

## KEY DRIVERS OF FOOD INSECURITY IN PAKISTAN

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*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



On 3 May 2023, the Global Network Against Food Crisis, the leading international alliance working to address the root causes of food crises and promote sustainable solutions, released its publication, the *Global Report on Food Crises 2023* (GRFC), produced by the Food Security Information Network (FSIN).<sup>1</sup> The GRFC is a referenced document on global, regional, and country-level acute food insecurity, based mainly on data obtained through the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification which estimates the populations in need of food, nutrition, and livelihood assistance.

The report provides a comprehensive analysis of key factors that drive food crises globally, including conflict, climate change, and economic shocks. The report highlights that the number of people experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity has increased for the fourth consecutive year in 2022. Over a quarter of a billion people are estimated to face acute hunger, with economic shocks as the Ukraine war contributes to the increase. The report depicted alarming rates of increase in conflict in 2022, affecting approximately 258 million people across 58 countries along with acute food insecurity, up from 193 million people in 53 countries and territories in 2021.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Global Report on Food Crisis, 2023,' Global Network Against Food Crisis, 2023, Rome <https://www.wfp.org/publications/global-report-food-crises-2023>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## ***Key Takeaways***

### *Conflict and Insecurity*

In many cases, conflict disrupts agricultural production, displaces populations, and hampers food distribution and access.

According to the report, conflict was the most significant driver of acute food insecurity in 2021 as it affected 19 countries impacting 117.1 million people. Whereas in 2022, conflict was the main driver of food insecurity across 24 countries/territories with 139 million people in phases of acute food insecurity.

The report further states that the primary cause of severe food insecurity in three countries—Afghanistan, South Sudan, and the Syrian Arab Republic—has shifted from conflict to economic shocks, leading to lower estimates. Among the seven countries – Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen, and Haiti – six are plagued by protracted conflicts and experiencing catastrophic food insecurity.

### *Economic Shocks*

Economic shocks, including inflation, unemployment, and economic instability, have significantly impacted food security, especially in low-income countries like Pakistan. This has further added to pre-existing stress caused by COVID-19 that initially generated a profound impact on global food security, and exacerbated existing vulnerabilities causing disruptions in food production, supply chains, and access to markets in countries like Pakistan.

The report also touches upon the socio-economic consequences of the impact of the conflict in Ukraine. In the past year, the Ukraine conflict has also emerged as a primary catalyst of food insecurity in 27 countries, affecting a total of 83.9 million people who are on the brink of facing acute hunger; a significant increase from 2021 in which 30.2 million people in 21 countries were affected. Moreover, the economic resilience of impoverished nations has substantially diminished, resulting in longer recovery periods and reduced capacity to handle forthcoming shocks.<sup>3</sup>

### *Climatic Shocks*

Climate-related events, such as droughts, floods, and storms, have become significant contributors to food insecurity posing a long-term threat to global food systems including in Pakistan. Weather

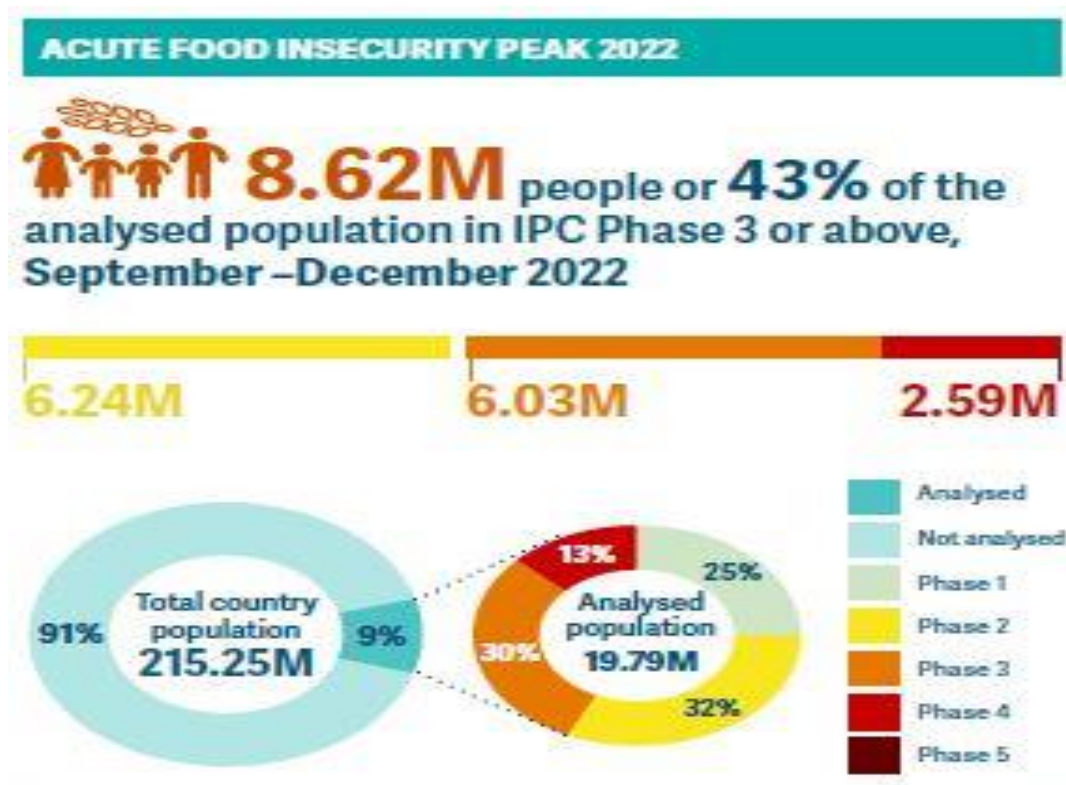
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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

extremes were the primary driver of acute food insecurity in 12 countries where 56.8 million people were classified as facing acute hunger above or equivalent, more than double the number of people (23.5 million) in eight countries in 2022.<sup>4</sup> These extremes included sustained drought in the Horn of Africa, devastating flooding in Pakistan, and tropical storms, cyclones, and drought in Southern Africa.

### ***The State of Food Security in Pakistan***

In the aftermath of the devastation caused by floods in Pakistan, destruction to agriculture, crops and livestock, and lack of access to healthy diets, inadequate quality and quantity of food have largely contributed to the current state of food insecurity in the country. Moreover, the deteriorating quality and quantity of food consumption due to the impacts of flooding as well as high food prices have in the past one year worsened the food security crisis in Pakistan.<sup>5</sup> In Pakistan, severe flooding in June and August 2022 affected the livelihoods of approximately 33 million people, especially in the southern areas. Some of the most alarming trends of food security according to the report, in Pakistan are as follows:



Source: Pakistan IPC, TWG, 2022

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF, Pakistan Floods Situation Report, 28 September 2022  
<https://www.unicef.org/documents/pakistan-floods-situation-report-28-september-2022>

- In the last quarter of 2022, the number of people in crisis reached 8.6 million in rural districts of the three analysed provinces of Pakistan (Balochistan, KP, and Sindh) by GRFC report, as one of the worst monsoon floods in years caused devastation in the agricultural and livestock sectors. 4 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity largely due to the impact of floods on food production, prices, and livelihoods.<sup>6</sup>
- The increase in severity of food insecurity, from 25 percent to 43 percent, indicates a significantly deteriorating situation in all provinces, especially in Sindh, where five areas that were previously classified as 'Crisis' shifted to 'Emergency.'
- Even before Pakistan was hit by the devastating monsoon floods in June and August 2022, heat waves in March and April 2022, in conjunction with fertilizer shortages and lack of irrigation water, affected 'Rabi' wheat crop yields<sup>7</sup> and lowered livestock production in most of the districts.
- Subsequently, flooding and landslides brought widespread destruction, disrupting the lives and livelihoods of about 33 million people in three of four provinces. Around 4.4 million acres of agricultural land were damaged, prompting the downward revision of 2022 production forecasts for rice, maize, sorghum, and millet, and around 0.8 million livestock were estimated to have perished,<sup>8</sup> with, over 7.9 million people temporarily displaced and 589,000 people living in camps.<sup>9</sup>
- According to FAO the total damage and loss in the agriculture sector was estimated at almost \$13 billion, consisting mainly of crops (82 percent) and livestock (17 percent).<sup>10</sup>
- The October–December planting of the 'Rabi' wheat crop was hampered in localized areas that were still under flood water. The report estimated that the loss and damage of agricultural inputs, including seed stocks, fertilizers, machinery, and irrigation infrastructure, may result in a contraction in the area planted with a negative impact on 2023 production.

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<sup>6</sup> Pakistan, Sindh: IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis July - December 2022 (Published on December 30, 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-sindh-ipc-acute-food-insecurity-analysis-july-december-2022-published-december-30-2022>

<sup>7</sup> GIEWS, Pakistan, 04-October-2022, <https://www.fao.org/giews/countrybrief/country.jsp?lang=ru&code=PAK>

<sup>8</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations, (FAO, December 2022).

<sup>9</sup> Pakistan, Sindh: IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis July - December 2022 (Published on December 30, 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2022-october-update-snapshot-31-october-2022>

<sup>10</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations, October 2022, <https://www.fao.org/e-agriculture/save-date-17-21-october-2022-fao-science-and-innovation-forum>

- Economic shocks, strong domestic demand, and high global commodity prices – largely due to COVID-19-related disruptions and the conflict in Ukraine – led to the largest current account deficit in four years by the end of June 2022. The currency depreciated by 23.1 percent against the US dollar and inflation reached an average of 12.2 percent, an 11-year high. By August 2022, prices of wheat flour were about 30 percent higher year-on-year and domestic prices of rice were at record levels.<sup>11</sup>
- Inflation continued on an upward trajectory and by December 2022 the price of a basket of basic food items was 36 percent higher year-on-year. Damage, loss, and needs assessment estimated total flood damages to exceed \$14.9 billion, and total economic losses to reach about \$15.2 billion.
- Due to higher domestic energy prices, flood disruptions, high agricultural input costs, and the weaker rupee, the report estimated inflation in Pakistan to reach 23 percent in the year by June 2023.
- Post-flood health crisis became another alarming issue. In June–August 2022, approximately 1.6 million children in flood-affected areas suffered from severe wasting and another 6 million from stunting, with the threat of further worsening.<sup>12</sup>
- In January 2023, approximately 4 million children were living near contaminated and stagnant flood waters, which caused diarrhoea, malaria, dengue fever, typhoid, acute respiratory infections, and painful skin conditions as well as malnutrition.<sup>13</sup>

### ***International & Domestic Response***

Pakistan ranked 8th among the top 10 disaster-vulnerable countries in the Global Climate Risk Index in 2021 and was hit by both heat waves and devastating floods in 2022. According to the latest report of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA),<sup>14</sup> Pakistan needs at least \$16.3 billion for post-flood rehabilitation and reconstruction. Despite the adverse impact of these factors, the GOP took timely and effective policy measures for mitigating the socioeconomic fallout and for supporting the economic recovery. The measures aimed at stabilizing the economy through

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<sup>11</sup> Food security Update, The World Bank, September 29, 2022  
<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/40ebbf38f5a6b68bfc11e5273e1405d4-0090012022/related/Food-Security-Update-LXX-September-29-2022.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF, Humanitarian Situation Report No.1,  
<https://www.unicef.org/media/137401/file/Mali-Humanitarian-SitRep-January-2023.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Pakistan Floods 2022: Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), Supplemental Report,  
[https://www.pc.gov.pk/uploads/downloads/PDNA\\_report.pdf](https://www.pc.gov.pk/uploads/downloads/PDNA_report.pdf)

comprehensive reforms, agriculture sector improvements, human resource development, and social welfare programs. Some of the measures that the government of Pakistan took to overcome the crisis were;

1. An International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan in Geneva was convened specifically to support the affected people by climate-induced disasters in Pakistan on January 9, 2023. It was co-hosted by the Government of Pakistan (GOP) and the United Nations (UN). The Conference brought together governments, leaders from the public and private sectors, and civil society to support Pakistan in dealing with the devastation caused by floods and the crisis in its aftermath. The objective of this Conference was to present the 'Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework' (4RF), which lays out a multi-sectoral strategy for rehabilitation and reconstruction in a climate-resilient and inclusive manner. The Conference was aimed at securing international support and forging long-term partnerships for building Pakistan's climate resilience mechanisms and adaptation. Pakistan was able to raise approximately \$10 billion in the form of pledges from states and international financial institutions to support its flood recovery efforts.<sup>15</sup>
2. The Federal Government also announced Rs. 70 billion for flood relief assistance. Out of which 63 percent has been disbursed through BISP. Secondly, the government carried out the distribution of nearly 6 lac tents, 4 lac tarpaulins, 3.5 million mosquito nets, and nearly 18 lac food packs. These efforts were carried out through the help of NDMA, PDMA, foreign assistance, and humanitarian organization assistance.<sup>16</sup>

## **Conclusion**

While economic challenges created in the wake of the COVID pandemic, climate change, and rapid growth of population have added to the difficulties in addressing the food security challenges around the globe, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has further accentuated the challenges and food insecurity in countries like Pakistan. To avoid such situations, Pakistan needs to plan its wheat crops and wheat trade better. The key takeaways of GRFC 2023 also emphasize the need for comprehensive and coordinated efforts to address food insecurity in developing countries like Pakistan. It highlights the importance of sustainable agricultural practices, investment in rural

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<sup>15</sup> Ahmad Salik, "International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan" Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, January 25, 2023

<https://issi.org.pk/issue-brief-on-international-conference-on-climate-resilient-pakistan/>

<sup>16</sup> 'Pakistan Floods 2022 Impact Assessment,' Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan, accessed July 3, 2023

[https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters\\_23/Annex\\_III\\_Pakistan\\_Floods\\_2022.pdf](https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_23/Annex_III_Pakistan_Floods_2022.pdf)

development, social safety nets, and resilience-building measures to ensure food access, availability, and nutrition for all populations.