World Vision

Double Hardship

Protecting conflict-affected children
in the age of COVID-19

Front cover: Refugee children face the double hardship of facing displacement and COVID-19.
Maria Bou Chaaya / World Vision

This page: World Vision staff distribute bleach and sanitising products to Syrian refugees in Lebanon to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Maria Bou Chaaya / World Vision

A devastating drought in western Afghanistan has forced hundreds of thousands of people to abandon their homes in a desperate bid to feed their families. Brett Tarver / World Vision

2021: The year of spiralling humanitarian need

Almost a year into the global pandemic, COVID-19 continues to threaten the futures of an entire generation of children, especially those who live in the world's protracted conflict hotspots, including Afghanistan, Mali, Syria, Somalia and Yemen. Already living in extremely difficult conditions, the pandemic's repercussions add to their deprivation, compound pre-existing risks and create new ones. Millions of children and their families are now battling the double hardship of displacement and disease, including its devastating knock-on effects, without access to functioning food, health, social safety and protection systems. Meanwhile, the wars that displaced them continue, in many ways fragmenting and expanding, with no obvious pathways to peace in sight.

This year – 2021 – is the year Australia must resolve to step up again as a humanitarian leader, just as it did in response to the 2011-12 food crisis in East Africa.[1] The United Nations recently estimated 235 million people worldwide would need lifesaving assistance and protection in 2021 – a historic increase of 40 per cent in just one year.[2] The World Food Programme calculated that COVID-19 would create an additional 121 million hungry people globally by the end of 2020, mostly in already crisis-affected countries. It also sounded the alarm on the risk of famine in several conflict-affected countries, including Yemen, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.[3]

While the pandemic affects people everywhere, World Vision sees the most extreme human suffering concentrated in the world's fragile and conflict-affected contexts, primarily in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, it is critical countries such as Australia redouble their humanitarian, development and peacebuilding engagement in these emergency settings. Record-breaking needs demand new levels of leadership, and now is the time to avert multiple famines and the spiralling violence and harmful coping strategies that may drive future unrest and insecurity. It is in Australia's national interest to help prevent a generation of children from being lost to violent conflict and COVID-19.

This paper sheds light on the double hardship that children and their families confront in conflict-affected countries, based on World Vision's first-hand observations and programmatic responses. It amplifies children's voices and provides five solutions for the Australian Government to strengthen food security, protection and resilience in the most fragile settings, now and in the future. The evidence provided in this briefing is drawn from assessments in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Venezuela, and the Central Sahel, conducted between June and September 2020. World Vision stands ready to support any efforts to strengthen the rights and wellbeing of children in emergencies.

Background: COVID-19 in conflict-affected countries

COVID-19 compounds the many pre-existing challenges and risks in humanitarian crisis settings, primarily in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, including countries such as Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lebanon, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Syria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen.[4] The virus and its aftershocks uniquely affect populations in these places – notably refugees, IDPs, returnees and host communities – due to their limited resilience and access to healthcare, livelihoods and social safety nets.

Difficulties containing the virus within fragile settings mean it circulates largely unchecked; its full spread is unknown due to insufficient testing capacity, inadequate data-sharing practices, and general wariness of people to seek treatment because of misinformation or fear of catching the disease and being stigmatised.[5] In Afghanistan, for example, the Ministry of Public Health announced in August 2020 about 10 million people were likely to have contracted COVID-19 – 300 times the number of officially confirmed cases in the country.[6] While some conflict-affected countries appear to show encouraging signs in slowing virus transmission, the Middle East region will likely remain a COVID-19 epicentre throughout 2021. Cases in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen have reached alarming levels, including among displaced populations.[7] UNHCR reports there are over 32,000 cases of COVID-19 among its people of concern as of 12 November 2020 – likely the tip of the iceberg.[8]
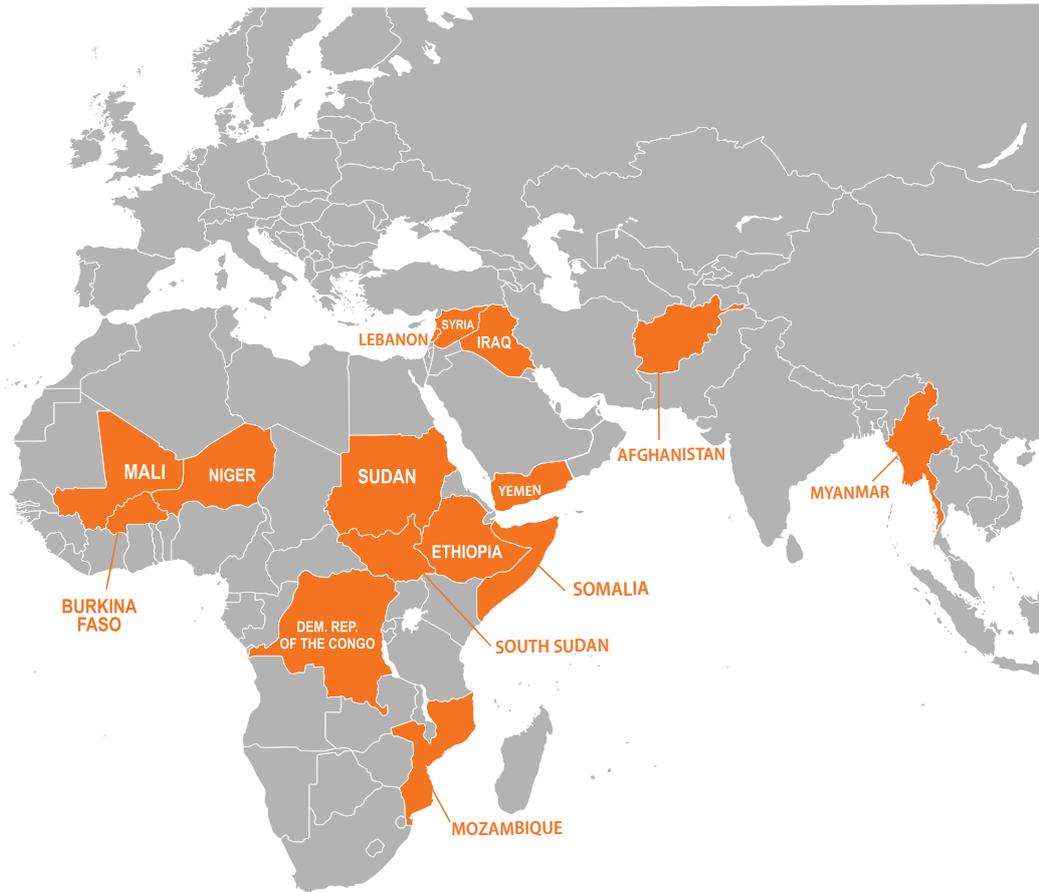
Most conflict-affected countries and displacement sites are ill-equipped to cope with the spread of the disease. This is due to institutional fragility, extremely limited healthcare and inadequate capacity for isolation and intensive care. In a global assessment of health security, most fragile states are at the bottom of the 195 countries assessed in the Health System category, which looks at health sector capacity to treat the sick and protect health workers.[9] Northwest Syria, for

example, is home to roughly 4 million people, many of whom are internally displaced, living in crowded camps and informal settlements or sharing accommodation with families. These conditions make it nearly impossible for people to adequately social distance and self-isolate. The lack of access to clean water and electricity also makes it difficult to implement basic hygiene measures, such as handwashing. Crucially, there were 85 attacks on health facilities across North-West Syria in 2019

alone, leaving people without access to functional health infrastructure.[10] Similar challenges exist for displaced and otherwise conflict-affected communities in Yemen; it is estimated only half of the country's health facilities are still functional as a result of conflict.[11]

Equally concerning are the pandemic's devastating knock-on effects on the livelihoods of conflict-affected communities. The measures initially taken by governments to contain the virus and mitigate its effects – albeit in good faith – have resulted in drastically reduced economic activity, triggering a rapid loss of income among refugees, IDPs, returnees and their host communities around the world.[12] Combined with inadequate social safety nets, this has exacerbated extreme poverty and hardship. For example, the proportion of Syrian refugees in Lebanon living below the extreme poverty line has climbed to 88 per cent in late 2020 from 55 per cent in 2019, while the economic situation inside Syria deteriorated with hyper-inflation and the value of the Syrian pound plummeting.[13] Across

the Middle East and North Africa region alone, three million people are estimated to have fallen into extreme poverty due to COVID-19.[14] The vast majority of conflict-affected populations have limited capacities to absorb economic shocks, and as levels of hardship spiral, they often take on debt and resort to negative coping strategies such as reduced food consumption, with devastating consequences for children (highlighted in the next chapter).

It is important to keep in mind that even before the pandemic, armed conflict and localised violence across much of the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa left millions of people highly vulnerable. There are more humanitarian crises, lasting longer and affecting more people, than a decade ago.[15] More than 80 million

people have been forcibly uprooted from their homes, 40 per cent of whom are children, often seeking shelter in makeshift sites close to areas of active hostilities.[16] Despite humanitarian efforts by agencies like World Vision, living conditions for these displaced populations tend to be precarious due to cramped living arrangements, a lack of jobs and limited access to basic social services. Displacement also leads to a breakdown of social support networks, the loss of safety nets and the depletion of savings and assets, all triggering significant psychosocial distress. With no viable, dignified solutions available, many have no choice but to seek protection elsewhere.

Two-year-old Mirwais last year visited a World Vision mobile health clinic in Badghis, Afghanistan, severely malnourished. He was prescribed the emergency nutrition RUTF – Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food. Brett Tarver / World Vision

Double hardship: Protecting conflict-affected children in the age of COVID-19

A child rights crisis:
Preventing a lost generation

World Vision is deeply concerned the pandemic is tipping millions of conflict-affected children into an even deeper hunger, safety, learning and well-being crisis, with devastating consequences for their long-term physical and mental development.

Since March 2020, various measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 disrupted children's access to human rights including food, education and protection, while placing new stressors on parents and caregivers. The harm many children have experienced will not be temporary. Things are unlikely to return to 'normal' and millions of girls and boys will stay trapped in cycles of extreme poverty, food insecurity, violence and stress, in addition to the hardship resulting from conflict and displacement. Unless we act now to address the pandemic's impacts on children, the echoes of COVID-19 will permanently damage our shared future.

COVID-19 continues to increase the risk of malnutrition for children like Farida in South Sudan.
Scovia Faida Charles / World Vision

Increasing hunger and malnutrition

Children in conflict-affected countries, especially IDPs and refugees, have long been vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition. In 2018, almost 5 million children under the age of five needed treatment for life-threatening malnutrition in just 10 conflict zones.[17] Indeed, the overwhelming majority of people facing a food crisis (IPC Phase 3 and above), as well as highest levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phases 4 or 5), are in countries with protracted insecurity and conflict.[18] In Afghanistan, for example, more than 11 million people faced acute food insecurity at the start of 2020, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis.[19]

Conflict – often in combination with climate change – impedes the ability of parents and caregivers to produce, process, and access food to eat and provide for their children. When violence erupts, crops, livestock and essential infrastructure (such as roads and farmland) are often left behind

or destroyed, leading to production shortages and supply chain disruptions. Conflict also prevents people and goods from getting to markets, making food more difficult for families to purchase. Additionally, disruptions to production and transportation often cause food prices to increase while conflict-related economic hardship makes household earnings shrink, significantly decreasing food affordability. When food gets scarce and more expensive, families may consume lower quantities and less diverse, nutrient-poor (or carbohydrate-rich) diets, and children often bear the impact at critical stages of life and development. Child malnutrition is not only a direct threat to life, but it also weakens children's immune systems and leaves them vulnerable to diseases; under-nourished children principally die of common infections while parental malnutrition is a precursor for stunting in newborn infants.[20]

> **"Some nights we go to sleep without eating food because there is nothing to eat."**
>
> (Girl, 15, Afghanistan)

> **"Our families cannot meet our nutritional needs anymore. Everything is very expensive."**
>
> (Boy, 14, Lebanon)

COVID-19 has further exacerbated household food insecurity and child undernutrition. Earlier in 2020, the pandemic was projected to nearly double the number of food-insecure people in the world, with particularly severe effects for children in conflict settings.[21] This is a crisis at a scale not seen in recent memory.

World Vision assessments suggest families in conflict settings are severely struggling to meet basic household needs.

In a survey across the Middle East, 75 per cent of respondents in Iraq, 74 per cent in Syria, and 65 per cent in Lebanon feared they and their families wouldn't have enough to eat in the coming months. 88 per cent of survey respondents in Afghanistan reported they now required external food assistance, and 86 per cent had incurred debt. In addition, 93 per cent of respondents in Iraq and 89 per cent in Syria were worried about falling deeper into poverty.[22]

24K

In South Sudan, "famine-like" conditions were reported at the end of 2020 in the remote east as a result of floods and inter-communal clashes. It is estimated that 24,000 people are currently experiencing famine.[27]

50%

World Vision has warned that over 19 million people, including 10 million children, are at risk of famine in 12 of the world's most fragile countries due to a deadly mix of conflict, the economic impacts of COVID-19, and natural disasters. The grim forecast equates to a 50 per cent rise in people at risk of starvation (in IPC phase 4), compared with 2019.[23]

In Yemen, cases of acute malnutrition increased almost 10 per cent since the start of the pandemic.[25] 16.2 million people (more than half of the country's population) face high levels of acute food shortages in early 2021, including 7.35 million children, with an estimated 21,338 children at risk of falling into famine.[26]

46%
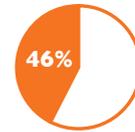
According to the WFP, 9.3 million people in Syria are now food insecure (46 per cent of the population), the highest number ever recorded and an increase of 1.4 million people since the start of 2020.[24]

Approximately 3.3 million refugees across East Africa – 72 per cent of the total regional refugee caseload – face ration cuts ranging between 10-40 per cent, thereby exposing them to further food insecurity and malnutrition. Less than a third continue to receive full food ration (2100 calories per person per day).[28]

For many families, the pandemic reversed the modest gains made in previous years to control their economic situation, resulting in heightened food insecurity. Lockdown measures earlier in the crisis significantly decreased daily labour and other income opportunities. They also forced cuts to food imports and supply chains and drove up food prices precisely at a time when incomes were being diminished.[29] This required poor households to become largely dependent on cheaper, nutrient-poor staple goods to meet their daily food needs and pushed many (including displaced populations in parts of Nigeria, Burkina Faso, South Sudan and Yemen) to the brink of starvation, with life-long repercussions for children's physical and cognitive development.

Children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are suffering various forms of exploitation resulting from a combination of conflict, food shortages and COVID-19. Patrick Abega / World Vision

Heightened protection risks

Various forms of violence against children – including early forced marriage, harmful labour, recruitment into armed groups, sexual abuse and physical punishment – were all common challenges for children in conflict settings well before the pandemic.

For example, at the start of 2020 it was estimated that about a quarter of Afghan children aged five to 14 worked instead of going to school.[30] In Yemen, more than two thirds of girls were married before they reached 18 years of age (compared to 50 per cent before the conflict).[31]

"With COVID-19 and the economic crisis, children are experiencing violence by their parents because of the stress parents are going through."

(Girl, 14, Lebanon)

"Before COVID-19 I used to go to school for half a day and to work for the other half. Now I am working for the whole day."

(Girl, 13, Afghanistan)

"My parents forced my sister to marry an old man because we are 13 girls and boys at home and my parents did not have the means to feed us all."

(Girl, 13, Afghanistan)

COVID-19 has exacerbated these child protection risks. As a result of spiralling poverty and hunger, boys and girls are at even greater risk of facing violence, abuse and exploitation.

In a global World Vision survey, 81 per cent (445 out of 552) of children and young people spoke about their experiences, or those of other children and young people, with different forms of **violence and abuse in their homes and communities in the wake of lockdown.**[32]

World Vision assessments in Afghanistan highlighted that the pandemic presented unique challenges for displaced families that **increased the number of child marriages. 49 per cent of families surveyed had already sent their children to work.**[33]

In a World Vision survey in Syria, **nearly half of all children reported incidents of physical violence** (47 per cent), primarily within the family environment. In Afghanistan and Iraq, over a third of children reported incidents of physical violence in the home.[34]

25 out of 28 Protection Clusters reported an increase in violence against children. 78 per cent of Protection Clusters (including in Afghanistan, Mali, Mozambique, Niger and Chad) reported **child and forced marriage increased since the pandemic.**[35]

Household vulnerability in conflict-affected communities can drive the use of negative coping mechanisms, such as resorting to income from a child's work or marriage to survive. Boys are often forced into daily labour or begging where they are at risk of being beaten, verbally abused, harassed and exploited. Girls are often married off for dowries, including as a security mechanism to protect them from sexual violence, particularly in displacement contexts.[36] It is important to note that protection challenges are compounded by gender inequality for girls and young women, who are often particularly vulnerable as a result of rigid gender norms and expectations. Girls affected by conflict face unique risks, including sexual violence and domestic abuse, due to limitations on their freedom of movement and limited reporting and law enforcement avenues.[37]

Beyond negative coping strategies, children in conflict settings also remain at risk of armed violence and insecurity. Despite calls by the international community for a global cessation of hostilities, most conflicts continue unabated and bombs keep falling on civilians and civilian infrastructure, in violation of international humanitarian law.

In Afghanistan, in addition to the 4.1 million people displaced since 2012, more than 155,000 people were forced to flee their homes since the onset of the pandemic. **Nearly 1900 children were killed or maimed in 2020 alone.**[38]

Children across the Middle East told World Vision they were **afraid to move around their communities due to frequent attacks, kidnappings, theft, verbal harassment and sexual violence.**[40]

Protection clusters in Nigeria, Libya and Yemen reported **increased violence against civilians, including attacks on camps for the displaced as well as hospitals and schools, damaging vital infrastructure needed for the response.** This is in line with data suggesting a 2.5 per cent increase in violence against civilians in conflicts around the world since the start of the pandemic.[39]

Lost education and earning potential

Even before the pandemic, we were dealing with a global learning crisis; millions of children in conflict-affected countries were without access to quality education or learning alternatives, including distance solutions. Only one in two refugee children, for example, were enrolled in primary school, and fewer than one in four refugee youth were enrolled in secondary education.[41]

In Afghanistan, almost half of all primary school-aged children (3.7 million) were out of school before the pandemic.[42] In Yemen, some two million children were out of school and around 2000 schools affected by the conflict due to damage or occupation by armed groups.[43] Education in emergencies is extremely important as school provides children with a precious sense of normality and stimulation to overcome the challenges they face while also keeping them safe from hazards in their environment.

Ten months into the COVID-19 crisis, children are starting to return to school, but school closures have disrupted the learning of almost 90 per cent of enrolled students worldwide.[44]

In a global World Vision survey, most children and young people (82 per cent) said COVID-19 had a negative impact on their education, citing school closures, difficulties continuing education at home, and concerns about future career prospects. 87 per cent of respondents worried that, due to changed education approaches, they might not be learning enough.[45]

In the 29 crisis-affected countries covered by the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, more than 250 million children and 8 million teachers were unable to physically attend school as a result of the pandemic.[46]

Alternative ways of learning (for example educational TV and radio) met the needs of only a fraction of conflict-affected children. School closures also affected children's psychosocial wellbeing and food security, as many schools give conflict-affected children at least one decent meal each day and, through play and exchange with peers, help lift their spirits.[47]

Alarmingly, many children attending school prior to the pandemic have now dropped out and may be lost to the education system entirely, similar to developments during the 2014-15 Ebola crisis.[48] Budget constraints may force parents to keep their children out of school even as schools reopen. Almost a quarter of all children surveyed by World Vision in the Middle East region reported being deprived of continuing any learning for the rest of the school year due to rising poverty.[49]

"From the beginning of the outbreak, I did not go to school and did not study. I heard that teachers are teaching through TV channel, but we do not have TV and radio at home. I don't have a phone and access to internet."

(Girl, 13, Afghanistan)

"When the pandemic ends, I will be the best student. Although I still don't have the uniform, or notebooks, or shoes, or anything, it doesn't matter."

(Boy, 11, Venezuela)

Rising distress

Conflict and life in displacement can have profound impacts on children's psychosocial wellbeing and long-term mental health.[50]

Many displaced children have suffered the loss of parents, siblings, friends and other loved ones or witnessed the destruction of their homes and schools. Many are exposed to daily stressors and suffer from deep distress, including anxiety, depression and trauma. Prolonged exposure to distress can be highly detrimental to children's long-term cognitive and emotional development, with negative consequences well into adulthood.[51] There are inadequate mental health and psychosocial support services – in quantity and quality – to address these issues, both in conflict settings and elsewhere.[52] This includes safe spaces for children and youth to play; leisure and play are human rights guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and fundamental to the quality of childhood.

Child wellbeing and mental health have suffered further during the pandemic.

In a World Vision survey across the Middle East, almost half of all participants, especially girls, reported they felt sad (49 per cent) and worried (49 per cent), and more than one third felt scared (39 per cent) and lonely (38 per cent).[53] Children were worried about rising food insecurity, economic hardship, increased violence as well as the loss of their education as a result of the pandemic's secondary impacts.

Anecdotal evidence from World Vision programs in the DR Congo, South Sudan and Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar) highlights that limited access to health care and the challenge of adopting social distancing in sub-standard living conditions resulted in increased stress for displaced children.[54]

An NRC study in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Jordan found that almost nine in 10 displaced and refugee children were stressed by COVID-19, and three quarters were afraid of catching the disease.[55]

100 per cent of Protection Clusters described growing psychological distress and mental health needs of affected populations. 74 per cent rate the risk of distress as severe; 15 per cent as extreme.[56]

The pandemic and its socio-economic repercussions trigger additional feelings of anxiety amongst conflict-affected children. This is due to a range of factors, including lack of understanding, fear, and uncertainty as to when life would go back to normal. Measures taken to stop the spread of COVID-19 (including quarantining) have also placed significant psychological strain on them, particularly in crowded settings such as displacement camps where privacy and personal freedoms are limited.[57]

> **"I always feel insecure since I live in a tent, not a house, and I am always afraid of bombs and kidnapping."**
>
> (Girl, 14, Syria)

> **"I feel the world is over. I am thinking about the future, what will happen? Can I be happy again? Now I am very sad."**
>
> (Girl, 13, Afghanistan)

Child Friendly Spaces, such as this one in Syria, provide psychosocial support for children at risk of violence in conflict settings. Jon Warren / World Vision

The way forward for Australia

Now is the time for Australia to step up again as a humanitarian leader to help feed and protect children in the world's conflict hotspots.

Considering the enormous challenges they face – including the return of famine, soaring violence and exploitation, mass school dropouts and spiralling distress – Australia must ramp up its humanitarian efforts in 2021. Record-breaking humanitarian needs demand new levels of leadership, in line with Humanitarian Principles, Good Practice Humanitarian Donorship and commitments made under the Sustainable Development Goals. Australia has demonstrated such leadership before, including in response to the Horn of Africa hunger crisis in 2011-12.

World Vision welcomes Australia's commitment to addressing the pandemic in our immediate geographic neighbourhood, the Pacific and South-East Asia.[58] Both regions are struggling economically and socially, and a strong focus on health security, stability and economic recovery is warranted. Yet, our neighbourhood tends to have low levels of conflict, few displaced people, less extreme poverty and greater resilience compared to the world's most fragile countries and

regions. Australia should not back away from supporting children and families where the need is greatest, including in crowded displacement sites and protracted conflict settings such as Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan.

A 'humanitarian step up' in the Middle East and Africa is entirely in Australia's national interest. Famine, an unchecked virus, economic collapse and a lost generation of children elsewhere are certain to have long-term political, economic, and security implications for Australia. In other words, tackling the outbreak and its aftermath in Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan will be a prerequisite to ending the pandemic in the Indo-Pacific. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that our health, economic and social systems are deeply interconnected. The growing marginalisation of conflict – and coronavirus – affected children, for example, may have a direct bearing on future peace and security in places like Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and Myanmar. We know that economic collapse, grievances and the lack of viable

solutions can lead young people to be more receptive to extremist ideologies.[59] Australia should do its utmost to prevent millions of forcibly displaced people across the Middle East and Africa from turning into permanent underclasses, vulnerable to exploitation.

Achieving this is a question of political will; Australia has the means and opportunities to mount an adequate response to COVID-19 in the world's most fragile countries. Collectively, G20 and OECD countries have allocated A$14.5 trillion to launch domestic stimulus packages in the wake of COVID-19.[60] Yet, only A$4.8 billion was raised of the A$12.5 billion for the UN's COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, with Australia contributing a paltry A$29 million (0.6 per cent of the fund's total budget).[61] Across the board, humanitarian crises remain severely underfunded, and on average, Australia's contributions are consistently out of step with the country's economic and political clout.[62] The human impacts of conflict and the pandemic are therefore much more catastrophic than they need be. Children pay a heavy price for these shortfalls.

Compassion towards children who seek a life without bombings and persecution, and who are now on the brink of starvation, is what makes countries good global citizens. World Vision calls on Australia to look beyond the Indo-Pacific and immediately step up to avert famine in conflict-affected countries, get children back into school, protect them from harmful coping strategies and violence, and provide more mental health and psychosocial support to those in urgent need. Children caught up in emergencies deserve the chance for a better future.

The Australia Government showed leadership in funding food distribution sites like this one during the Horn of Africa hunger crisis in 2011-12. Scott Kelleher/AusAID 2011

Recommendations

World Vision calls on the Australian Government to:

1. **Immediately adopt a A$150 million famine prevention package to address soaring hunger and child malnutrition in at least three conflict-affected countries outside the Indo-Pacific.** This contribution should be new and in addition to planned 2020-21 expenditure. It is recommended that this funding package be channelled into appropriate mechanisms including the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), World Food Programme and the Australian Humanitarian Partnership to ensure swift action in response to emerging food and nutrition crises.

2. **Fund three new multi-year resilience programs in conflict-affected countries (such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan or Syria)**, to address the factors that drive conflict and fragility. These programs should support both displaced populations and host communities to improve their food security, generate sustainable incomes and reduce negative coping strategies in the wake of COVID-19. They should also include strong social resilience components to build peace and transform community relationships before these may escalate into widespread community violence and conflict. Planning and financing should be on a multi-year basis, with flexibility to adapt to shocks and changing circumstances (based on thorough context analysis and early warning protocols).

3. **Earmark 10 per cent of Australia's 2021-22 humanitarian response budget for services that support children's protection, mental health and psychosocial wellbeing**. More dedicated multi-year programs are needed to help children cope with the psychological impacts of their double hardship and to protect them from spiralling violence, abuse and exploitation. This may include specialised services such as psychological first aid, child friendly spaces, reporting hotlines and case management by trained social workers. Scaling up MHPSS and protection efforts is a critical investment in children's futures – it will help them thrive and reach their full potential later in life.

4. **Establish a trajectory for Australia to meet its fair share of humanitarian financing of at least A$861 million per annum**, with a view to contributing meaningfully to the humanitarian response plans (HRPs) of protracted crises outside the Indo-Pacific. This increase in humanitarian funding must come from an increasing Official Development Assistance program. Australia's humanitarian budget is small compared to similar-sized economies (including Canada and the Netherlands) and growing it would be consistent with Australia's economic and political clout.

5. **Reverse the 2020-21 budget decision to cut Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program by 5000 places**, and immediately return Australia's intake to 18,750 a year, in line with its commitments to improved responsibility sharing in the Global Compact on Refugees. Most people forcibly uprooted from their homes find themselves in long-lasting and intractable states of limbo. Now more than ever, they need safe and legal pathways out of their untenable situations.

Thousands of Syrian families have fled to Iraq since the civil war erupted a decade ago. Shayan Nuradeen / World Vision

[1] See for example https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/australian-government-assistance-horn-africa-crisis and https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/aid/evaluation-of-australias-response-to-horn-of-africa-crisis-2011/Pages/3-the-australian-response

[2] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GHO2021_EN.pdf

[3] https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/letter-members-security-council-mr-mark-lowcock-warned-first

[4] Fragile contexts are classified by the World Bank as: (1) countries with high levels of institutional and social fragility, and/or (2) countries affected by violent conflict. See: here for a list of fragile and conflict-affected situations: http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/888211594267968803/FCSList-FY21.pdf

[5] For tracking of officially recorded cases see here: https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html

[6] https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/over-10m-afghans-infected-with-covid-19/1932644

[7] https://www.rescue.org/press-release/us-and-uk-struggle-contain-covid-19-conflict-affected-states-show-encouraging-signs

[8] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/13112020_UNHCR%20Global%20COVID-19%20Emergency%20Response.pdf

[9] https://www.ghsindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2019-Global-Health-Security-Index.pdf

[10] http://www.emro.who.int/syr/syria-news/in-4-years-494-attacks-on-health-killed-470-patients-and-health-staff-in-syria.html

[11] https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(20)30359-4/fulltext

[12] https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/World%20Vision%20COVID-19%20Emergency%20Response%20100%20Days%20On_fnl.pdf

[13] https://thearabweekly.com/poverty-soars-among-syrian-refugees-lebanon

[14] https://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/mena-time-to-act-is-now

[15] https://www.humanitarianlibrary.org/sites/default/files/2019/08/GHO2019.pdf

[16] https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/12/5fcf94a04/forced-displacement-passes-80-million-mid-2020-covid-19-tests-refugee-protection.html

[17] https://www.actionagainsthunger.org/sites/default/files/publications/Conflict_and_Hunger_-_Briefing.pdf

[18] http://www.fao.org/3/cb1907en/CB1907EN.pdf

[19] http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1152215/?iso3=AFG

[20] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4889773/

[21] https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14308.doc.htm

[22] https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Covid19%20very%20final_small.pdf

[23] https://www.wvi.org/newsroom/coronavirus-health-crisis/covid-19-could-force-over-19-million-people-half-them-children

[24] https://www.wfp.org/news/more-syrians-ever-grip-hunger-and-poverty

[25] https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/malnutrition-surges-among-young-children-yemen-conditions-worsen

[26] https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-integrated-food-security-phase-classification-snapshot-october-2020-june-2021

[27] http://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/South_Sudan_TWG_Key_Messages_Oct_2020-July_2021.pdf

[28] https://mcusercontent.com/9206ea93bb8c6f35f98cc8ccf/files/0cba2650-a754-4f18-b25d-074da5b1a1fb/FSNWG_Statement_November_2020.pdf

[29] Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, food prices have increased by 27% in Nigeria, 28% in South Sudan, and 11% in Yemen. See https://data.humdata.org/dataset/wfp-food-prices-for-nigeria

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A severe drought in western Afghanistan has meant that thousands of children are confronted with the double hardship of displacement and disease. Brett Tarver / World Vision

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