

FACT SHEET THE IPC FAMINE

WHAT IS FAMINE?

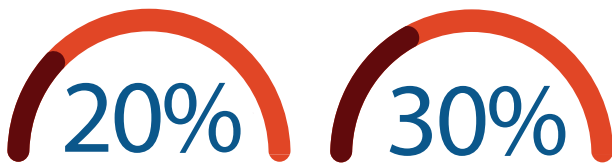


The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) defines Famine as a situation in which at least one in five households has an extreme lack of food and face starvation and destitution, resulting in extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition and death.

The IPC plays a critical role in identifying Famine conditions, and informing the response needed to save millions of lives. The IPC is now the primary mechanism the international community uses to analyse data and arrive at a conclusion whether Famine is happening or projected to occur in a country. Analyses are based on evidence gathered by a wide range of partners and multistakeholder technical consensus.

HOW IS FAMINE MEASURED?

Famine (IPC Phase 5) is the highest phase of the IPC Acute Food Insecurity scale, and is classified when an area has:



for every 10,000 each day due to outright starvation or to the interaction of malnutrition and disease.

WHO DECLARES FAMINE?

Whereas the IPC's role is to facilitate classification of acute food insecurity, governments and/or international agencies have typically taken on the role of making formal statements (often characterized as a "declaration") that Famine exists. In other words, the IPC does not "declare Famine" or issue "Famine declarations", but rather facilitates the analysis that allows governments, international/ regional organizations and humanitarian agencies to issue more prominent statements or declarations.

COMMON DRIVERS OF FAMINE AND EXTREME FOOD CRISES



Conflict often leads to population displacement and disrupts traditional methods of addressing food scarcity, as well as the delivery of humanitarian assistance.



Weather extremes, such as drought, flooding and cyclones affect food availability and access.



Economic shocks greatly impacts access to food, through disruptions to food trade, food price inflation, and currency volatilities.

PREVIOUS IPC FAMINE CLASSIFICATIONS



Somalia
2011



South Sudan
2017



South Sudan
2020



Sudan
2024



THE IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY SCALE

The IPC Acute Food Insecurity scale has become the **global standard for the classification of acute food insecurity**. It is used principally to inform decisions on resource allocation and programming globally and within countries, especially for those experiencing recurrent or protracted food crises.

IPC Phase 1 None/Minimal	IPC Phase 2 Stressed	IPC Phase 3 Crisis	IPC Phase 4 Emergency	IPC Phase 5 Catastrophe/ Famine
Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income.	Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies.	Households either: Have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition; or are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies.	Households either: Have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality; or are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation.	Households experience an extreme lack of food and/or cannot meet other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. For Famine Classification, area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality.

IPC PHASE 5 EXPLAINED

Catastrophe and Famine both refer to IPC Phase 5, indicating the most extreme food insecurity situations. However, there are notable differences between the two as Catastrophe is a household-level classification and Famine is an area-level classification.



CATASTROPHE

IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe) can only be classified at household level. In this Phase, household members experience an extreme lack of food and exhaustion of coping capacities; and face starvation and a significantly increased risk of acute malnutrition and death. Households may be classified in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe) even if the area is not classified in IPC Phase 5 (Famine). The latter is the case when less than 20 percent of the population is experiencing IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe) conditions and/or when malnutrition and/or mortality levels have not (or not yet) reached Famine thresholds.



FAMINE

Famine is an IPC classification at the area level. The IPC defines Famine as a situation in which at least one in five (or 20 percent of the) households have an extreme lack of food and face starvation and destitution, resulting in extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition and death. In this phase, prevalence of acute malnutrition in children under five reaches or exceeds 30 percent, households destitute, and death, measured in the form of excess mortality is prevalent (at least 2 deaths per 10,000 people/day).

FAMINE WITH SOLID EVIDENCE: An area is classified in Famine with solid evidence if there is clear and compelling evidence of food insecurity (food deprivation and livelihood collapse), acute malnutrition and mortality to support the classification.

FAMINE WITH REASONABLE EVIDENCE: An area is classified in Famine with reasonable evidence if there is clear evidence that two of the three thresholds for acute food insecurity (food deprivation and livelihood collapse), acute malnutrition and mortality have been reached, and analysts reasonably assess from the broader evidence that the threshold from the third outcome has likely been reached.



RISK OF FAMINE

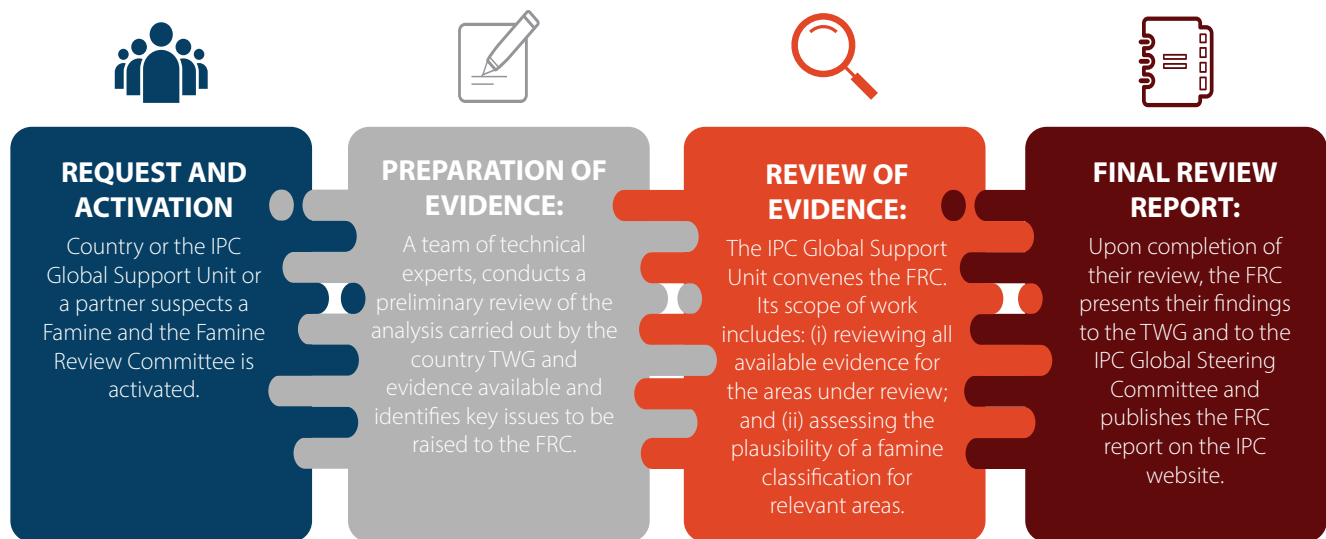
The IPC also conducts risk of Famine analyses. Risk of Famine refers to the reasonable **probability of an area going into Famine** in the future (i.e. during the IPC projected period). While this is not the most likely scenario, it is one that generally has a realistic chance of occurring. It complements the IPC projections by providing insights into potential for Famine to occur if conditions evolve in a manner worse than anticipated. It differs from IPC Phase 5 (Famine) projections because it focuses on a worst-case scenario with a reasonable and realistic chance of happening, as opposed to the most likely scenario. Risk of Famine is a statement about the potential deterioration of the situation. It is not a classification and it is not to be accompanied by estimates of populations facing this risk.

HOW THE FAMINE REVIEW COMMITTEE WORKS

When a country IPC analysis shows a potential, or already identified situation of Famine, a specific procedure is activated in order to assess the plausibility of Famine classification.

Famine Reviews can be triggered in several ways: (i) when the country IPC Technical Working Group (TWG) reaches the conclusion that at least one area is classified in Famine; (ii) when there is a breakdown in technical consensus regarding a Famine classification; (iii) when the IPC Global Support Unit is concerned about Famine conditions; (iv) when an IPC Global Partner officially requests its activation.

Once the process is triggered, the Famine Review Committee (FRC) is requested to conduct a review to ensure **technical rigour and neutrality** of the analysis before the results are confirmed and communicated. The FRC is a team of leading independent international food security, nutrition and mortality experts. The committee is tasked with **reviewing and debating available evidence** and IPC analysis results and reach conclusions on whether a Famine classification is warranted.



COMMON DRIVERS OF FAMINE AND EXTREME FOOD CRISES

In many cases, Famine is caused by a complex interplay of multiple factors, which can be man-made, nature-driven, or a combination of both. Data from the most recent famines shows that this phenomenon is often driven by the intricate interaction of the following drivers:



CONFLICT: Conflict often leads to population displacements and disrupts people's traditional ways of dealing with food scarcity (such as gathering wild foods); prevents people from cultivating their land; destroys market centres and transport links; hinders humanitarian access, and brings about long-term economic decline as infrastructure is destroyed and foreign investment collapses.



ECONOMIC SHOCKS: Ailing economies, especially in developing countries, greatly impact access to food. Economic conditions can affect both the prices vulnerable people have to pay for food and their employment opportunities. Disruptions to food trade, food price inflation, and currency volatilities push vulnerable people to high levels of hunger and malnutrition.



WEATHER EXTREMES: Natural disasters, such as drought, flooding, and cyclones, can have a great impact on food availability and access, and drive high levels of acute food insecurity and malnutrition. Human pandemics and epidemics such as measles, animal diseases and crop pests such as desert locusts or the Fall Armyworm can also contribute to food insecurity and malnutrition.

KEY FACTS ON PREVIOUS FAMINE CLASSIFICATIONS

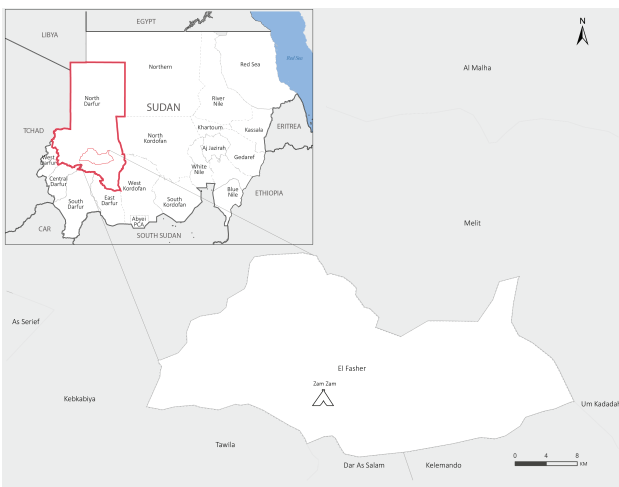
In the last 15 years, four Famines have been confirmed: in Somalia in 2011, South Sudan in 2017 and 2020, and most recently in Sudan in 2024. These extreme food crises were characterised by severe food shortages, widespread acute malnutrition, and

tens of thousands of deaths, primarily driven by conflict and erratic weather patterns. Additionally, the IPC projected Famine conditions in Palestine in 2024, Somalia in 2022 and Yemen in 2018.



2024 SUDAN FAMINE

Food Security Situation | July 2024



In July 2024, the FRC concluded that famine was ongoing in Zamzam IDP camp, south of El Fasher in North Darfur. The FRC also expressed concerns about populations in other IDP sites in the El Fasher area likely facing similar conditions. The escalating violence in Sudan, which had been persisting for over 15 months, severely impeded humanitarian access and pushed these populations into famine.

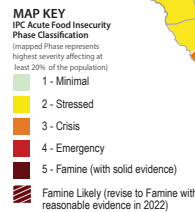
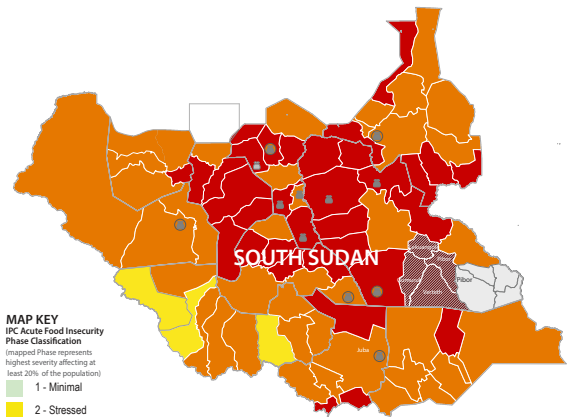
Source: The IPC Famine Review Committee

2020 SOUTH SUDAN FAMINE

Food Security Situation | Oct - Nov 2020

In November 2020, the FRC concluded that four payams in Pibor county, Jonglei State - namely Gumuruk, Pibor, Lekuangole, Verteth payams - experienced Famine Likely (IPC Phase 5) conditions. Pibor was particularly affected by violence and flooding, which destroyed homes, livelihoods, burned to the ground key infrastructure, caused massive displacements, cut off access to humanitarian services, and created almost insurmountable operational challenges for humanitarians delivering aid. These local shocks, combined with economic hardship, in particular significant increase in prices, drove tens of thousands of people into famine.

Source: The IPC Famine Review Committee

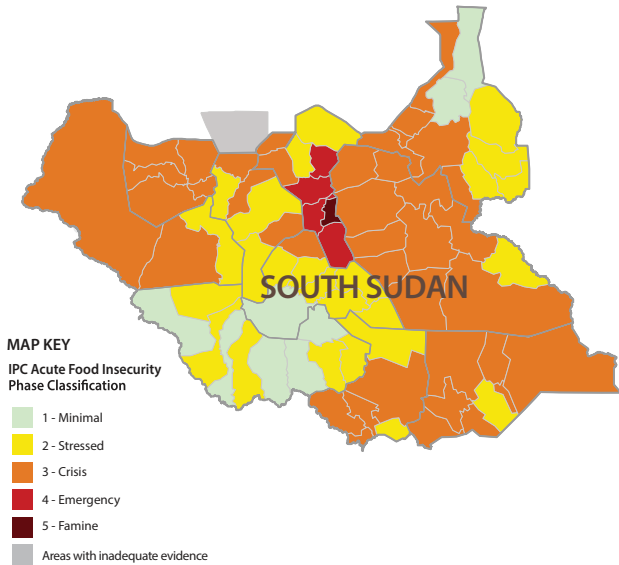


Source: The South Sudan IPC Technical Working Group, External Quality Review and Famine Review

2017

SOUTH SUDAN FAMINE

Food Security Situation | January 2017



Famine was declared in parts of South Sudan in February 2017, where nearly 80,000 people faced Famine (IPC Phase 5) in parts of Unity State (the central-northern part of South Sudan), with another one million people classified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). By then, three years of civil war had devastated livelihoods, coupled with an ailing economy and high food prices. Unity State, which borders Sudan, was at the centre of some of the fiercest fighting, forcing tens of thousands of people to flee their homes into displacement camps.

Source: The South Sudan IPC Technical Working Group

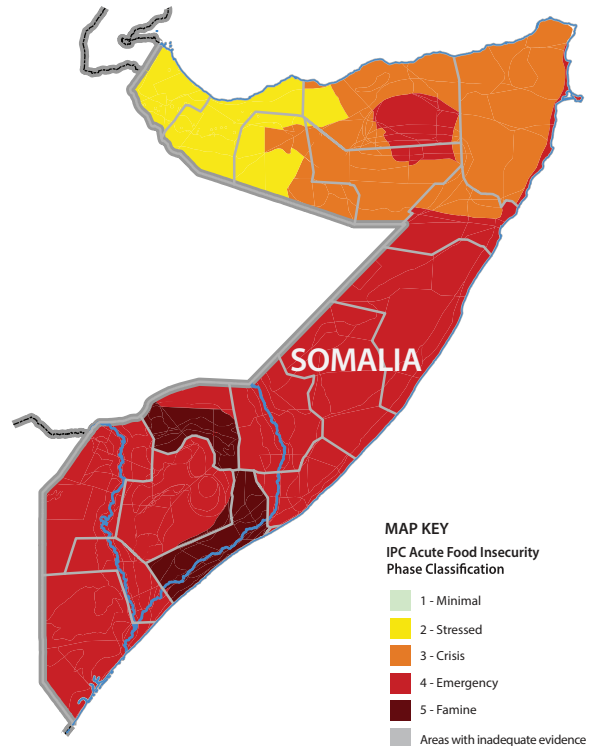
2011

SOMALIA FAMINE

Food Security Situation | July 2011

In July 2011, the FAO-managed Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit for Somalia (FSNAU) and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) classified Famine in parts of Southern Somalia including Balcad and Cadale districts of Middle Shabelle, the Afgoye corridor IDP settlement, and the Mogadishu IDP community. About 490,000 people in Somalia were experiencing these conditions due to conflict and drought.

Source: FSNAU/FAO Somalia & FEWS NET



HOW TO AVOID AND REVERT FAMINE

Famines should be avoided at all costs. Although further deaths can and should be prevented by urgent action, it is evident that these actions will be a late response because many people will have died by the time a famine is declared. The IPC supports famine prevention by highlighting the following:

Early warning/action

Early warning messages should trigger early response to protect livelihoods and save lives. This requires regular monitoring of the drivers of extreme food and nutrition crises.

Cessation of conflicts

Where conflict is a key driver of Famine conditions, the suspension of active hostilities will allow for the urgent provision of humanitarian assistance to affected populations and for the progressive resumption of economic activities and basic services.

Humanitarian access

Humanitarian access is a fundamental pre-requisite to effective humanitarian action to avert Famine conditions. Full and unimpeded access is essential to establish operations, as well as move goods and personnel where they are needed.

Multi-sectoral response

A massive multi-sectoral response is critical to prevent additional deaths and total livelihood/social collapse. This includes coordinated access to food, agricultural inputs, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), health and nutrition, among others.

“Famines should be avoided at all costs”

- IPC Technical Manual 3.1

About the IPC

The IPC is a global, multi-partner initiative that facilitates improved decision-making through the provision of consensus-based food security and nutrition analysis. It is founded on a complementary set of analytical tools and procedures for classifying the severity and magnitude of food insecurity and malnutrition. The IPC was developed in 2004 in Somalia, based on the need for a common food security classification tool driven by evidence to provide actionable information and facilitate effective humanitarian responses. Today, the IPC is used in over 30 countries, including in protracted crises and contexts of chronic food insecurity. The IPC works in close collaboration with the Cadre Harmonisé, a similar tool used in the Sahel and West Africa for food security and nutrition analysis.

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