

# Spotlight | Countries of concern with data gaps

Since data gaps prevent GRFC partners from reporting on the full range of countries of concern, the number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition in food crises is likely higher than the estimates included in the GRFC 2023.

Out of the 73 countries/territories initially identified as potential food crises for the GRFC 2023, 17 were not included either because:

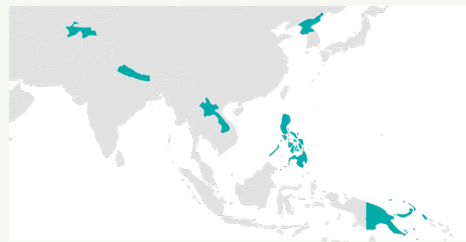
- ✕ data were not available (five countries) or
- ! the evidence did not meet the GRFC requirements (11 countries).

However, this marks a significant improvement since the GRFC 2022 when 24 countries/territories were omitted because of data gaps. These included Lebanon, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, which are included as major food crises in the GRFC 2023.

The 17 countries profiled in this Spotlight have been identified by the international community as having populations of concern through UN coordinated appeals or response plans in 2022, hence, likely to have populations facing high levels of acute food insecurity.

Nutrition data is also missing for these countries.

## Seven countries had data gaps in Asia



### ✕ Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Information on acute food insecurity in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is challenging to obtain. Data from 2021 already suggested a fragile food and nutrition situation (ECHO, March 2023), and there are indications that the situation is worsening. Low water supply due to historically low snow cover, and rainfall deficits in southern agricultural areas in April and May may have affected spring production, although forecasts for July–September 2022 suggested average growing conditions (WFP, June 2022). Throughout 2022 border closures and prolonged quarantine measures on imports as a result of COVID-19 resulted in critical shortages of basic goods, including medicine. Trade with the People's Republic of China decreased by up to 90 percent in 2021 compared with 2019 (ACAPS, June 2022). In March 2023, the country requested food assistance from WFP but it has not been provided due to disagreement on monitoring access (UNSC, March 2023).

### ! Lao People's Democratic Republic

Unfavourable weather conditions and expensive agricultural inputs resulted in a 4 percent below-average paddy production in 2022. Household food insecurity has worsened, particularly in rural areas where food consumption was worse than in urban areas. The cost of food has increased, a result of high production and transport costs: annual food inflation reached 47.1 percent by January 2023 and an estimated one in four

households had decreased incomes year-on-year, making it difficult to face the increasing cost of living. One in five households consume inadequate diets according to the food consumption score (FCS). Food insecurity is expected to deteriorate during the lean season from May to October 2023, or even earlier depending on the evolution of the macroeconomic situation and severity of coping strategies adopted (CFSAM, March 2023).

### ! Nepal

Household food consumption had been improving since 2020, but this trend changed in October 2022, when almost 18 percent of households had poor or borderline food consumption score (FCS). The worsening food insecurity is due to rising food prices and limited household incomes. Around a third of households have reduced incomes, and, by October a quarter of Nepalis relied on purchasing less expensive foods (WFP, October 2022). By the end of 2022, annual inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index was 7.4 percent. Fuel inflation was higher at 47.1 percent, with diesel and petrol by 47.1 and 30.9 percent higher, respectively (WFP, December 2022).

### ! Papua New Guinea

Between May and July 2022, violence escalated in parts of the Highlands region and, in December 2022, the IOM-DTM identified a total of 31 481 IDPs (IOM, December 2022). Violence is linked to national elections that also stoked long-standing tensions around land and clan tensions. Due to the insecurity, needs assessments could not be conducted (UNCT, August 2022).

The country is challenged with a triple burden of malnutrition (undernutrition, overweight and obesity and micronutrient deficiencies) and a vulnerable agriculture sector on which over 80 percent of the rural population depends (UNCT, August 2022). In 2022, drought conditions in four provinces affected water levels, crop production and thus food consumption. Combined with the earthquake that occurred in October 2022, these factors led to food scarcity and water borne diseases,

such as diarrhoea and typhoid (UNCT, October 2022). As of February 2023, the provinces of Bougainville and New Ireland remained in critical drought conditions, while the provinces of East New Britain and Enga were in drought alert levels (UNCT, February 2023).

### ! The Republic of the Philippines

The Republic of the Philippines is prone to natural disasters, especially typhoons. Super Typhoon Rai made nine landfalls in December 2021. In the six worst-hit regions, the typhoon affected around 9.9 million people of whom about 2.4 million needed assistance across all sectors. To complement the government's response, external assistance targeted 840 000 people primarily in the most-affected central-southern areas (OCHA, February 2022).

Food insecurity correlates strongly with poverty, both of which are worst in the Bangsamoro Administrative Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Headline inflation hit 7.7 percent in October and over half of Philippine households were concerned about increased food prices. Sixty percent of surveyed households reported coping by adopting food consumption-based strategies, mostly buying less expensive food. Around 74 percent of households reported resorting to livelihoods-based coping strategies, including borrowing money for food or purchasing food on credit (WFP, October 2022).

### ! Tajikistan

Tajikistan's economy was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery has been hampered by the war in Ukraine (World Bank). The international sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation – to which Tajikistan's economy is closely tied – have resulted in reduced trade and remittances, which account for around 30 percent of Tajikistan's GDP (World Bank). By the end of 2022, there were around 8 450 Afghan refugees in the country (UNHCR) and clashes along the border with Kyrgyzstan were reported (IFRC, October 2022).

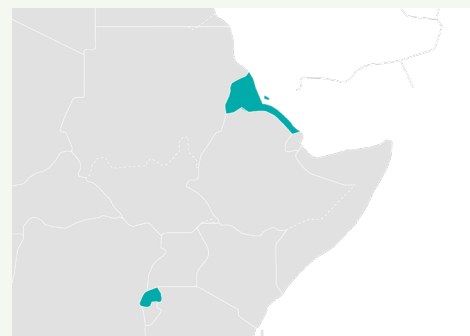
In August 2021, high acute food insecurity affected

19 percent of Tajik households as per the WFP CARI indicator. Over a quarter of households reported coping by reducing expenditures on health and/or education and about 60 percent reported allocating over half of their income to food purchases. In 2023, it was projected that the situation would worsen to 36 percent of the population facing high acute food insecurity due to the loss of remittances and food price increases as per CARI methodology (WFP, April 2022). An IPC analysis was conducted in January 2023, and its results will be reported on in the GRFC 2023 Mid-Year Update.

### ! Tonga

The Kingdom of Tonga is extremely vulnerable due to the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters. On January 15, 2022, the eruption of the underwater Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano and subsequent tsunami caused damages to the economy estimated at USD 182 million, more than 36 percent of national GDP (World Bank, March 2023), and food crop losses amounted to USD 17 million (FAO, February 2022). These damages exacerbated acute food insecurity on the island, as roughly 88 percent of Tonga's population lives in rural areas and is dependent on agriculture and fisheries (IFAD, 2022).

## Two countries had data gaps in East Africa



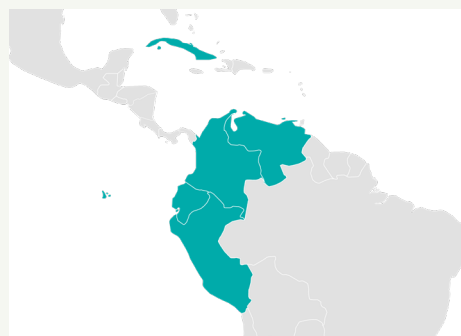
### ✕ Eritrea

There is little information on food security conditions in Eritrea due to limited availability and access to official data as well as constraints to humanitarian actors to conduct assessments (OCHA, accessed 11 April 2022). In early 2022, there were initial concerns about a third consecutive poor rainy season, but the July–September rainfall amounts were adequate and led to an increase in Eritrea's wheat harvest (FAO, December 2022).

### ! Rwanda (refugees)

Rwanda has long hosted refugees. As of December 2022, around 127 000 people were registered with UNHCR in Rwanda, mainly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (60 percent) and Burundi (40 percent) (UNHCR, December 2022). Due to the conflict and unrest in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congolese asylum seekers continue to flee to Rwanda. According to the 2022 Post Distribution Monitoring preliminary report, about 19 percent of refugees living in camps reported adopting negative coping mechanisms, driven by food insecurity. The country has been hard hit by inflation, with food prices surging by 54 percent between June 2021 and June 2022. This had a detrimental effect on refugee populations as it increased the gap between the assistance provided and what families needed to meet basic needs (UNHCR, February 2023).

## Five countries had data gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean



### ✕ Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, humanitarian partners plan to provide around 2 million people with food security and livelihood assistance in 2022–2023 (OCHA, August 2022). There is a lack of data on the country's food insecurity situation, but the most recent evidence suggests that total food availability has improved due to increased local production and imports (FAS, September 2022). Food access, however, remains a major barrier to food security due to elevated food prices and constrained household purchasing power (WFP/FAO, September 2022). At 234 percent, inflation remained extremely high in 2022, albeit lower than in 2021 when it reached 686 percent (Reuters, January 2023).

According to the Center for Research and Analysis of the Venezuelan Teachers' Federation (Cendas-FVM), in July 2022, the monthly cost of the basic food basket (60 food products for a typical family of 4.5 members) was USD 459.84, which represented a year-on-year increase of 102.7 percent. According to data from the Venezuelan Observatory of Finance (OVF), in July 2022, the average monthly income was USD 118.40, covering only 25.7 percent of the cost of the basic food basket (FAS, September 2022). This difficult economic climate means that outflows of refugees and migrants are expected to continue in 2023. According to the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan 2023–2024, the number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in need of food

assistance is estimated at 3.62 million in 2023, slightly up from the 3.57 million in 2022 (FAO-GIEWS, March 2023).

### ✕ Colombia

With the aim of understanding the magnitude and severity of acute food insecurity and to orient evidence-based policies to revert food-crisis conditions, the government of Colombia, which is hosting around 2.5 million Venezuelan migrants with intention to settle, supported an IPC analysis for the first time in 2022 following several years of socioeconomic deterioration. While this represents significant progress towards reducing data gaps, at the time of publication the findings of the analysis carried out among Colombian residents and migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela were still under review. The GRFC 2023 includes data from a WFP Emergency Food Security Assessment among Venezuelan migrants but does not include data for Colombian residents.

However, there are clear indications that acute food insecurity estimates indicate a poor situation among Colombian residents in 2022 following three years of macroeconomic challenges largely linked to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as structural issues, exacerbated by the ripple economic effects of the war in Ukraine, armed conflict, internal displacement and weather extremes. WFP food security assessments conducted in November 2022 highlighted that the most acutely food-insecure populations include Colombian victims of the armed conflict, ethnic groups (particularly afro-descendant and indigenous populations) and women-headed households.

Although the unemployment rate decreased for the second year in a row, it remained high at over 10 percent in 2022 (DANE, January 2023). Over 50 percent of Venezuelan migrant households and 35 percent of Colombian households reported a year-on-year decline in income in 2022 (WFP, November 2022). Household purchasing power diminished as inflation rose steadily throughout 2022, primarily driven by food inflation, which reached 27.8 percent by the end of the year (DANE, January 2023). Sharp currency depreciation exacerbated high domestic food prices as about 85 percent of the country's cereal consumption needs are usually covered by imports (FAO GIEWS, December 2022). In additional

high international fertilizer prices (over 30 percent of imports of fertilizers were sourced from the Russian Federation in recent years) led to higher prices of agricultural inputs in 2022 (CEPAL, FAO and WFP, 2022) adding pressure on food prices.

Insecurity increased with the expanded presence of non-state armed groups, disrupting rural livelihoods, limiting access to humanitarian actors, curbing agricultural production and hampering the delivery of food assistance in most affected areas. Between 2021 and 2022, the number of IDPs increased by 12 percent to reach 5.2 million and the number of people affected by forced confinements increased by 56 percent (OCHA, March 2023).

Weather extremes – mainly flooding and landslides associated with La Niña – affected about 0.62 million people by December 2022 mainly in the departments of Antioquia, La Guajira, Bolívar and Chocó, which further constrained food access and availability for populations with already high poverty levels (OCHA, March 2023).

### ✕ Cuba

The intersection of economic and financial challenges has resulted in food availability and access challenges in Cuba. The lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the embargo and the 2021 monetary reform have led to an increase in food prices that has reduced vulnerable households' purchasing power and limited access to food (WFP, July 2022). In November 2022, the official annual rate of food inflation was estimated to be 63 percent. In 2022, the country's ability to import critical food and fuel commodities continued to be constrained by high international prices, which reduced domestic supply and curtailed the availability of agricultural inputs (FAO-GIEWS, January 2023). In September 2022, the category 4 hurricane Ian damaged housing, water infrastructure and facilities that store or distribute food, as well as thousands of hectares of crops, particularly in the Pinar del Rio province (IFRC, December 2022).

### ✕ Ecuador

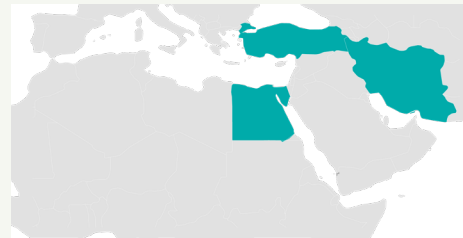
Inflationary pressures continued to build in 2022, driven by higher food and transport prices and non-tradeable services (IMF, December 2022). Annual food inflation stood at nearly 8 percent in December 2022 (WFP, April 2023), as elevated international commodity prices exerted strong upward pressure on domestic markets (FAO GIEWS, March 2023). These increases created food access issues in Ecuador and led to a rise in social unrest and acute food insecurity among nationals and migrants (WFP, March 2023).

### ! Peru (refugees and migrants)

As of early 2023 more than 1.5 million asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants had found refuge in Peru, mainly in Lima and Callao (UNHCR, December 2022). High levels of acute food insecurity, based on WFP rCARI methodology, are driven by low access to reliable income sources. Some do not have a valid regular stay permit, which limits their rights and access to essential services, and impedes socioeconomic integration and access to livelihood opportunities (RMRP, December 2022). Almost 80 percent of Venezuelan migrants and refugees are forced to be informally employed, due to absence of legal documentation. This inability to find regular work is further heightened by negative social and xenophobic perceptions as well as reduction of employment opportunities (Danish Refugee Council, August 2022).

In June 2022, the inflation rate in Peru reached 8.81 percent, the highest level in 26 years, and did not fall below 8.28 percent during any month of 2022 (Trading Economics, accessed 12 April 2022). The increased prices of essential foods have left refugees and migrants particularly vulnerable to food insecurity.

## Three countries had data gaps in Middle East and North Africa



### ! Egypt (Syrian refugees)

As of December 2022, there were an estimated 289 000 refugees in Egypt, including 146 000 Syrian refugees (UNHCR, December 2022). Refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt often reside in overcrowded neighbourhoods, where the host community struggles with substandard living conditions and high unemployment rates. Some 84 percent of refugees live below the national poverty line and face extreme challenges accessing basic services, such as healthcare. The continued influx of refugees and migrants coincides with Egypt's worst economic recession in decades with dramatic price increases for food and utilities worsening living conditions for the most vulnerable population (ECHO, July 2022).

All Syrian refugees in Egypt were estimated to be in need of assistance in 2022. Around 82 percent of them reported relying on less preferred and less expensive foods, 63 percent reported reducing the number and portions of meals per day, while 44 percent reported reducing adults' food consumption to allow for children to eat (3RP, May 2022).

### ! The Islamic Republic of Iran (Afghan refugees)

The Islamic Republic of Iran hosted around 750 000 registered refugees at the beginning of 2023 (UNHCR, December 2022). The Afghanistan Refugee Response Plan targets 2.2 million Afghans (refugees and asylum-seekers) as well as the host community (UNHCR, March 2023). Food prices in country increased

by over 50 percent between May 2021 and May 2022, complicating access to food. Global inflationary pressures have played a significant role in this respect – in a typical year, the Russian Federation and Ukraine accounted for approximately 60 percent of the country's supply of staples such as wheat, sunflower oil and maize. The annual inflation reached 53.4 percent in February 2023 (Trading Economics, April 2023).

### ! Türkiye

Türkiye hosts the world's largest refugee population for the ninth consecutive year with close to 4 million refugees and asylum-seekers of whom around 3.6 million are from the Syrian Arab Republic, around 144 000 from Afghanistan and 142 000 from Iraq (UNHCR, December 2022). An estimated 70 percent are children and women.

Syrian refugees registered in the country have access to national services and can apply for working permits but, due to difficulties in obtaining formal employment, many work in informal sectors. According to the latest Inter-Agency Protection Sector Needs Assessment, 90 percent of refugees cannot fully cover their monthly expenses or basic needs, while 94 percent have reduced food consumption and borrowed money to cope with food consumption gaps (UNHCR, September 2022).

The latest figures from the Turkish Statistical Institute indicate an annual food inflation rate of 71 percent in January 2023, down from the record levels of 90–100 percent between April and November 2022 (FAO-GIEWS, March 2023). Economic deterioration is expected to continue in 2023 with rising inflation and depreciation of the Turkish lira. In February 2023, earthquakes in the east of the country put further strain households that lost their homes again.

The poverty rate in Türkiye is projected to remain above pre-2019 levels due to the persistently high inflation which predominantly affects the poor. There are also concerns about an increase in tensions between refugees and host communities linked to economic challenges and elections in 2023 (3RP, February 2023).