

FACT SHEET THE IPC FAMINE

WHAT IS FAMINE?



The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) defines Famine as an extreme deprivation of food. Starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition are or will likely be evident.

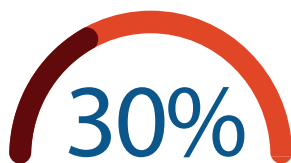
The IPC plays a critical role in identifying Famine conditions, and informing the response needed to save millions of lives. The IPC is now the primary mechanism the international community uses to analyse data and arrive at a conclusion whether Famine is happening or projected to occur in a country. 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:



of households facing an extreme lack of food



of children suffering from acute malnutrition



Deaths of two people or four children 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, 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 CAUSES OF FAMINE AND EXTREME FOOD CRISES



Conflict often leads to population displacements and disrupts people's traditional ways of dealing with food scarcity.



Natural Hazards, such as drought, flooding, and cyclones, as well as human and animal diseases and crop pests, affect food access and availability.



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



Inadequate Humanitarian Response: When a shock occurs, and the humanitarian response is not sufficient, well-coordinated, or fast enough, the affected populations can only cope for a short period.

PREVIOUS IPC FAMINE CLASSIFICATIONS



In 2011, Famine was declared by FSNAU and FEWS NET in parts of Southern Somalia due to conflict, drought and poor rains.



Three years of civil war, coupled with an ailing economy and high food prices, led to Famine being declared in 2017 in South Sudan's Unity State.

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 countries 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 extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality.

IPC PHASE 5 EXPLAINED

CATASTROPHE

IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe) can only be classified at household level, not at area level. An area might have some households in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe) linked to very high levels acute food insecurity. However, an entire area can only be classified in IPC Phase 5 (Famine) if this high level of acute food insecurity is accompanied by certain levels of acute malnutrition and mortality.

FAMINE

IPC Phase 5 (Famine) can only be classified at area level. In a given area, Famine occurs when food security, nutrition and mortality altogether portray famine conditions, meaning at least 20% of the population is in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe), with about one out of three children being acutely malnourished and two deaths for every 10,000 inhabitants, or four child deaths out of 10,000 children per day, due to outright starvation or to the interaction of malnutrition and disease.

FAMINE WITH SOLID EVIDENCE: An area is classified in Famine with solid evidence if there is clear and compelling evidence that the Famine thresholds for starvation, acute malnutrition and mortality have been reached.

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 starvation, 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.



IPC **Phase 5 (Famine)** exists in **areas** where at least one in five households experience an extreme lack of food and face starvation resulting in destitution, extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition and death.



IPC **Phase 5 (Catastrophe)** can only be classified **at household level**, not at area level. Households may be classified in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe) even if the area is not classified in IPC Phase 5 (Famine).

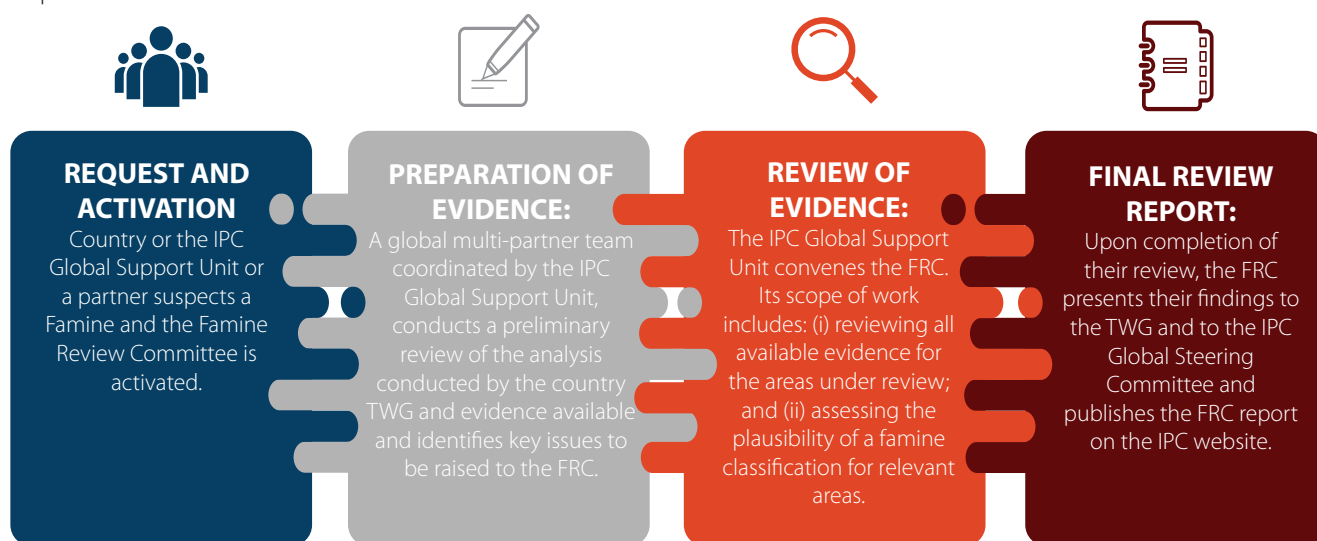
HOW THE FAMINE REVIEW COMMITTEE WORKS

When a country IPC analysis shows a potential, or already identified situation of Famine, a specific procedure is activated in order to confirm or disprove a 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 CAUSES OF FAMINE AND EXTREME FOOD CRISES

In many cases, Famine has multiple causes which can be man-made and nature-driven or a combination of both. Data from the most recent famines shows that the phenomenon is often driven by the complex interaction of four dominant causes related to:



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.



NATURAL HAZARDS: 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.



ECONOMIC DECLINE: 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 extreme levels of hunger and malnutrition.



INADEQUATE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE: When a sudden onset shock occurs, informal safety nets tend to dry up along with the capacity of people to cope, in the short to medium term, depending on the resilience of households and the communities they live in. If the humanitarian response is not sufficient, well-coordinated, or too slow, the affected populations can only cope for a short period.

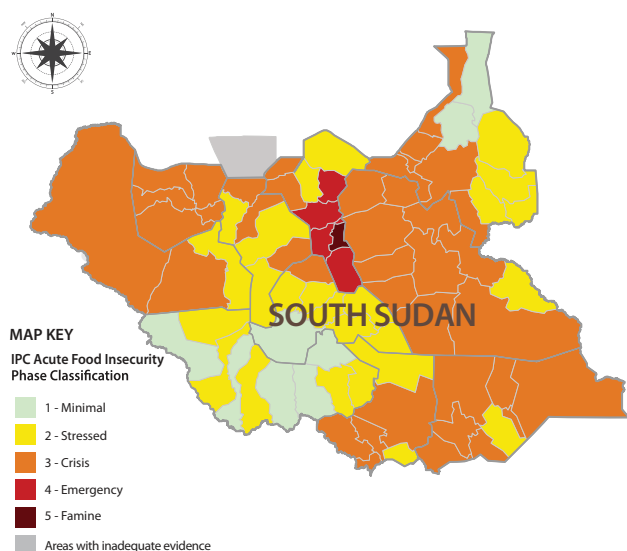
KEY FACTS ON PREVIOUS FAMINE CLASSIFICATIONS

The last decade has witnessed two examples of famine classification, in Somalia in 2011 and in South Sudan in 2017, that resulted in widespread acute malnutrition and the deaths of tens of thousands of

people. The Famines in Somalia and South Sudan were extreme food crises in which large populations lacked adequate access to food, mainly driven by conflict and erratic weather patterns.

2017 SOUTH SUDAN FAMINE

Food Security Situation | January 2017



80,000



Famine was declared in parts of South Sudan on February 20, 2017, where nearly 80,000 people faced Famine conditions (IPC Phase 5) in parts of Unity State (the central-northern part of South Sudan), with another one million people being 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



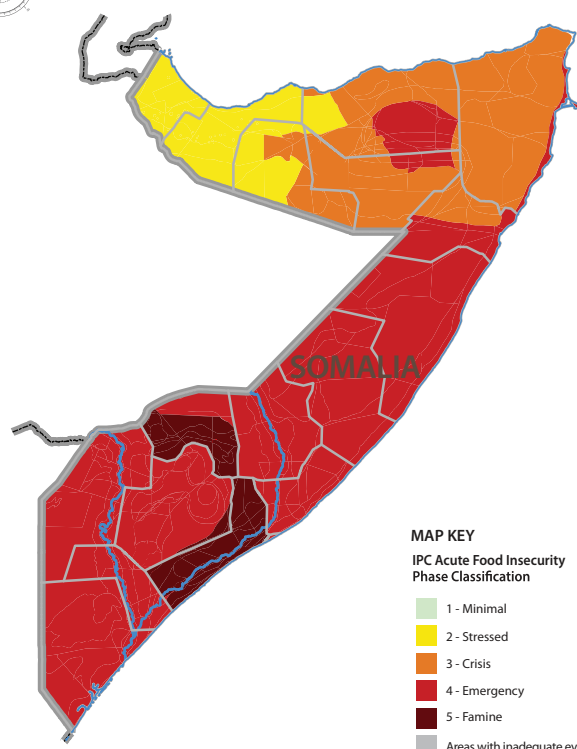
490,000

On July 20, 2011, the FAO-managed Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit for Somalia (FSNAU) and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) declared a 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 Catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 5) due to conflict, drought, and poor rains.

Source: FSNAU/FAO Somalia & FEWSNET

2011 SOMALIA FAMINE

Food Security Situation | July 2011



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 projected period. While this is not perceived necessarily as the most likely scenario, it is a scenario that generally has a realistic chance of occurring. It complements the Famine projection of the most likely scenario by providing insights of potential Famine if prospects evolve in a manner worse than anticipated.

HOW TO AVOID AND AVERT 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:

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.

Early Warning/Action

Early warning messages should trigger early response, especially for households classified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) to save lives and livelihoods. This requires a robust multi-stakeholder monitoring tool of all drivers and outcomes of food insecurity.

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 -response, 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 insecurity and malnutrition 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 insecurity and malnutrition analysis.

Contacts:

For urgent media inquiries:
Frank Nyakairu,
IPC Communications Team Leader
Email: Frank.Nyakairu@fao.org

For general inquiries:
IPC@fao.org
www.ipcinfo.org

IPC Global Support Unit (IPC GSU)
Hosted at Food and Agriculture
Organization of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Rome, Italy

The IPC Global Partners



IPC Funding Partners

