Ecuador is heavily reliant. Meanwhile, both poverty and inequality levels have increased in the past year; **38%** of the country—and a much higher proportion of minority and rural populations—currently live below the poverty line. These levels, combined with taxes called “vacuna” imposed by armed groups, will continue to strain the coping capacities of families and businesses, deepen poverty and increase the threat of violence against those who cannot pay. The spread of violence could also deter international investments, further reducing state revenue and the ability of the government to provide key services.

○ **Fear of violence and increased poverty will trigger population movements through the region.** A growing number of Ecuadorians are leaving the country primarily to reach the U.S., where government **data** indicates a surge in arrivals of Ecuadorians since June 2023. More than **50,000** Ecuadorians crossed into Panama via the Darien Gap in the first 10 months of 2023—a nearly 75% increase compared to all of 2022. The decision to take this high-risk route highlights the desperation of migrants, with numbers potentially increasing as pressures rise in Ecuador. U.S. border **policies** could also leave Ecuadorians stuck in Mexico, where critical services are already struggling to meet the needs of migrants, who also face violence and other protection risks.

## THE IRC IN ECUADOR

The IRC is on the ground in Ecuador, working with our partners to provide timely and holistic support from displacement to integration for Venezuelans and others, including Ecuadorians, seeking safety and to rebuild their lives. Currently, we are providing services through local partners in the cities of Guayaquil, Lago Agrio, Pimampiro, Ibarra, Tulcán, Machala and Quito. Our work in Ecuador focuses on providing cash transfers to help people access housing, food and other critical needs; primary health care; safe spaces where Venezuelan and Ecuadorian children up to age 5 can play, learn and become more resilient; and protection services that include case management and raising awareness to prevent violence against women and children. [Learn more](#) about the IRC's Ecuador response.

ABOVE: After a long journey, Nacari, 16, sits in the border town of Huaquillas, waiting to cross from Ecuador to Peru.



# HAITI

UNRANKED

## Violence grows as political crisis deepens

Haiti remains on the Emergency Watchlist for the third consecutive year as the country faces a persistent political crisis and widespread, intense violence that is driving significant civilian harm. The political vacuum triggered by the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021 is likely to continue in 2024, with high rates of armed group violence and weak state capacity undermining security and the delivery of services across Haiti. Nearly **50%** of the population needs humanitarian assistance, including almost **200,000** internally displaced people, while economic pressures and climate shocks compound risks. Potential U.N. efforts to restore security are unlikely to significantly improve security conditions in the coming year or address the underlying political challenges driving the crisis.



Throughout 2023, violence reached unprecedented levels, directly impacting and displacing thousands of Haitians. This situation made it increasingly difficult to deliver aid, as access for humanitarian workers was blocked in many areas of Port-au-Prince.”



**Serge Dalexis**  
Head of Office, IRC Haiti

KEY DATA



**5.5M**

PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED (NEARLY HALF OF POPULATION)



**200K**

PEOPLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED, A **76%** INCREASE IN 2023



**4.4M**

PEOPLE (44% OF POPULATION) FACING CRISIS OR WORSE (IPC 3+) LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY



**169TH/185**

COUNTRIES RANKED ON ND-GAIN'S INDEX FOR VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE



**HIGH RISK**

OF DEBT DISTRESS

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **Violence is growing rapidly as criminal groups become stronger.** Weak governance, **corruption** and an overwhelmed police force have allowed gangs to expand their control across Haiti. Violence sharply increased in the first nine months of 2023 when compared to the same period in 2022, with over **5,600** gang-related incidents including 3,156 killings and 1,248 kidnappings. Persistent insecurity is pushing Haitians overseas, with the U.S. recording a **41%** increase in Haitian nationals encountered trying to cross its southern border in Fiscal Year 2023 compared to 2022. The vigilante “Bwa Kale” movement has emerged from self-organized community attempts to respond to gang violence. However, **reports** of killings by these groups highlight the potential for insecurity to spiral into wider civil conflict, particularly as small arms **continue** to enter the country. In October 2023, the U.N. **authorized** a Kenya-led multinational force, which, if deployed, may start to improve security in the long term, but is unlikely to have an immediate impact.
- **Without a functioning political system, the government will struggle to address violence and meet growing needs.** The country has lacked any elected officials since the last elected senators concluded their terms in office in January 2023. Political instability is likely to continue given that Prime Minister Ariel Henry may well cite ongoing violence to justify postponing elections again—though attempting to hold elections is also likely to be a trigger for further instability. The lack of a sustained political resolution will limit the government’s ability to improve security, restore basic services and rebuild Haiti’s resilience to climate and other shocks.
- **Food insecurity will deepen as economic and climate shocks continue to disrupt livelihoods.** The depreciation of the Haitian gourde has diminished the government’s ability to pay for imports, pushing up the cost of food in a country where **90%** of people experience poverty. Although inflation has slightly eased, violence has disrupted livelihoods and market activity. Combined with low empowerment opportunities, violence has pushed **44%** of Haitians into crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity, including 1.4 million facing emergency (IPC 4) levels. Haiti’s domestic agricultural production is also increasingly unpredictable because of climate shocks and above-average temperatures during production seasons. Severe earthquakes and tropical storms in recent years have caused population displacements and disrupted income-generating activities—further reducing purchasing power and access to food. At the same time, a **25%** decrease in WFP food assistance nationwide will continue to deepen food needs.
- **The effects of insecurity, state collapse and economic pressures will hinder critical services.** The health system is at **risk of collapse** as many hospitals lack staff or supplies to treat patients. Insecurity has closed **two of three** major water treatment plants in the Artibonite region, increasing the risk of waterborne illness. Haiti already saw a resurgence of cholera in October 2022, reporting more than **60,000** suspected cases into mid-2023. Insecurity, the lack of safe water and the disruption to health services will affect the ability of the population to seek care and for Haiti to manage any outbreak.
- **Armed groups’ growing territorial control across the country poses threats to humanitarian action.** Armed groups control about half the country, including **80%** of the capital Port-au-Prince. Active fighting in areas requiring humanitarian assistance impedes the delivery of aid and poses significant risks to aid workers. Humanitarians are increasingly required to negotiate with armed groups to pass **checkpoints**, where demands for payment or other concessions are often made in exchange for access. Amid these constraints, Haiti’s humanitarian response is currently only **32.9%** funded in 2023—meaning that humanitarian actors will struggle to meet growing needs.

## THE IRC IN HAITI

The IRC re-entered Haiti in late 2022 and established programs focused on health, women and girls’ protection (including gender-based violence), and water, sanitation and hygiene in partnership with four local organizations in some of the hardest-to-access neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince. IRC’s response in Haiti is a fully partner-led approach and builds on the existing capacities and strengths of Haitian civil society, enhanced by resources and IRC’s capacity-strengthening efforts. Given the highly complex security and access environment in Port-au-Prince, working in collaboration with partners has enabled a faster and more impactful response and equipped the IRC to support some of the hardest-to-reach communities, reaching over 50,000 clients.

ABOVE: A woman displaced in Haiti sits on the roof at the Rex Medina theater in downtown Port-au-Prince. Photo: UNOCHA/Giles Clark



# LEBANON

UNRANKED

## Economic freefall continues amid political paralysis and rising regional conflict risk

Economic volatility and a still unresolved political deadlock in Beirut keeps Lebanon on the Emergency Watchlist for the fourth straight year. Years of poor governance and widespread corruption have compounded the impacts of the 2019 financial collapse, leading to deteriorating social and economic conditions. Food insecurity and serious gaps in public services—including health care, education, and water and sanitation—will continue to deepen needs, with refugees at particular risk. Meanwhile, the conflict in Gaza has triggered increased tensions between Israel and the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah, with regular cross-border fire and the potential for a rapid escalation which would drive major displacement and a humanitarian crisis in southern Lebanon.

**“Our main obsession now is to secure food. My neighbor and I share meals to save and make ends meet. We, most of the time, do not have electricity and stay in the dark. If the money is available, we buy our daily needs, and if not, we either go into debt or eat from the same meal for over three days.”**



**Renee**  
IRC client in Lebanon

**ABOVE:** Futoon\* and her daughter Ayah\* walk into their tent in the Bekka area of Lebanon. Their family of three was displaced from Syria.

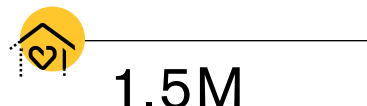
\*Name has been changed to protect the person's privacy.

18 The Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) for 2024 does not include needs in Lebanon.

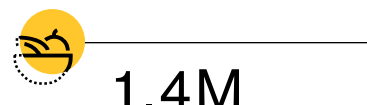
KEY DATA



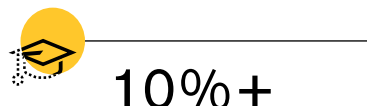
PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED, IN 2023 (2/3 OF POPULATION)<sup>18</sup>



SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON



PEOPLE (1/4 OF POPULATION) FACING CRISIS OR WORSE (IPC 3+) LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY



OF 1.2 MILLION LEBANESE CHILDREN DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO EDUCATION

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **Economic collapse and political paralysis will lock Lebanon into humanitarian crisis.** Lebanon's presidency has been vacant since October 2022 and parliament has failed on 12 occasions to elect a new head of state—preventing Beirut from implementing reforms required to access **\$3 billion** in IMF loans. If the deadlock in Beirut persists throughout 2024, it will remain unable to access critical funds to rebuild the economy, which is now almost **40%** smaller than before the crisis began in 2019. Even if Lebanon can overcome its political challenges, any economic and political recovery that might alleviate the country's humanitarian crisis is likely to be very slow.
- **Basic services are crumbling, leaving more people vulnerable to risks.** Falling tax revenues and cuts in government spending have decimated basic services. Health facilities are **increasingly** unable to cope with demands as they suffer from a shortage of supplies, medicines and workers—many of whom have left the country amid the crisis. There is an increased risk of disease outbreaks as the health sector breaks down and access to clean drinking water becomes harder. For example, in 2022, Lebanon experienced its first cholera outbreak in **30 years**. Education is increasingly unaffordable due to rising poverty and insufficient funding, leading some parents to pull their children out of school—exposing them to the **risk** of exploitation and abuse. Further disruption to schooling is likely as teachers—whose salaries have further eroded in value due to inflation—continue **strikes**.
- **The population will still face high levels of food insecurity due to economic pressures.** Approximately **80%** of the population is experiencing poverty, with 36% in extreme poverty, while banking and other sectors are near collapse—meaning that access to goods and services is already extremely difficult for the majority of the population. Basic goods and even food are becoming unaffordable due to the **devaluation** of the Lebanese pound, high inflation rates and the high cost of imports, on which the country heavily relies. Approximately **1.4 million** people—including many Syrian and Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon—are facing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity. High levels of unemployment and continued financial pressures—particularly for already vulnerable communities—will mean that food will remain unaffordable for many while the coping capacities of families will be strained further.
- **Refugees are experiencing extreme challenges in accessing basic services.** The **1.5 million** Syrian refugees in Lebanon—the most refugees per capita of anywhere in the world—face an **increasingly** hostile environment. Political actors are weaponizing the presence of refugees to distract from the failures of the state in improving living conditions for most Lebanese. Syrian refugees continue to face the risk of

detention and deportation back to Syria, while many are also unable to access employment or public services due to restrictive and illegal **curfews** in some areas. Additionally, **60%** of Syrian refugee children do not have access to education. Restrictions on refugees are likely to increase as political actors seek to demonstrate their legitimacy amid the country's ongoing crisis, leading to deepening needs for refugees.

- **The spillover of the crisis in Gaza could escalate, leading to further displacement and a large-scale humanitarian crisis, particularly in southern Lebanon.** After Israel launched its military operation in Gaza in October 2023, hostilities at the Israel-Lebanon border have also increased. Both Palestinian and Lebanese armed groups, in particular Hezbollah, have traded fire across the border with Israeli forces. Israel has targeted Hezbollah positions, causing displacement and civilian casualties in southern Lebanon. Although neither Hezbollah nor Israel likely wants these hostilities to spark large-scale conflict, there is nonetheless a real risk of escalation that would cause a massive increase in displacement and a sharp rise in needs in southern Lebanon. Prolonged fighting would also cause additional economic pressures across the country, placing further strain on livelihoods and driving up prices, particularly of food and **imported goods**.

## THE IRC IN LEBANON

Since 2012, the IRC has been providing legal services, education, cash assistance, training and economic support for refugees and local communities. Protection for affected communities, including children, women and girls, the elderly and people with disabilities is another key focus area for the IRC in Lebanon. After the Beirut port explosion in 2020, the IRC launched an emergency response to provide immediate cash, protection and economic assistance to those impacted by the blast. The IRC is also supporting primary health care centers and the capacities of health care workers as part of its health program launched in 2021. Additionally, the IRC is implementing risk communication and community engagement activities and sensitizing communities on early health-seeking behaviors, awareness raising, health promotion, prevention of cholera and distribution of hygiene kits. [Learn more](#) about the IRC's Lebanon response.





# NIGERIA

UNRANKED

## Internal security challenges compound impacts of growing economic crisis

Nigeria remains on the Emergency Watchlist in 2024 amid continued conflict in the northeastern and northwestern regions, where humanitarian needs and internal displacement remain high and civilians are caught between government forces and armed groups. At the same time, rising inflation and the freefalling currency are deepening poverty and inequality in a country that has both one of the largest economies in Africa and the second-largest population living in extreme poverty globally. Economic pressures are likely to contribute to a departure of skilled workers—undermining services including health care—compounding risks for the population in the year ahead.

“Flooding has affected me and the members of this community seriously. It has destroyed our farm materials, farm products and seriously affected our maize, rice and even pineapple. Even the farmland has already washed away completely.”



**Salihu Yahaya**  
IRC client in Nigeria

**ABOVE:** 51-year-old farmer Shaibu Mohammed in his house in Nigeria. He has lived in Dasin for over 50 years and experienced the devastating effect climate change has had on local farmers. “Climate change has greatly damaged agriculture,” he explains. “Especially corn, because corn needs water when it is young so that it grows to maturity and produces cobs. And there was no water at that time.”

KEY DATA



**7.9M**

PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED



**2.2M**

PEOPLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED



**26.5M**

PEOPLE FACING FOOD INSECURITY IN 2024



**4.4M**

CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM ACUTE MALNUTRITION, INCLUDING 1 MILLION SUFFERING FROM SEVERE ACUTE MALNUTRITION

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **Conflict will remain the primary driver of Nigeria’s humanitarian crisis, particularly in the northeast.** Northeast Nigeria has been experiencing conflict since 2009, and fighting there continues between government forces and armed groups. Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) is dominant in the region, but both ISWAP and Jama’u Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad (JAS) continue to stage attacks that cause significant civilian harm and displacement. With ISWAP and JAS also battling for influence in northeastern Nigeria, civilians will continue to be caught between rival groups fighting each other and government forces. In the northwest, armed militias (often referred to as “bandits”) are fueling escalating violence. A notable increase in **kidnappings**, thefts and damage to infrastructure in some conflict-affected areas further constrains humanitarian access and limits the population’s ability to reach critical services.
- **Nigeria will continue to see high levels of displacement in 2024.** Due to ongoing violence, more than **2.2 million** people are displaced in Nigeria. The government is pursuing policies aimed at sending displaced people back to their homes, including the recent decision to close all camps for internally displaced people in Borno state. These approaches will likely drive people to locations where they may encounter insecurity and limited economic options, and put pressure on services and resources within communities that could force people to go on the move again.



**26%**

INCREASE IN INFLATION, CAUSING AN 18-YEAR HIGH IN SEPTEMBER 2023 AND PUSHING 4 MILLION INTO POVERTY

- **High inflation will persist and continue to strain household budgets, increasing needs, particularly for conflict-affected communities.** After taking office in May 2023, President Bola Tinubu scrapped long-running fuel subsidies that had buffered the Nigerian population from the global rise in fuel prices but had simultaneously drained government resources. This, coupled with exchange rate reforms that significantly devalued the naira—which has fallen to record lows against the U.S. dollar—pushed inflation to an 18-year high in September 2023 at more than **26%**. High inflation pushed **4 million** more people into poverty in the first five months of 2023, with the total number of people living below the poverty line reaching **84 million**. Prices will continue to rise in the coming year with widespread insecurity further undermining livelihoods and limiting the affordability and availability of essential goods. Moreover, state

capacity and basic service provision are extremely low, meaning that critical services will continue to be out of reach for many.

- **Rising prices will continue to drive food insecurity.** The price of food is rising even faster than that of other goods, leading President Tinubu to declare a **state of emergency** in July 2023. **26.5 million** people are expected to be food insecure at the peak of the lean season in 2024 as diminished crop production in 2023 has led to **limited** food supply and conflict continues to affect livelihoods, including agriculture. Meanwhile, in the conflict-affected Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states, the number of children under 5 at risk of severe acute malnutrition has **doubled** in a year to 700,000. Adding to these economic and conflict risks, Nigeria has also **experienced** large-scale flooding in recent years, leading to the widespread **destruction** of farmlands—further driving food insecurity.
- **Nigeria’s deteriorating health system will struggle to respond to increased risk of diseases.** Poor infrastructure, shortages of staff and a lack of medical supplies are all putting the country’s health system under strain. Approximately **2,000** doctors leave the country every year, and some **75,000** midwives and nurses have left in the last five years due to rising prices and stagnant wages. For every doctor in Nigeria, there are over 10,000 patients, 20 times what the WHO recommends. Immunization rates are falling and limited health infrastructure and availability of doctors reduce testing levels and increase the risk of diseases spreading—as illustrated by an ongoing diphtheria outbreak.

## THE IRC IN NIGERIA

The IRC began responding in Nigeria following severe flooding in 2012 that affected over 30 states of the Federation. Since then, the IRC has expanded its operations across northeast Nigeria’s Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states. In 2023 it expanded its operations to Katsina and Zamfara in the northwest states, working largely at the local government area levels, as well responding to emergencies in Plateau State (northcentral Nigeria) and Kogi State. IRC’s programming approach is integrated multisectoral programming in health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation, and protection for women, men, girls and boys who are internally displaced and in host communities. [Learn more about the IRC’s Nigeria response.](#)



# SYRIA

UNRANKED

## Economic freefall and climate shocks push needs to new highs after years of war

Syria remains on the Emergency Watchlist in 2024 as the country experiences a deepening economic crisis and conflict continues in areas outside government control in the northwest and northeast. Currency inflation, a multiyear drought and disrupted food production will continue to drive up prices and aggravate food insecurity. Devastating earthquakes in February 2023 demonstrated the degree to which conflict and economic threats have increased the impact that any new shocks have on Syrians. At the same time, severe funding shortfalls, and uncertainty about the ability of the U.N. to continue to deliver aid cross-border from Türkiye, is likely to undermine the longer-term ability of the humanitarian response to meet rising needs. Amid these risks, a major escalation of conflict in Syria is unlikely—meaning that it drops to the second half of the Emergency Watchlist for the first time.

**“The Syria-Türkiye earthquake has made the humanitarian situation in Syria even worse—particularly for those who lost their homes and for women and girls who now face increased protection risks. Despite the earthquake affecting many of our team directly, the IRC and its partners were committed to supporting women, girls and other vulnerable groups as quickly as possible.”**



**Eilaf Albakri**  
Women's Protection and Empowerment Senior Manager, IRC Syria

**ABOVE:** Hannan\* and her family in the tent they share with 22 relatives. When the earthquake hit Türkiye and Syria in February 2023, Hannan and her husband had to leave their home with their children to find safety.

\*Name has been changed to protect the person's privacy.

KEY DATA



15.3M

PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED (66% OF POPULATION)



6.8M

PEOPLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED



12.1M

PEOPLE (MORE THAN HALF OF POPULATION) FACING FOOD INSECURITY



90%

OF PEOPLE LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **Syria's economic crisis continues to deepen, driving needs and potentially sparking further unrest.** According to the U.N., **90%** of Syrians live below the poverty line as wages cannot keep pace with rising prices, meaning Syrians will continue to rely heavily on humanitarian aid for survival. In northeast Syria, disruption to the oil sector has contributed to high inflation while climate-induced drought has curtailed agricultural output and will continue to drive rising food costs, putting basic goods out of reach for many of those experiencing unemployment. The sharp depreciation of the Turkish lira against the dollar has significantly impacted the economy in northwest Syria. High inflation rates have contributed to a notable rise in the prices of essential commodities. Coupled with high unemployment rates and a prevalence of low-wage jobs, the population in northwest Syria struggles to meet their basic needs. Meanwhile, in government-controlled areas, the Syrian pound has further **devalued**, pushing up prices and increasing social unrest in areas the government typically relies on for political support. Any further economic deterioration and associated protests pose a risk of a violent response from the government.
- **The 2023 earthquake has left affected communities less able to withstand new shocks.** In February 2023, a series of earthquakes struck Türkiye and Syria, killing and displacing thousands of Syrians alone. The quakes caused significant damage to infrastructure and homes, and disrupted access to critical services. Before the earthquake, some **15.3 million** people (almost 70% of the population) were in need of humanitarian assistance and **12.1 million** people were already food insecure, but needs grew rapidly.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the area is also affected by climate change which has led to a multiyear drought. Exacerbated by Türkiye reducing water flow on the Euphrates River, drought has reduced their crop yields and hindered livestock farming. Drought has also depleted sources of safe water—already decimated by years of war—exacerbating the risk of waterborne diseases, particularly for displaced communities.
- **Twelve years since the crisis began, active conflict persists with the security situation prone to escalation.** Although the Government of Syria now controls approximately **70%** of the territory in the country, conflict is far from over. In the northwest, the military remains locked in conflict with a coalition of armed groups, some of which are also fighting each other. In the northeast, fighting has erupted between the Kurdish-aligned Syrian Defense Forces (SDF) and certain Arab tribes. Turkish forces have **escalated** attacks on Kurdish forces along Syria's northern border after a group part of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) claimed an attack in Ankara on October 1. Meanwhile,

<sup>19</sup> At the point of writing, the U.N. had not yet published a figure for the number of people in need in 2024.

Israel has increased its strikes on targets in Syria since the outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Hamas, disrupting U.N. flights from both Aleppo and Damascus airports. Israel will continue airstrikes in Syria in 2024, particularly if armed actors associated with Iran attempt to move arms through Syria to support regional proxies in a campaign against Israel. Even without immediate impacts from the Gaza crisis, insecurity will continue to cause civilian harm, damage infrastructure and stymie any economic recovery.

- **Humanitarian needs are now at their highest, yet the humanitarian response remains chronically underfunded and constrained.** In July 2023, the U.N. Security Council failed to **reauthorize** the cross-border mechanism that allowed the U.N. to deliver aid from Türkiye into areas outside government control. The U.N. and the Government of Syria have since reached an agreement to allow the delivery of aid to continue across the border until January 2024, but the future of this deal remains in doubt. If it lapses without a longer-term solution, **4.1 million** people in need in northwest Syria will lose access to critical aid, compounded by shortfalls in funding. Syria's humanitarian response plan already faces a 67% funding gap—the **largest** by percentage since the conflict began in 2012.

## THE IRC IN SYRIA

The IRC has been working in Syria since 2012, responding to needs in northwest and northeast Syria. The IRC supports early childhood development and provides counseling and protection services for women and children, particularly for survivors of violence. We support health facilities and mobile health teams with critical trauma services and primary, reproductive and mental health services. Our teams promote economic recovery with job training, apprenticeships and small business support.

We also respond to shocks and emergencies in Syria, including the February 2023 earthquake. We do so both directly and through partners to ensure life-saving services and supplies—including cash assistance, critically needed medicine and other items—reach those in need as quickly as possible. We also support Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. [Learn more about the IRC's Syria response.](#)



# UKRAINE

UNRANKED

## Critical services at risk amid decade of protracted conflict

After nearly 10 years of conflict, and two years since the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion, intense fighting in eastern and southern Ukraine continues to devastate civilian lives and infrastructure. The humanitarian and economic impacts of the war are felt across the country as Moscow uses military and other levers to pressure Kyiv, while ongoing economic turmoil undermines people's coping capacity—**14.6 million** people are in need of humanitarian assistance, while an additional **4 million** people living in areas under Russian Federation control face acute humanitarian and protection needs. Attacks on civilians, civilian infrastructure and major population centers have intensified across the country and are likely to continue driving major needs, which is why Ukraine remains on the Emergency Watchlist in 2024.

“[My patients] often come in a state of stress, because someone's husband was killed in the war, someone's brother is in captivity, someone's property is destroyed, someone misses their home and relatives very much.”



**Dr. Alla Pantieieva**  
Medical Doctor,  
IRC Ukraine

**ABOVE:** 67-year-old Valentyna in her yard with her dog. Valentyna's house in Ukraine was shelled three times. During one of the explosions, her leg was injured by falling shrapnel.

KEY DATA



**14.6M**

PEOPLE IN HUMANITARIAN NEED (39% OF POPULATION)



**3.7M**

PEOPLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED



**1,100+**

ATTACKS ON HOSPITALS, HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE AND STAFF



**5/5**

SCORE FOR SEVERITY OF ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **Civilian harm could grow in 2024 if fighting intensifies.** The U.N. has verified more than **27,000** Ukrainian civilian casualties since February 2022, illustrating the immense impact of the fighting so far. Russian Federation forces—who have **reportedly** carried out war crimes—continue to target urban areas with missile and drone strikes. Western support for Ukraine shows signs of strain, raising the possibility that military and humanitarian assistance for Ukraine will reduce in 2024. Crucially, bipartisan commitment to military support is fraying in Washington, with continued assistance likely dependent on the outcome of the 2024 U.S. elections. Any reduction of Western and particularly U.S. military aid could significantly weaken Ukraine's military, raising the possibility of a new Russian offensive that would drive increased humanitarian needs and displacement.
- **Severe damage to critical infrastructure will impede the delivery of essential services.** Russian airstrikes in the 2022/23 winter significantly damaged **40%** of Ukraine's energy infrastructure, causing frequent blackouts. Ukraine has worked to repair its energy infrastructure and secure the power **grid**, which now operates at **50%** of pre-war capacity, but repair costs are estimated at more than **\$10 billion**. Reduced energy capacity, especially during the winter months, will particularly impact displaced people living near the front lines, many of whom lack adequate shelter. Health services will remain severely disrupted through 2024 as more than **1,100** attacks on hospitals, health infrastructure and staff have been recorded, including nearly **550** attacks that damaged or destroyed hospitals. Meanwhile, an exodus of health care workers and shortages of medical supplies and equipment will continue to disrupt health services, especially for those with chronic and urgent health needs, and undermine the response to the deepening mental health crisis facing Ukrainians. Additionally, the June 2023 explosion at Nova Kakhovka dam in southern Ukraine disrupted the surrounding regions' water supply, sanitation systems and public health services, increasing the risk of waterborne illness.
- **The economy remains vulnerable to new shocks despite some signs of recovery.** Ukraine's GDP contracted by **nearly a third** following Russia's invasion. While inflation has fallen to pre-war levels from a peak of **26.6%** amid a modest economic recovery in 2023, crucial sectors such as agriculture remain



THE UKRAINE POWER GRID NOW OPERATES AT **50% OF PRE-WAR CAPACITY**, BUT REPAIR COSTS ARE ESTIMATED AT **MORE THAN \$10 BILLION**.

hamstrung by the war. Unexploded ordnance has rendered vast swathes of farmland unusable, while the Nova Kakhovka dam explosion has left **600,000 hectares** of arable land without irrigation. Moscow is also targeting the Ukrainian economy, having withdrawn from a deal that allowed Ukraine to export grain from certain Black Sea ports in July 2023, and subsequently bombing Ukrainian grain silos and ports. While some reduced shipments of Ukrainian grain are passing through Black Sea ports, Ukrainian farmers may increasingly have to rely on slower and more costly road, rail and riverine routes to reach export markets, which will drive up food prices as they recoup increased shipping costs.

- **The humanitarian response faces falling funding and an extremely challenging operating environment.** Funding for Ukraine's humanitarian response in 2023 reduced from **87%** of requirements being met in 2022 to **61.8%** in 2023. Humanitarian access has also significantly deteriorated since the end of 2022, with **ACAPS** now rating Ukraine as having “extreme” access constraints (5 out of 5). The presence of unexploded ordnance and mines is a key factor making it harder for communities near the front lines to access services—and for humanitarian actors to access people in need. Areas outside Ukrainian government control remain largely inaccessible to international humanitarian organizations, while the U.N. estimates the needs in these regions to be the **highest severity** in the country.

## THE IRC IN UKRAINE

The IRC launched an emergency response to the war in Ukraine in February 2022, working directly and with local partners to reach those most in need. In Ukraine, our response is focused on conflict-affected areas in the east and southeast. We are distributing essential non-food items, providing cash assistance to the most vulnerable households, improving access to health care and providing a variety of tailor-made protection services, including safe spaces for women and children. Our emergency programs are also active on the ground in Poland and Moldova. We respond to people's immediate and long-term needs, with activities targeting refugees from Ukraine in Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Czechia and Bulgaria, as well as in Germany, Italy, Greece and the United Kingdom. [Learn more about the IRC's Ukraine response.](#)



# YEMEN

UNRANKED

## War-weakened economy means needs will remain high

Humanitarian needs will remain high throughout Yemen in 2024 as a decade of conflict has profoundly weakened the country's economy, leading to widespread poverty. Many Yemenis are unable to afford basic goods and food. As a result, both food insecurity and malnutrition are persistently high. However, Yemen drops out of the Top 5 of the Emergency Watchlist, where it has ranked since 2021, and falls into the second half of the list for 2024. This shift does not indicate an expectation of a significantly improved situation in Yemen over the coming year. Rather, it reflects the fact that a de facto truce in place since October 2022, after a U.N.-brokered deal expired, has reduced the likelihood of a return to full-scale conflict between forces loyal to the de facto authorities (DFA, also known as Ansar Allah or the Houthis) in northern Yemen and the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) in the south. As a result, a major deterioration in the humanitarian situation is relatively less likely than in the countries in the top half of the list. Indeed, the number of people in humanitarian need has dropped from **21.6 million** in 2023 to 18.2 million in 2024.

“After nine years of conflict, Yemen's economy has almost completely collapsed, leaving many unemployed and struggling to make ends meet. Food insecurity is increasing and an already fragile public health system will struggle to cope with any new shocks, while the risk from floods and changing climate is also a reality for many in Yemen.”



**Amal Al-Maqboli**  
Senior Government Liaison  
Manager, IRC Yemen

ABOVE: Nabihah holds her son after he recovered from malnutrition with the help of the IRC.

### KEY DATA



**18.2M**

PEOPLE IN  
HUMANITARIAN NEED  
(54% OF POPULATION)



**4.5M**

PEOPLE INTERNALLY  
DISPLACED



**3.9M**

PEOPLE (41% OF  
POPULATION) FACING  
CRISIS OR WORSE  
(IPC 3+) LEVELS OF  
FOOD INSECURITY



**5/5**

SCORE FOR  
SEVERITY OF ACCESS  
CONSTRAINTS

## KEY RISKS FOR 2024

- **Almost a decade of war has decimated the economy, weakening the currency and pushing up the price of basic goods.** The existence of two parallel economies led by the DFA in the north and the IRG in the south has disrupted basic macroeconomic functions. Further, DFA forces' attacks on oil port terminals—combined with corruption and mismanagement—have undermined income from oil revenues on which the IRG relies. As a result, imported fuel and gas prices have surged in southern Yemen, leading to electrical outages of up to 17 hours a day. Lack of fuel supply will also disrupt the functioning of basic systems such as hospitals and the delivery and transport of food and medicines. Economic pressures are also increasing protection risks, including gender-based violence. Meanwhile, DFA forces have launched missile and drone strikes toward Israel following the escalation in Gaza, which could lead to additional sanctions that would further weaken the economy.
- **Rising costs and climate risks may drive higher levels of food insecurity and malnutrition as donor support wanes.** A food security analysis found that some **3.9 million** people were facing crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity in 2023. However, it assessed less than a third of Yemen's population and did not cover many areas controlled by the DFA, where food insecurity has historically been most pronounced, highlighting the challenges to understanding the scale of the food security crisis in Yemen. Additionally, **80%** of the population lives below the poverty line, and 23% of households have no income. Rising costs of agricultural inputs like fertilizer are likely to result in lower crop yields, which combined with increasing food costs will contribute to worsening food insecurity. Moreover, heavy rainfall due to the El Niño effect following years of drought conditions could trigger large-scale flooding, which would also affect agricultural outputs and livelihoods. Yemenis will remain heavily reliant on international assistance, yet the country's humanitarian response plan is only **37.8%** funded for 2023—after seven years of being at least 50% funded—and funding gaps have already forced major humanitarian organizations to scale back their programs.
- **Yemen's health care system is on the brink of collapse.** **20.3 million** people in Yemen (60% of the population) lack access to health care, **46%** of health care facilities are either out of service or only partially functional, and staff shortages are evident across the country. Diseases such as measles, rubella, cholera and polio are spreading, in part due to low vaccination rates, high levels of malnutrition and poor access to clean water. Gaps in health surveillance mean that caseloads are likely higher than reported and that outbreaks can go undetected. Reduced humanitarian funding, particularly for the health sector, risks further undermining the limited capacity of health services to address large-scale health risks and disease outbreaks.
- **Despite some progress on peace talks, insecurity will continue to pose risks for civilians.** Although a U.N.-brokered ceasefire in April 2022 has since expired, a de facto truce has held while the DFA and Saudi Arabia continue to hold peace talks, resulting in a sharp reduction in conflict activity. Still, both parties remain far apart on key issues, and smaller-scale violence has continued, including cross-border drone strikes in southern Saudi Arabia in September 2023. Moreover, other political and military actors like the IRG and the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which has significant influence in southern Yemen, are not active participants in the talks, meaning these and other parties could play a spoiler role and resume fighting. Even if peace talks at the international level succeed, localized violence and conflict will persist as armed groups like Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) increase their activities and could exploit political fragmentation—particularly in southern Yemen—to build their influence.
- **Access constraints remain extremely high in Yemen despite the lower levels of conflict.** ACAPS rates Yemen as having “severe” access constraints (5 out of 5), highlighting the ongoing challenges in accessing and delivering aid despite reduced conflict activity. Restrictions on entering the country and moving around within it are particular challenges, as are efforts by parties to the conflict to interfere in humanitarian activities. Unexploded ordnance continues to threaten civilians and prevents many internally displaced people from returning home safely. Moreover, security risks continue to hinder humanitarian operations, with aid workers facing incidents of abuse, detention and killing.

## THE IRC IN YEMEN

The IRC has been working in Yemen since 2012 and rapidly scaled our programming in 2015 to address greater humanitarian needs caused by the conflict. While the ongoing conflict and restrictions of air and seaports create challenges to our operations, the IRC's 350-person staff in Yemen and 650 paid volunteers have maintained access to affected populations and continue to provide critical health care, economic empowerment, women's protection and empowerment and nutrition programming. [Learn more about the IRC's Yemen response.](#)



# METHODOLOGY

**To compile the annual Emergency Watchlist, the IRC uses a multistage process of quantitative and qualitative analysis to identify the 20 countries that should be included in the annual Emergency Watchlist because they face the greatest risk of major deterioration in their humanitarian situation over the coming year, whether because of armed conflict, economic turmoil, the climate crisis, or other natural and human-driven shocks.**

A detailed description of the analysis conducted can be found [here](#). A brief overview of the process follows. If you have questions about the 2024 Emergency Watchlist or the IRC's other crisis analysis work, please contact [Crisis.Analysis@Rescue.org](mailto:Crisis.Analysis@Rescue.org).

## 1 Initial “Red Flagging” exercise using 65 quantitative and qualitative variables

The IRC's Global Crisis Analysis team compiled 65 quantitative and qualitative variables from 13 different datasets including [INFORM](#), [Verisk Maplecroft](#), [the Danish Refugee Council](#), [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [International Crisis Group](#), [Armed Conflict Location and Event Data \(ACLED\)](#), and [ACAPS](#). The team then identified which countries were consistently flagged across these variables—for example, because they ranked in the Top 25 countries or the source qualitatively identified the country as facing a major risk over the year ahead.

## 2 Validating initial analysis against internal IRC and external partner sources

The Global Crisis Analysis team then validated this preliminary analysis by setting it alongside insights from both internal and external experts gathered in two ways:

- Each IRC regional office (Middle East and North Africa, East Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, Latin America and Asia) completed a survey, highlighting the countries they saw as facing the greatest humanitarian risk over the year ahead on a 1-3 scale (3 being greatest risk) and sharing qualitative insights on each country.

- The Global Crisis Analysis team and regional offices collaborated to organize an online and in-person “regional roundtable” in each region, to bring together both IRC staff and external partners and other experts in and from the different regions.

These two steps allowed the IRC to bring insights from among the IRC's 40,000 staff and volunteers as well as from external experts, including staff from partner organizations, academics and researchers, diplomats and more. Their insights inform both the selection of the countries for the list and the more thematic analysis presented at the front of this report.



**LEFT:** Adriana García, Estefani Beltrán del Río and Alejandro Ruelas work from the IRC office in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Their team is focused on child protection and women's empowerment.

## 3 Combining insights from step 1 and step 2 to develop the final Emergency Watchlist and Top 10 rankings

The Global Crisis Analysis team then drew up a final, ranked shortlist of countries through a series of meetings, allowing them to set qualitative and quantitative insights alongside one another. The key reference points for this stage were:

- The rankings produced purely by Step 1.
- Quantitative rankings and qualitative inputs from both the surveys and roundtables in Step 2.
- Qualitative analysis by the IRC's Global Crisis Analysis team to identify the risk of further deterioration of humanitarian crisis in countries on the preliminary short list.
- The scale and severity of emergencies that had occurred in those countries during 2023, as measured by the IRC's Emergency Classification System.
- A dataset of macroeconomic variables compiled by the Global Crisis Analysis team to assess institutional and economic resilience.
- Humanitarian needs data from the Global Humanitarian Overview and country Humanitarian Needs Overviews, via the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
- Analysis of humanitarian access constraints from ACAPS, combined with the qualitative knowledge and expertise.

## 4 Drafting country sections and thematic analysis

The thematic analysis in the first half of the Emergency Watchlist 2024 and country profiles in the second half draw on the analysis from Steps 1-3 as well as data and analysis from the following sources:

- Food insecurity data from Integrated Food Security Phase Classification ([IPC Info](#)), the Famine Early Warning Systems Network ([FEWS NET](#)) and the Food Security Prevention Network ([RPCA](#)).

- Displacement data from the U.N. High Commission for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East ([UNRWA](#)) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre ([IDMC](#)).
- People in need of humanitarian assistance data from U.N. OCHA's Humanitarian Response Plans ([OCHA](#)).
- Malnutrition data on stunting in children from UNICEF and the World Health Organization's Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates ([JME](#)).
- Data on governance and extreme poverty from the World Bank ([WB](#)).
- Conflict data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project ([ACLED](#)) and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program ([UCPD](#)).
- Climate disaster data from the International Monetary Fund's ([IMF](#)) Climate Change Dashboard.
- The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security ([WPS](#)) index of women's well-being and their empowerment in homes, communities and societies more broadly.
- The Equaldex LGBT Equality Index ([EI](#)) on the status of LGBT rights, laws and freedoms, as well as public attitudes towards LGBT people.
- The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative ([ND-GAIN](#)) Index of countries' vulnerability and readiness to successfully adapt to climate change and other global challenges.
- The Economic and financial data from U.N. OCHA's Financial Tracking Service ([FTS](#)), International Monetary Fund ([IMF](#)) and World Bank Group and the U.N. Development Programme's ([UNDP](#)) Human Development Index ([HDI](#)).
- Other open-source humanitarian, media and think tank reporting.

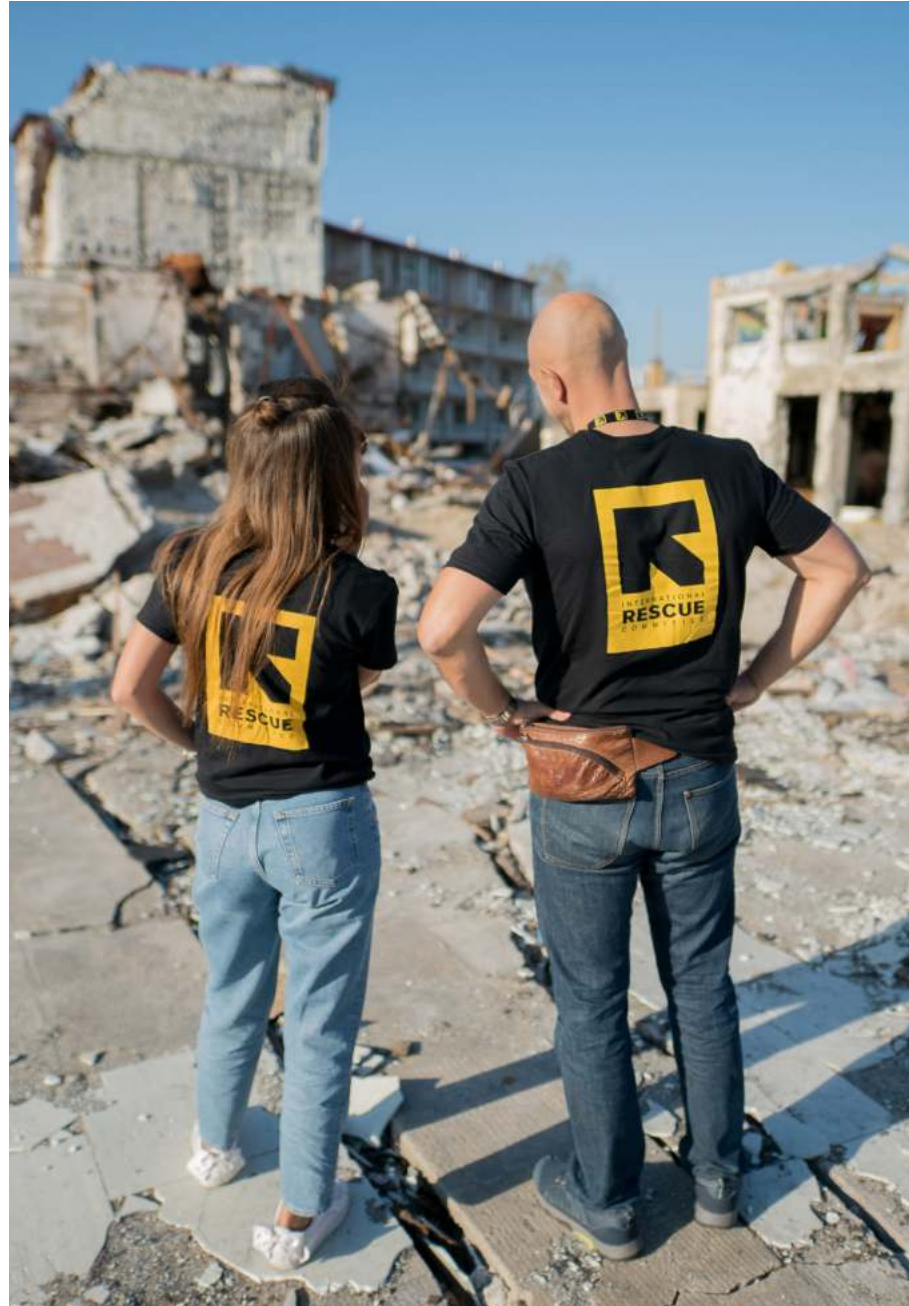
**THE INSIGHTS FROM STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS INFORM BOTH THE SELECTION OF THE COUNTRIES FOR THE LIST AND THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS.**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**The Emergency Watchlist team wishes to express its gratitude to the range of both IRC and non-IRC colleagues who have contributed to this year's Emergency Watchlist. This report is the culmination of research and analysis that touches on nearly every aspect of the International Rescue Committee's work and much of the organization has made invaluable contributions to the analytical, programmatic, design and communication components of the report. We are extremely grateful to Zainab Azizi, Hermann Derwanz, Sreya Guha, Meena Mohajer and Felipe Ramos for their contributions to this year's Emergency Watchlist.**

We also want to thank colleagues from the IRC's regional offices around the world who partnered with us closely on the report, including in the co-creation and design of regional roundtables that engaged more than 100 external experts and partners who intimately understand their local contexts and priorities. These events were held under the **"Chatham House Rule,"** so we are unable to thank all of the participants by name, but they include staff from partner organizations, community-based organizations, local academic institutions and think tank researchers. The insights shared during these events have added significantly to the analysis and recommendations contained within this report.

Thank you to the Open Society Foundation for their generous support that made the regional roundtable events possible. Thank you also to Verisk Maplecroft, ACLED, Danish Refugee Council and others for providing access to their data.



IRC security staff visiting a missile impact site in the Odesa Oblast in Ukraine after Russian missiles landed on local homes in the village.



**The International Rescue Committee (IRC) helps people whose lives have been shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and rebuild.**

In 1933, Albert Einstein helped found the organization that would become the IRC. We now work in over 50 crisis-affected countries as well as communities throughout Europe and the Americas. Ingenuity, fortitude and optimism remain at the heart of who we are. We deliver lasting impact by providing health care, helping children learn, and empowering individuals and communities to become self-reliant, always with a focus on the unique needs of women and girls.

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