

**VENEZUELA**

**COLOMBIA**

**BURKINA FASO**

**NIGERIA**

**MALI**

**CAMEROON**

**CENTRAL AFRICAN  
REPUBLIC**

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC  
OF THE CONGO**

**NIGER**

**LEBANON**

**PALESTINE**

**CHAD**

**SYRIA**

**AFGHANISTAN**

**SUDAN**

**YEMEN**

**SOMALIA**

**ETHIOPIA**

**SOUTH SUDAN**

**MOZAMBIQUE**



# **WATCHLIST**

# **2021**

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## FOREWORD FROM DAVID MILIBAND, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

2020 was a year of acute humanitarian need around the world, including the Ebola crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo, economic crisis in Venezuela, and the threat of famine in Yemen. But 2020 was also the year of global emergency prompted by COVID-19. The pandemic is a disease of the connected world, and the failed response to it is a symptom of a crisis in the global system. It is a warning to the world as we head into a new year: unless we respond to crises as a genuine and inclusive global community, then we will all be poorer for it, and the most vulnerable will pay the greatest price.

Each year the International Rescue Committee produces a global Watchlist of humanitarian crises we expect to significantly deteriorate over the course of the coming year. The Watchlist draws on 85 quantitative and qualitative measures, including insights from the IRC's 30,000 staff and volunteers in over 40 countries globally. IRC's Watchlist 2021 should serve as a warning to policymakers, government leaders, and concerned citizens around the world about the impact of humanitarian neglect, the costs of diplomatic inertia, and the danger of failing to prepare for crises on the horizon.

The word 'crisis' often implies a new and unexpected situation, but the truth is that the greatest humanitarian emergencies of 2021 will almost all be neglected, long-standing crises that have

been the global epicenter of conflict, displacement, and extreme poverty for the past decade. These are political emergencies as much as they are humanitarian emergencies.

The IRC's presence in the 20 countries on the 2021 Watchlist dates back an average of fifteen years, and considerably longer - 20-30 years - in some. These 20 countries represent just 10% of the global population, but account for 85% of those in humanitarian need. They are also the countries driving the global displacement crisis, accounting for 88% of all internal displacement and 84% of all refugees in 2019.

While we are understandably seized with events at home, these crises risk spreading across borders with devastating political, economic, security, and humanitarian implications for entire regions. If we don't learn this lesson from the way the Syrian and Congolese crises have spiraled into regional crises then we risk repeating the same mistake with newly emergent crises like the turbulence in Ethiopia.

The common factor driving persistent crisis in nearly all Watchlist countries is widespread conflict, but a closer look at these crises highlights how the COVID crisis and the climate crisis are exacerbating needs and increasing the pressure on these already-fragile societies. Watchlist countries are among the top

countries most vulnerable to climate change and many of these countries have struggled to properly track the scale of their Covid outbreaks.

Years of untended crisis and conflict have damaged hospitals, markets, water and sanitation systems, and other civilian infrastructure, making it harder for these communities to effectively respond to the additional pressures posed by the COVID and climate crises. Displaced populations, and in particular women and girls, are disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises and COVID is no exception as they face devastating harm to economic opportunities, schooling, and access to healthcare in these crisis countries. They are also those most likely to be left out of state-led responses either by accident or by design. The COVID and climate crises together risk reversing decades of hard-won progress to reduce poverty, hunger, violence, and disease.

It is not an accident that Watchlist countries are unable to cope with conflict, COVID and climate change. In too many contexts where the IRC works, the destruction of hospitals, markets, and homes is not an accidental by-product of war, but the result of deliberate military strategy. Of particular concern during the pandemic is the deliberate and repeated targeting of health facilities, including multiple IRC-supported hospitals, clinics, and ambulances in Syria.

These horrors epitomize the global shift toward an emerging Age of Impunity, in which governments, dictators, generals, and militias ignore the laws of war knowing that they will never be held accountable for their abuses.

The Age of Impunity is running rampant in part because of the growing number of armed non-state actors and foreign militaries participating in these conflicts, which makes conflicts longer, more deadly, harder to solve, and less accountable when civilians are targeted. One-fifth of conflicts today involve more than ten parties and two-thirds involve at least three parties. In addition to making war-fighting more complicated, it also makes the delivery of humanitarian assistance more complicated. For instance, in Yemen, IRC teams must travel through around 50 checkpoints set up by

the various armed groups on the 300-mile road from Aden to Sanaa. Without a concerted effort to invigorate fidelity to the laws of war, and in particular the protection of civilians and humanitarian access, we can expect further proliferation of conflict and humanitarian need.

As the world emerges from an unprecedented and turbulent 2020, the question is whether global leaders will apply key lessons from this past year or whether they will let these protracted crises spiral into larger and more catastrophic crises in 2021. As talk shifts to a "new normal" after COVID-19, there must also be a new normal in humanitarian response that builds on lessons learned during this year. Unprecedented challenges require new approaches not only for this pandemic but for future humanitarian crises.

This means reaching those at risk of being left behind, particularly displaced populations and women, by including them in all aspects of humanitarian responses and directing resources to frontline responders who are on the ground and can reach these groups. Humanitarians like the IRC will stay and deliver even in the most complex, protracted crises. But it will take politics to produce long-term solutions. The international community should respond to the triple threat of conflict, COVID-19 and climate change by implementing long-needed reforms to the multilateral system that improve the coordination and rapid distribution of aid, while investing in long-term local resilience. International leaders should also re-engage in diplomacy that prioritizes humanitarian action and measures to restore accountability for violations of International Humanitarian Law. The international community has both a moral obligation and strategic imperative to support the most vulnerable living through these crises.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Miliband".

David Miliband,  
President and CEO,  
International Rescue Committee

## INTRODUCTION

The IRC is launching Watchlist 2021 as a call to action for global leaders and the general public. Historically, the annual Watchlist was a humanitarian planning tool to inform operational preparedness. By identifying the 20 countries at greatest risk of a major new - or significantly worsened - humanitarian crisis over the year ahead, the IRC could better focus our own planning and preparedness efforts. However, humanitarian planning and preparedness on their own are insufficient to meet the scale of challenges we expect in 2021.

Watchlist 2021 reveals that the world is facing both unprecedented humanitarian emergencies as well as a political crisis of inaction and global retreat from humanitarian obligations. The international community must take action now, before decades of hard-won progress on reducing poverty, hunger and disease is lost or even reversed.

### TOP TEN

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>1. YEMEN</b>       | <b>6. BURKINA FASO</b> |
| <b>2. AFGHANISTAN</b> | <b>7. SOUTH SUDAN</b>  |
| <b>3. SYRIA</b>       | <b>8. NIGERIA</b>      |
| <b>4. DRC</b>         | <b>9. VENEZUELA</b>    |
| <b>5. ETHIOPIA</b>    | <b>10. MOZAMBIQUE</b>  |

### UNRANKED BOTTOM TEN

- |                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| <b>CAMEROON</b>         | <b>MALI</b>      |
| <b>CENTRAL AF. REP.</b> | <b>NIGER</b>     |
| <b>CHAD</b>             | <b>PALESTINE</b> |
| <b>COLOMBIA</b>         | <b>SOMALIA</b>   |
| <b>LEBANON</b>          | <b>SUDAN</b>     |

The Watchlist is divided into a ranked Top 10 and an unranked bottom half. The Top 10 countries are where we assess there is greatest risk of deterioration leading to the most serious emergencies in 2021. See more about the methodology for Watchlist 2021 in the Annex.

## KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ **The crises in Watchlist countries are pushing global humanitarian needs and displacement to record levels, and women and girls are often disproportionately affected.** There are now 235.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance globally, of which 85% are in Watchlist countries – even though they are home to just 10% of the world's total population. In 2019 these countries produced 88% of global internal displacement and 84% of global external displacement.
- ▶ **A limited set of protracted crises are driving the largest increases in humanitarian needs.** Long-running conflicts in places like the DRC and Afghanistan remain highly volatile despite their protracted nature.
- ▶ **The triple threat of conflict, climate change and COVID-19 is driving the crises in nearly all Watchlist countries.** Climate change and COVID-19 are exacerbating a baseline of conflict and violence, whether involving militant groups, national armies, communal militias, criminal gangs or others. Ethiopia moves up into the top five because of conflict in its Tigray region while the rapidly escalating insurgency in Cabo Delgado is the reason Mozambique enters the Watchlist for the first time, directly into the top ten.
- ▶ **Yemen remains in the top position for the third year in a row.** Sixteen countries featured in last year's Watchlist remain on Watchlist 2021, illustrating how these crises are protracted but hardly static. Only Colombia, Lebanon, Mozambique and Palestine are new additions to Watchlist this year, replacing Burundi, Iraq, Libya and Myanmar. The IRC is responding to the crises in eighteen of the countries on this year's Watchlist. Mozambique and Palestine are the only exceptions for now.
- ▶ **Famine threatens four countries in the top ten of the Watchlist** (Yemen, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and South Sudan) and the [UN](#) has flagged nearly all other countries on the list as being “acute food insecurity hotspots,” as the economic impacts of COVID-19 compound the impact of years of conflict. Women and girls represent more than 70% of people facing chronic hunger ([GHO](#)). Famine has not been declared anywhere in the world since early 2017 in South Sudan - the first UN declaration of famine since 2011.

**2021**

**KEY THEMES AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

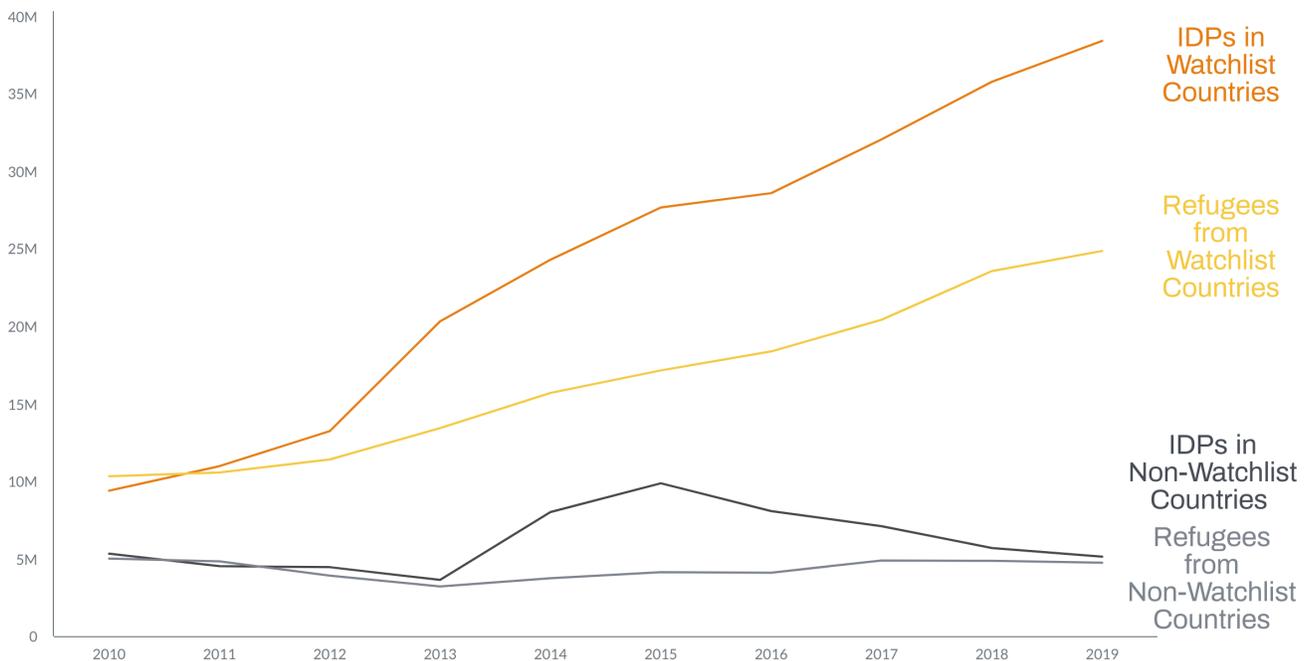


## RECORD NEEDS YET HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES UNDER THREAT

**Global needs are at record levels, in large part due to a limited set of crises that continue to deteriorate year after year.** The number of people globally in need of assistance tripled between 2015 and 2021, rising to [235.4 million](#) - up by 40% on the number of people in need in 2020. Over the past decade, the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) rose from 16 million in 2010 to a historic record of over 40 million while the refugee population doubled to 30 million. Preliminary figures for the first half of 2020 (14.6 million new IDPs) suggest the number of internally displaced people will reach a new record in 2020 ([GHO](#)). As Figure 1 illustrates, these global rises have been driven almost entirely by the twenty countries that appear on Watchlist 2021.

Watchlist countries account for just 10% of the world's total population but 85% of all people in need<sup>1</sup>, 88% of people displaced within their own countries and 84% of refugees and others displaced externally. The top ten countries alone account for 63% of all people in need, 54% of people displaced internally and 56% of refugees, despite being home to just 7% of the global population. Humanitarian appeals will have been organized for Watchlist countries for an average of eleven consecutive years in 2021, with some like Sudan (28 years), Somalia (23 years) and the DRC (22 years) much longer ([GHO](#)). In 2021, the IRC will also have been working for an average of around fifteen years in the eighteen Watchlist countries where it has a presence.

### REFUGEES AND IDPs PRODUCED BY WATCHLIST COUNTRIES VS. REST OF THE WORLD



**Figure 1** Displacements within and from Watchlist countries according to UNHCR. NB for the purposes of this chart, “refugees” includes UNHCR-registered refugees, Venezuelans recorded by UNHCR and Palestinians registered under UNRWA’s mandate. Source: UNHCR, UNRWA.

<sup>1</sup> Counting people in need according to response plans included in the 2021 Global Humanitarian Overview ([GHO](#)). Figures for 2020 have been used for Chad because the total number of people in need there is still being finalized.

**Women and girls are hit the hardest.** The IRC's experience globally demonstrates that humanitarian crises have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, and this pattern is true of the countries featured on Watchlist 2021. Sixteen of the countries are in the bottom category (Group 5) of the [Gender Development Index](#) and seven feature among the ten least gender equal countries according to the Georgetown Institute for Women and Peace [WPS Index](#). In these contexts, women and girls often face particular barriers to accessing humanitarian assistance, legal and safe work, and education. As a result, they represent over 70% of people facing chronic hunger ([GHO](#)), while 70% of women and girls in some humanitarian settings experience gender-based violence ([Action Aid](#)).

**Humanitarian access and action is increasingly under threat.** While ongoing conflict activity is a major factor constraining both the ability for humanitarian actors to reach affected populations and those populations' ability to access humanitarian services and goods, principled humanitarian responses are increasingly threatened by bureaucratic obstacles. Humanitarians and civilians frequently face restrictions on their ability to move within countries and parties to conflicts sometimes try to interfere in humanitarian assistance, for example to direct aid to their supporters or for corrupt financial gain ([ACAPS](#)). Such constraints are not an inevitable consequence of conflict, but are a consequence of deliberate decisions by parties to conflicts. Of the sixteen countries that [ACAPS](#) identified in mid-2020 as seeing "extreme" (5/5) or "very high" (4/5) access constraints, ten are on Watchlist 2021.

Similarly, counterterrorism policies at times constrain humanitarian action for political or military objectives, for example by increasing the bureaucratic obstacles and delays associated with working in areas under the control of armed groups or opposition groups or effectively preventing humanitarians from negotiating with these groups to access all populations in need. Such policies risk associating humanitarians with one party to a conflict, jeopardizing the neutrality and independence of humanitarians and thus threatening the safety of aid workers. Restrictions also risk politicizing aid delivery and leaving civilians' access to life-saving assistance contingent on which parties to the conflict they live under, rather than their need.

Moreover, 2019 saw the [highest](#) number of attacks on aid workers in the past decade, albeit against a backdrop of growing numbers of aid workers ([ALNAP](#)). According to data from the Aid Worker Security Database ([AWSD](#)), Watchlist countries are the most dangerous places for aid workers: since 2016, 94% of all aid workers killed, 84% of aid workers injured and 98% of aid workers kidnapped have been in the countries on this year's list. The ten deadliest countries for aid workers during the first nine months of 2020 and the ten countries where kidnappings of aid workers were most common are all on Watchlist 2021 ([AWSD](#)).

Economic pressure on donor governments creates a further threat to humanitarian action, if humanitarian responses are not adequately funded. Less than half of all funding required for country-level Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) was received in 2020 and the HRPs for two Watchlist countries - Venezuela and Colombia - were less than 20% funded. Regional response plans<sup>2</sup> received even less funding - under a third of total requirements - while the DRC regional response is just 7% funded ([GHO](#)). 2020 also saw major fundraising for the response to COVID-19. The appeal for global operational support in response to the pandemic was 78.1% funded, but a specific appeal for efforts to prevent famine was just 16% funded ([FTS](#)), raising real questions about the international community's willingness to fund the response to the record humanitarian needs expected in 2021.

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<sup>2</sup> "Regional response plans" include the regional responses for Syria, the Horn of Africa & Yemen, Venezuela, Burundi, DRC & South Sudan

## THE CAUSE: A TRIPLE THREAT FROM CONFLICT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19

Needs are growing so rapidly because of a triple threat found in nearly all Watchlist countries: a baseline of conflict and violence, exacerbated by climate change and now COVID-19. The centrality of conflict to the crises featured in Watchlist 2021 chimes with the [World Food Programme's](#) finding that conflict is the single biggest driver of hunger globally. Likewise, the [World Bank](#) has warned that conflict is responsible for 80% of all humanitarian need, and that the only way to end extreme poverty is by addressing fragile and conflict-affected settings. COVID-19 and climate change then layer on top of conflict to compound the crises in Watchlist countries, by creating new health risks, devastating economies, and complicating existing political and security dynamics.

### CONFLICT: THE PRIMARY DRIVER OF NEED ACROSS WATCHLIST COUNTRIES

On average, Watchlist countries saw conflicts in seven years of the decade 2010-2019, with Venezuela the sole country without any mass conflict (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, [UCDP](#)).<sup>3</sup> International attention to conflicts often falls over time. Yet the countries on Watchlist 2021 demonstrate that it is in fact long-running, protracted conflict situations that account for the largest increases in humanitarian needs because they remain highly volatile and continue to rapidly deteriorate. Protracted conflicts are hardly static. The number of people in need in Afghanistan and the DRC has risen by 385% and 275% respectively since 2015, even after decades of conflict. Concerningly, Watchlist reveals that many of these states are at risk of an even more violent year in 2021.

Moreover, the speed with which Watchlist countries have pushed up global refugee numbers (see Figure 1 above) underlines how quickly, when left unaddressed, the consequences of armed conflicts spread across borders. Situations like the Lake Chad Basin (across the borders of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon) and the central Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger) demonstrate how conflicts can easily spread to destabilize regions. Emerging conflicts in Mozambique - from where armed groups are increasingly striking just inside Tanzania - and the Tigray region of Ethiopia are already starting to spill over to neighboring states.

While it is well-established that conflict drives humanitarian need, three key changes in the nature of conflict are responsible for the spiraling humanitarian crises and the consequences illustrated by Watchlist countries:

**1. Civil conflicts are increasingly internationalized, increasing the risk of longer and more severe conflicts.** The overall number of conflicts has risen by 10% since 1990 despite the number of pure civil conflicts dropping by 32%. The global rise in the number of conflicts is driven by a 600% increase in internationalized civil conflicts - those crises involving a foreign actor. These conflicts are often more violent: 27% of internationalized civil conflicts in 2019 were "severe" according to UCDP's typology (over 1,000 battlefield deaths/year) as compared to just 3% of purely civil conflicts. All five countries that saw "severe" internationalized civil conflicts in 2019 - Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria and Yemen - appear on this year's Watchlist. Moreover, internationalized civil conflicts are likely to last longer ([K4D](#)). Greater length and severity of conflict both increase harm to civilians as conflicts decimate civilian infrastructure, force populations to flee, and erode states' capacity to cope with other crises.

**2. The influence of non-state armed groups over crisis situations is growing.** From Afghanistan to Colombia to Mozambique, non-state armed actors - including criminal gangs, communal militias, militant groups and more - have significant influence over the crises in every Watchlist 2021 country. Of the 54 conflicts identified by [UCDP](#) in 2019, 52 involve non-state armed groups. This trend forces humanitarians to negotiate principled access in areas influenced by an ever-growing set of actors, some of which may be designated as terrorist groups by one or more governments.

<sup>3</sup> Venezuela is the most significant exception to the importance of conflict in Watchlist countries, and it is included on Watchlist 2021 primarily as an economic crisis. However, the country has seen rapidly rising criminal violence in recent years. Sudan and Lebanon are the only other countries that data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program indicates did not experience active conflicts that meet UCDP's definition in 2019. However, Sudan had seen conflict in all nine of the preceding years and fighting has increased in parts of the Darfur region in 2020. Lebanon is not currently seeing armed conflict or widespread societal violence but the political and economic crises currently affecting the country are heavily influenced both by the conflict in neighboring Syria and Lebanon's own history of civil war.

**3. Wars are increasingly fought without respect for International Humanitarian Law, resulting in direct harm to civilians and weakened local response and coping capacity as critical infrastructure is damaged.** The countries on Watchlist 2021 are emblematic of an “age of impunity”, which is - in part - a consequence of the aforementioned two changes in the nature of conflict. In the first three quarters of 2020, seven Watchlist countries were in the top ten of countries worldwide for civilian deaths recorded by [ACLED](#). In the same time period, 86% of airstrikes identified by ACLED globally as affecting civilians were in Watchlist countries. In the Sahel, communal and self-defence groups have been central to driving rising violence against civilians. Several countries on Watchlist 2021 have seen repeated attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, particularly hospitals and residential areas. For instance, in Yemen, Saudi and Emirati-led Coalition airstrikes are more likely to kill people in residential areas than anywhere else ([Yemen Data Project](#)). In Syria, around 50% of health facilities have been damaged or closed due to conflict ([WHO](#)) with multiple attacks on IRC-supported facilities.

## COVID-19: PANDEMIC SPARKS WIDER HEALTH, ECONOMIC & SOCIAL CRISES

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Limited testing makes it difficult to assess the true spread and direct health impacts of COVID-19 in most Watchlist countries, but its wider devastating economic and social impacts are already well documented. The pandemic has already caused a 40% increase in humanitarian needs globally ([GHO](#)) and it risks reversing decades of hard-won progress to reduce poverty, hunger, disease and mortality rates in three key ways:

**1. Deaths and illness from non-COVID health impacts of the pandemic may exceed those from COVID-19 itself.** As the IRC has seen in other contexts, outbreaks can reduce both the supply of routine healthcare - vaccinations, primary and reproductive healthcare - and demand for such services, as people may be afraid to seek treatment. In West Africa, healthcare usage declined [18%](#) during the Ebola outbreak and similar trends are already being seen with COVID-19. IRC analysis shows that the number of patients seeking care for malnutrition during the COVID-19 pandemic has dropped by 20% in Somalia, 19% in South Sudan and 15% in DRC compared to the same period in 2019, even though food insecurity is rising across the board ([IRC](#)). Immunization services were disrupted in 68 countries and the pandemic could also erode decades of progress on containing HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria ([GHO](#)).

**2. Loss of livelihoods is driving up food insecurity and could trigger multiple famines in 2021.** Extreme poverty has risen for the first time in over two decades ([GHO](#)) as measures introduced to control the spread of COVID-19, such as lockdowns and border closures, have eliminated livelihoods. An estimated USD 3.5 trillion of income was lost in the first nine months of 2020 alone ([GHO](#)). In crisis-affected settings, there are few resources for stimulus packages or social safety nets seen in wealthier countries, so lost income often means going without food. IRC analysis suggests the number of people facing acute hunger in fragile contexts has risen by 60%, to 91 million globally, due to the recession triggered by COVID-19 ([IRC](#)) and could delay progress towards Zero Hunger by three years ([IRC](#)). The UN has identified 20 countries - seventeen of them on Watchlist 2021 - as being at risk of COVID-driven food crises. Of these, four (Yemen, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, northeast Nigeria - all on Watchlist 2021) are at risk of famine ([FAO-WFP](#)).

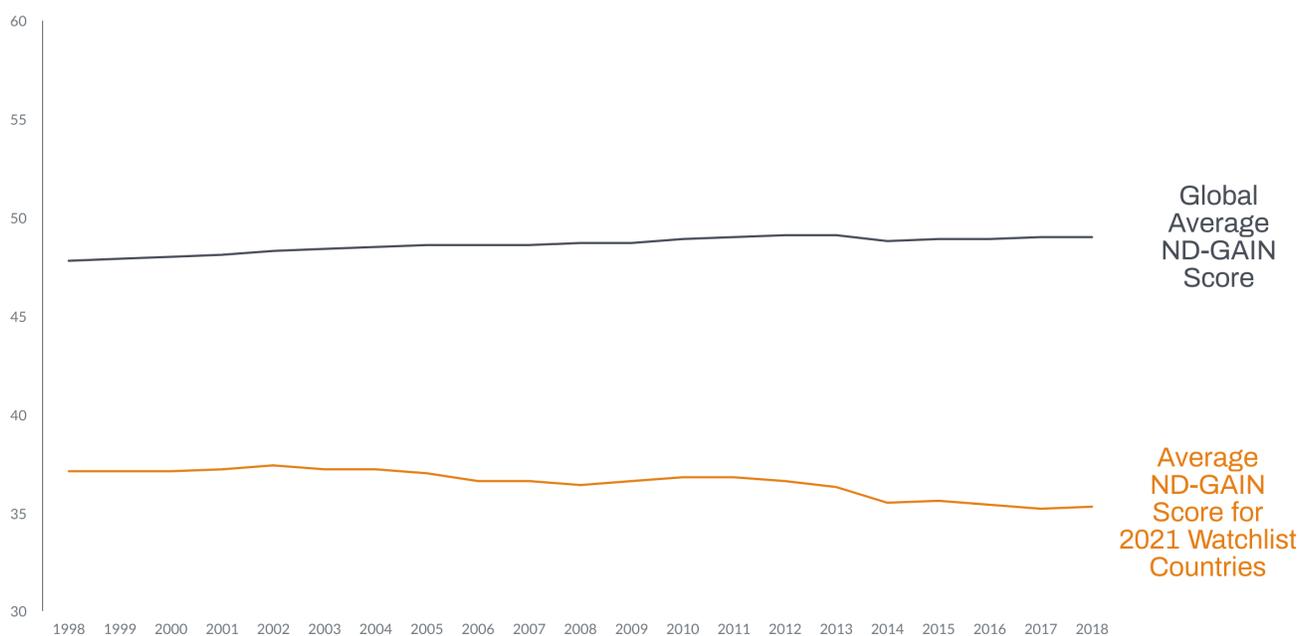
**3. Measures to contain the pandemic are leaving women and other frequently marginalized groups behind, while increasing the risks they face.** The pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities for women as well as displaced populations and migrants who are often left out of national response plans and services like social safety nets and health services. Women - especially in conflict-affected states - have reduced access to COVID-19 testing and healthcare more broadly ([IRC](#)). Across Watchlist countries, IRC staff have reported rises in violence against women and children, child labor, and child marriages ([IRC](#)). [UNFPA](#) projections warned that 15 million more cases of gender-based violence are expected for every three extra months of global lockdown, and that disruption to efforts to end child marriage could result in 13 million child marriages over the next decade that could otherwise have been prevented.

## CLIMATE CHANGE: A THREAT MULTIPLIER

The IRC's teams around the world are seeing the consequences of climate change first hand. The last ten years were the hottest on record and, as [OCHA](#) has documented, climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of natural shocks. In turn, populations become more vulnerable to diseases like malaria and dengue, and the availability of water and agricultural land is reduced in many countries. These shifts are exacerbating food security and undermining livelihoods, contributing to greater displacement and - at times - conflict over resources. Indeed, the World Bank has predicted that the worsening impacts of climate change could force over [140 million](#) people to displace within their home countries by 2050.

Moreover, climate change has a highly unequal impact. People living in the least developed countries are [ten times](#) more likely to be affected by a climate disaster than those living in wealthy countries. Of the ten countries identified by the Notre Dame [ND-GAIN](#) index of countries most vulnerable to climate change and other global challenges, seven - Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Chad, the DRC, Niger, Somalia and Sudan - are on this year's Watchlist and all are affected by conflict, which further erodes local response capacity. The gulf between Watchlist countries and the rest of the world is also growing. The global average of scores given by ND-GAIN to countries for their resilience to climate change has risen 2.5% over the past two decades, yet the average for Watchlist countries is falling (down 5% over the same time period). Climate change is consequently a key threat multiplier in many of the countries on this year's Watchlist, and will present long-term challenges for these countries in addition to immediate humanitarian risks in 2021.

### RESILIENCE OF WATCHLIST COUNTRIES TO CLIMATE CHANGE VS. GLOBAL AVERAGE



**Figure 2** The global average score for countries' resilience to climate change is slowly rising, but it is falling for Watchlist 2021 countries (Source: [ND-GAIN](#))

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The triple threat of conflict, COVID-19 and climate change presents an unprecedented challenge for an international community that was already struggling to respond effectively to existing humanitarian crises. Far too often, conflicts have led to overly-securitized responses and counterterrorism policies that restrict humanitarians. While security assistance flows, humanitarian funding lags far behind rising needs. The UN's Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) are chronically underfunded. Less than half of the total required funding was received for HRPs in Watchlist countries in 2020, though with significant variation. The pandemic has exacerbated these trends; many governments looked inward when the crisis demanded support to fragile contexts experiencing the greatest devastation from the pandemic. Moreover, in crisis-affected contexts, states often lack the resources to fully address needs on their own - or are unwilling to provide essential services for all those in need. As a result, populations in these settings rely on humanitarian actors and a robust multilateral response to fill the gap.

There is still time to reverse these trends and prevent the worst outcomes. But these humanitarian crises demand urgent political solutions. Conflicts in Watchlist countries - particularly the top 10 - drive the vast majority of global humanitarian needs and require particular attention. The IRC calls on the international community to take the following steps:

- ▶ **Target those at risk of being left behind.** All actors, from governments in crisis settings to donors, should ensure displaced populations, hard-to-reach populations, women and other groups that are often marginalized are included in all aspects to humanitarian responses, particularly health systems, social safety nets, COVID-19 response plans, and national and sub-national climate adaptation plans. UN member states should also increase their commitments to global responsibility sharing through greater resettlement, asylum and integration pathways for the most vulnerable that cannot remain in their host communities.
- ▶ **Reach the frontline in crisis-affected contexts.** Donors should provide greater humanitarian funding and direct more funding to frontline responders and local organizations already active in protracted conflict situations. The G20 and international financial institutions should also define concrete financial commitments to conflict-affected states. All donors should shift to longer term and flexible funding to enable humanitarians to adapt to evolving situations like an unprecedented pandemic and to prepare for the long-term impacts of conflict, climate change, and COVID-19.
- ▶ **Prioritize diplomacy to support humanitarian action.** Humanitarian diplomacy is needed to protect and expand humanitarian access and ensure the delivery of principled humanitarian aid based on need rather than who controls territory. Clear, effective humanitarian exemptions should be included in counterterrorism policies, sanctions, and other policies by national, regional, and international bodies. All UN member states should heed the UN Secretary General's call and UNSC Resolution 2532 by pressing for immediate ceasefires to allow humanitarians to respond to COVID-19 and other needs.
- ▶ **Update the multilateral system to meet the triple threat of conflict, climate and COVID-19.** This triple threat requires coordinated, international responses given the global nature of these challenges and the weak response capacity in many of the most affected states. States should support a UN-led international coordinating mechanism to direct COVID-19 resources where they are most needed, promote a harmonized response and prevent famine. Longer term, the Global Health Security Agenda should be reformed and adapted to support sub-national and non-governmental standing capacity to detect, prevent and respond to infectious disease threats. Likewise, the international community must come together to curb climate change, including by strengthening local-level resilience to future shocks and ensuring protections for those displaced or otherwise on the move due to climate change. These measures will be insufficient to address record levels of need unless they are accompanied by meaningful diplomatic steps to end conflicts and reduce the risk of new conflicts emerging.
- ▶ **Break the cycle of impunity for civilian harm by restoring accountability for violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).** All governments should ensure their assistance to security partners includes clear conditionality for assistance tied to civilian protection, adherence to international humanitarian law, and accountability for abuses. UN member states and the UN Security Council should publicly condemn IHL violations by all parties to the conflicts and press for independent investigations into breaches of IHL, including full, published investigations into attacks that kill civilians or destroy civilian infrastructure.



**2021**

**WATCHLIST  
COUNTRY PROFILES**



## WATCHLIST COUNTRY PROFILES

The following pages contain profiles of all the countries on Watchlist 2021. They are divided into a ranked top ten and an unranked bottom half. Each country profile contains key facts and a qualitative description of the current situation in the country, as well as risks facing it in 2021. The profiles also feature a quantitative risk scorecard which illustrates both the probability of a human-driven or natural shock occurring and the likely impact that any shock would have given the existing pressures on the population and constraints on the country's ability to respond.

All scores in the scorecard are out of a maximum possible of ten. Please note that these scores only represent the quantitative aspects of the Watchlist's mixed quantitative and qualitative methodology. Some countries may therefore be ranked higher or lower than their scores alone might suggest. Read more about how the Watchlist was drawn up in the Annex

### PROBABILITY

**10** HUMAN THREAT

**5** NATURAL THREAT

The two "probability" scores indicate the likelihood of a human-driven or natural shock occurring in 2021.

**HUMAN THREAT** The probability of the country experiencing disruptive human-driven events such as political instability, armed conflict and/or economic collapse.

**NATURAL THREAT** The probability of the country experiencing natural events such as a flood, earthquake or storm.

### IMPACT

**8** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**8** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

The two "impact" scores illustrate the likelihood of any shock (conflict or natural) sparking a humanitarian crisis.

#### **CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE**

Whether a country has the governance structures and physical/communications infrastructure to respond effectively to a crisis.

#### **EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION**

The factors that are already putting pressure on the population in that country.

# 1. YEMEN

**Unrelenting conflict  
and risk of famine**



## KEY FACTS

Population: **29.8 million**

**24.3 million** people in need of humanitarian aid (80% of population)

**16.1 million** people facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+) in 2021 (54% of population)

**53.2%** child stunting due to malnutrition (second highest in world)

**20.5 million** people lack access to clean water and sanitation

**3.6 million** people internally displaced

**50%** of health facilities are not fully functional

**190th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**63%** increase in assaults and abuse targeting women since the conflict began

**167th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**168th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**5/5** score for severity of access constraints

**48%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Abdul Ghafar sits with his son Adbdullah in Mosuk Village, southern Yemen. When Adbdullah, 3, became sick his father took him to the IRC mobile health clinic where he received treatment for cholera and malnutrition.

## PROBABILITY

**10** HUMAN THREAT

**5** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**8** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**8** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Yemen tops the IRC's annual Emergency Watchlist for the third year in a row: a consequence of over five years of major armed conflict and severe underfunding that has pushed the world's largest humanitarian crisis to new lows in 2020 and left the humanitarian response on the brink of collapse.**

The conflict remains intense even after five years since the escalation of the war in 2015 following the Saudi and Emirati-led Coalition's intervention to support the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) against the Ansar Allah movement. Conflict between forces loyal to the IRG and Ansar Allah escalated in Jawf and Marib governorates throughout 2020. There is no sign of a political resolution to the crisis despite localized agreements over the past two years. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic and a steep drop in humanitarian funding puts the country at risk of massive further deterioration. Food insecurity is rising and 47,000 Yemenis are projected to face the worst ("catastrophe", IPC 5) levels of food insecurity in 2021, underlining the risk of famine.

"Yemen faces a triple threat from conflict, hunger, and a collapsing international response. COVID-19 is further exacerbating the world's largest humanitarian crisis, crippling global supply chains and worsening Yemen's food insecurity. At the end of 2020, malnutrition for children under 5 was the highest ever recorded, yet, in the face of an unprecedented threat, the world has turned its back on Yemen. Never before have Yemenis faced so little support from the international community – or so many simultaneous challenges."

- Abeer Fowzi  
Deputy Nutrition Coordinator, IRC Yemen



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Stalled peace efforts and competition for control of Yemen's oil fields put the country at risk of new rounds of escalation and even greater humanitarian needs.** The number of frontlines rose from 33 at the beginning of 2020 to 47 by October ([OCHA](#)). Marib governorate to the east of Sanaa, host to one million IDPs, saw an escalation towards the end of 2020 as Ansar Allah forces advanced towards IRG-controlled oil-producing areas ([OCHA](#)). The December 2018 Stockholm agreement between IRG and Ansar Allah remains largely unobserved, though there has been some progress on prisoner exchanges. Yemen's ever-deepening economic crisis and fuel shortages mean that Marib oil fields may be a particular focus for conflict in 2021. At least 90,000 people were displaced in Marib during 2020 and these numbers will rise if fighting spreads to more densely populated areas of the governorate in 2021 ([IOM](#)). Persistent tensions in southern Yemen between the IRG and fighters aligned with the Southern Transitional Council also spark sporadic clashes which threaten the lives and livelihoods of Yemenis.
- ▶ **Yemenis tell the IRC that they are more concerned about hunger than COVID-19, though the pandemic is increasing the risk of famine by deepening Yemen's economic crisis.** The war has destroyed many Yemenis' livelihoods at home and abroad, leaving over 80% of the population reliant on humanitarian assistance ([OCHA](#)). The Yemeni Rial has lost 25% of its value in 2020 alone while rising fuel prices and shortages drive up the cost of food and restrict humanitarian activities ([WFP](#)). Over 16 million Yemenis are expected to face crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity in 2021, with 47,000 at the highest "catastrophe" (IPC 5) level ([IPC Info](#)). With COVID-19 further limiting economic activity, WFP has warned that many Yemenis could face famine in 2021 ([WFP](#)). Moreover, women and girls are likely to be particularly affected. 1 million pregnant women are malnourished and 120,000 women and girls are at risk of violence ([UNFPA](#)).
- ▶ **Parties to the conflict in Yemen often disregard their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian access.** The [Yemen Data Project](#) finds that 40% of deaths in airstrikes since 2015 have occurred in residential areas. This means that Yemenis are more likely to be killed in their homes than any other location. Hospitals, homes, bridges and other critical civilian infrastructure are regularly damaged or destroyed by fighting; only half of Yemen's medical facilities are still fully functional ([OCHA](#)). The conflict's wider impacts are even more deadly and have long-term implications for the country's recovery; UNDP research finds the majority of deaths in the conflict are due to indirect impacts of conflict - and decisions by parties to it - particularly reduced access to health services, food and infrastructure ([UNDP](#)).
- ▶ **The humanitarian response faces unprecedented threats from underfunding, on top of one of the world's most challenging operating environments.** OCHA estimated that 19.1 million people in need were in hard-to-reach areas by August 2020 due to insecurity and/or bureaucratic constraints ([OCHA](#)). Bureaucratic measures - imposed by all parties to the conflict - threaten the humanitarian response, such as slow approval processes for life-saving programming. Moreover, humanitarian funding dropped significantly in 2020, forcing 31 out of 41 major UN programs to reduce or close down entirely ([OCHA](#)) and the WFP to halve food rations for 8.5 million people ([WFP](#)). As a result, [3 million](#) fewer Yemenis were receiving aid each month by late 2020 compared to the response at the beginning of the year. There are profound concerns about whether there will be enough money to pay for critical humanitarian action in 2021.
- ▶ **An avoidable disaster at the Safer oil tanker could cause catastrophic disruptions to economic activity and humanitarian action.** The Safer tanker is currently in use as an export terminal near Yemen's largest port, Hodeidah. Years of poor maintenance mean it could cause an oil spill four times larger than the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster, resulting in long-term disruption to Hodeidah port and the fishing industry, as well as incalculable environmental damage ([ACAPS](#)). Hodeidah port handles about 70% of Yemen's commercial and humanitarian imports so a leak could cause food prices in Yemen to double and fuel prices to triple ([UNEP](#)).

### THE IRC IN YEMEN

The IRC has been working in Yemen since 2012. The IRC is one of the largest non-governmental health actors in Yemen and supports primary health facilities, emergency obstetric and newborn care centers and hundreds of health workers. The IRC's programming also includes therapeutic feeding programs, cash transfers and livelihood programs, services for women and children who have experienced violence, water infrastructure rehabilitation and education for out of school children.. In response to COVID-19, the IRC is supporting the establishment of a COVID-19 isolation unit. Learn more about the [IRC's Yemen response](#).



## 2. AFGHANISTAN

Stalled peace process under threat



### KEY FACTS

Population: **38.9 million**

**18.4 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**16.9 million** people facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**3 million** people internally displaced due to conflict and violence

**1.2 million** IDPs due to natural disasters

**2.8 million** Afghan refugees

**6,000** civilian casualties in the first three quarters of 2020

**130th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**50.8%** of women over 15 report they have ever experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner

**166th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**176th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**4/5** score for severity of access constraints

**45%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Children playing at an IRC Safe Healing and Learning Space in Deh Surkh, Qala-e-Naw, Afghanistan.

### PROBABILITY

**10** HUMAN THREAT

**7** NATURAL THREAT

### IMPACT

**8** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**9** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Afghanistan has risen to second on Watchlist because of its high exposure to the triple threats of conflict, COVID-19 and climate change and uncertainty over the stalled peace process between the government and the Taliban.**

Even after four decades of crises, humanitarian needs in Afghanistan are growing rapidly amid COVID-19 and unrelenting violence, with the number of people in need for 2021 nearly doubling compared to early 2020. Needs could rise rapidly in 2021 if intra-Afghan peace talks fail to make progress, particularly amid uncertainty about the continued US military presence in the country. The global pandemic and climate-related disasters are exacerbating needs for Afghans, many of whom have lived through decades of conflict, chronic poverty, economic crises, and protracted displacement. Some armed groups oppose the peace talks and so the security situation in Afghanistan will remain volatile regardless of that process, with violence continuing to drive humanitarian needs and civilian casualties.

"The people of Afghanistan have little opportunity to build an income and improve their lives. When Afghans cannot provide for their family, we see the surge in violence against the most vulnerable family members. This forces many families, including children, to risk their lives in desperate attempts to leave Afghanistan and seek safer, better lives elsewhere. A peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict is the only sustainable solution to meeting chronic need in Afghanistan."

- Vicki Aken  
Country Director, IRC Afghanistan



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Political uncertainty is likely to dominate 2021 and incentivize conflict between the Taliban and Afghan government forces.** The US-Taliban deal of early 2020 has been followed by stalled intra-Afghan talks, but the US has nonetheless signalled it intends to continue reducing troop numbers in Afghanistan. If progress in the talks remains elusive, both sides may try to improve their negotiating position with military gains on the ground - or the process could break down entirely. Fighting in late 2020 in Helmand province displaced 35,000 and could indicate a larger escalation in conflict that is likely to carry into 2021 ([OCHA](#)). If a deal is reached, 2021 could see reduced levels of violence, though the Islamic State and other non-state armed groups would continue to act as spoilers, so conflict would remain a persistent driver of needs.
- ▶ **Civilians and humanitarians are likely to continue bearing the brunt of the conflict. Afghanistan remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for civilians and aid workers.** While overall casualties fell in 2020 due to the reduction in violence around the US-Taliban deal, fatalities from incidents recorded by [ACLED](#) as “violence against civilians” have increased relative to 2019 and 2018. October 2020 saw higher civilian fatalities than the same month in any of the previous three years. Meanwhile, 278,000 people were displaced in the first 10 months of 2020 ([OCHA](#)). Conflict dynamics also threaten the humanitarian response. Attacks forced 38 health facilities to close in 2020 despite the pandemic ([WHO](#)). Meanwhile, access constraints by key parties to the conflict drastically increased in the months after the COVID-19 outbreak compared to the same period a year earlier ([OCHA](#)).
- ▶ **COVID-19 has pushed Afghans at home and abroad into poverty, making food insecurity likely to continue to grow in 2021.** Lockdowns in neighboring states contributed to growing returns; 573,000 Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan by September – a 53% increase compared to the same period in 2019 ([OCHA](#)). Within Afghanistan, 59% of households saw their income reduced due to the pandemic ([OCHA](#)) and an additional 6 million people could face poverty ([WFP](#)). 3 million more people could become food insecure due to the pandemic ([WFP](#)) with 42% of the country expected to face crisis or worse levels of food insecurity in 2021, making it the fifth-highest food insecurity crisis in terms of proportion of the population affected ([OCHA](#)).
- ▶ **Women are disproportionately affected by crises.** The country ranks as the second worst country for women ([WPS Index](#)). Women and children have made up nearly [45%](#) of civilian casualties in the first nine months of this year. A new [IRC/UN Women survey](#) in Afghanistan finds women are also disproportionately affected by COVID-19, particularly due to cultural barriers to health services and work in the formal sector; 48% of women in the formal sector are working fewer hours and 63% of women in the informal sector have lost their jobs since the beginning of the pandemic. IRC staff report concerning increases in child labor, violence against women and children and early marriage. COVID-19's wider crises and the exclusion of women from meaningful participation in the peace process threatens to roll back critical and fragile gains made in gender equality.
- ▶ **Climate impacts are exacerbating needs and displacements.** Afghanistan is prone to natural disasters, and the likelihood of extreme weather events is rising due to climate change. Afghanistan is ranked in the ten countries globally most vulnerable to climate change ([ND-GAIN](#)). An estimated 1.1 million people remain displaced due to natural disasters ([IDMC](#)) and around half of the districts in Afghanistan experienced a natural disaster in 2020, affecting over 110,000 people ([OCHA](#)).

### THE IRC IN AFGHANISTAN

The IRC has been working in Afghanistan for over three decades (since 1988) providing aid to the most vulnerable. We work with thousands of villages across nine provinces, reaching over one million people each year with education, protection, water and sanitation, emergency response, and economic recovery programs. The IRC is responding to COVID-19 and other health needs by supporting over 100 health facilities, installing hand-washing stations at communal gathering points and providing information and training sessions about COVID-19. Having expanded our protection and women's protection and empowerment activities in recent years, the IRC is now a leading actor in the protection field in Afghanistan. Learn more about the [IRC's Afghanistan response](#).



## 3. SYRIA

The deadliest place for humanitarians



### KEY FACTS

Population: **17.5 million**

**13 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**6.6 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+) before COVID-19

**6.7 million** people internally displaced

**5.6 million** Syrian refugees, including almost **two-thirds** of the health workforce

**90%** of Syrians live below the poverty line

**50%** of health facilities are fully functional

**188th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**165th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**146th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**5/5** score for severity of access constraints

**55%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: A family in their tent in Areesha camp in northeast Syria, where the IRC runs a primary health, reproductive health and mental health program for camp residents.

### PROBABILITY

**10** HUMAN THREAT

**6** NATURAL THREAT

### IMPACT

**6** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**7** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**2021 marks a decade of conflict in Syria. Despite its protracted nature the crisis continues to reach new lows as conflict, displacement and needs grow, while humanitarians' cross-border access to people in need is increasingly constrained.**

Conflict in Syria is fought all too often with disregard for International Humanitarian Law. Attacks on civilians, aid workers, and civilian infrastructure remain common as parties to the conflict act with impunity. Many civilians have been left living in perpetual conflict zones and displaced multiple times, while the health system has been decimated. Ten years of war has undermined Syrians' ability to cope with the latest challenges wrought by COVID-19 and a growing economic crisis. In the face of rising need, humanitarians are confronted with an increasingly challenging operating environment and severely and increasingly constrained humanitarian access.

"The pandemic is just one of many challenges that IRC's teams and the people we serve have had to contend with over the past ten years. Through everything, we keep going. If people need help, our team is there to provide it. Even when they themselves are facing the worst, our staff's motivation doesn't stop – and it is their unrelenting dedication and determination to help people that makes our response inside Syria possible."

- Taj-aldein Alkaisi  
Area Coordinator, IRC Syria



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Conflict in the northwest is the most likely trigger for major instability in 2021, as the security situation remains volatile even after a decade of conflict.** Fighting in late 2019 and early 2020 forced nearly one million people to flee their homes in the largest displacement in the war yet and many IDPs have been displaced multiple times, eroding their coping capacity ([UN](#)). The situation in the northwest remains volatile and it deteriorated once again in late 2020, raising the risk of major new offensives by the Government of Syria in 2021, particularly if the fragile Turkish-Russian ceasefire that reduced hostilities in 2020 breaks down. Meanwhile, Islamic State remains active in the northeast. Government-controlled areas in the south could also see an escalation in conflict if localized truces break down under the additional stress of COVID-19 and the economic crisis.
- ▶ **COVID-19 is compounding what was already the worst economic crisis to hit Syria since the conflict began.** The banking crisis in Lebanon since 2019 has worsened Syria's economic crisis. Fuel, water and food prices are all rising. Food prices have risen nearly 240% in a year, reaching record levels ([WFP](#)). 9.3 million Syrians - more than ever before - suffer from food insecurity and an additional 2.2 million are at risk of becoming food insecure ([WFP](#)). IRC teams already report a rise in child labor and people begging in the streets. The economic crisis is also affecting the humanitarian response; fuel shortages, inflation and banking restrictions in neighboring states will undermine humanitarians' ability to move at the scale and pace required over the next year.
- ▶ **Syrian women and children will be particularly affected by the continuing impact of COVID-19.** The pandemic has already led to increased child labour, gender-based violence, child marriage, and other forms of exploitation ([UNFPA](#)). Syria is also the third least equal country for women ([WPS index](#)) and ranks seventh lowest on [UNDP's Gender Development Index](#), indicating that women are lagging far behind men on human development measures. Women in Syria have higher levels of poverty than men ([UNFPA](#)) and so the economic impacts of COVID-19 and the banking crisis in neighboring Lebanon are likely to have a particular impact on women too.
- ▶ **Syria is the deadliest country in the world for humanitarians and both security threats and bureaucratic restrictions will diminish humanitarian action in 2021.** Syria had the world's highest number of attacks on aid workers and most aid worker deaths in 2019 ([Aid Worker Security Database](#)). ACAPS also gave Syria a maximum score of 5 for constraints on humanitarian access ([ACAPS](#)). Already, around 50% of health facilities have been damaged or closed ([WHO](#)) and now border closures are limiting the ability of Syrians to access treatment abroad. Humanitarians and civilian infrastructure continue to come under attack, with health facilities targeted even during the pandemic.
- ▶ **Humanitarians' ability to access people in need in Syria from neighboring countries is increasingly restricted.** In 2020 the UN Security Council failed to re-authorize UN agencies' continued usage of three out of the four border crossings they had relied on since the Council first authorized the cross-border response in 2014. This decision has already significantly constrained the humanitarian response given the lack of direct, efficient alternatives to cross border access. Over four million Syrians relied on cross-border operations to receive humanitarian aid. The COVID-19 and broader health response has been particularly affected by the closure of the Yaroubiya crossing, which was a vital lifeline for medical supplies from Iraq into the northeast. The authorization for the final crossing expires mid-2021. The current loss in access - and any further reduction - will prevent humanitarians from meeting all needs in 2021 and scaling up if the crisis worsens, as expected.

### THE IRC IN SYRIA

The IRC has been working in Syria since 2012, responding to needs in northwest and northeast Syria. We support health facilities and mobile health teams with life-saving trauma, primary, reproductive and mental health services. We are now promoting COVID-19 awareness campaigns and training health workers in infection prevention and control. IRC teams also support the most vulnerable with food and cash distributions and help women and children through safe spaces, case management and psychosocial support. Through our early childhood development program, we support children's cognitive and socio-emotional skills. The IRC also supports Syrian refugees in Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon. Learn more about the [IRC's Syria response](#).



## 4. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Record number of people facing severe food insecurity

### KEY FACTS

Population: **89.6 million**

**19.6 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**21.8 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**5.5 million** people internally displaced

**161st** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**50.7%** of women over 15 report they have ever experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner

**161st** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**177th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**4/5** score for severity of access constraints

**35%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Dr. Sylvie Musema Ngimba, an IRC staff doctor, delivers personal protective equipment to a local health facility in Beni, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo.

### PROBABILITY

**8** HUMAN THREAT

**5** NATURAL THREAT

### IMPACT

**9** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**9** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) ranks in the top five of Watchlist for the third year in the row, reflecting persistent volatility in a country that is now in its fourth decade of a major humanitarian crisis.**

The DRC has experienced a protracted humanitarian crisis - the east of the country has hosted a major response for over 30 years - and yet the humanitarian situation is still constantly evolving and deteriorating, principally due to conflict. There are now more people facing crisis (IPC 3) or worse levels of food insecurity in the DRC than has ever been recorded in any country. The DRC faces other major challenges on top of large-scale violence: 2020 saw the conclusion of the DRC's tenth Ebola outbreak in eastern DRC, the start and end of the country's eleventh Ebola outbreak in western DRC and the arrival of COVID-19. Conflict, economic struggles and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are all driving up food insecurity.

"Years of insecurity and the multiple humanitarian needs make the DRC a complex operating environment. It is imperative that we are able to balance the requirements of battling pre-existing health and protection needs for the most vulnerable, especially women and children, whilst simultaneously preventing and containing the effects of new shocks such as COVID-19. With the long history of our presence in DRC, the IRC is well placed to engage and mobilise communities as part of our response programming."

- Nelly Moleka  
Deputy Director of Programs, IRC DRC



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Conflict involving an array of local armed groups, often vying for control of natural resources, will continue to affect many parts of eastern DRC, driving humanitarian needs and making the country one of the most dangerous for civilians and humanitarians.** In the first half of 2020, over 1.4 million people were displaced by conflict in eastern DRC, mostly in North Kivu and Ituri; this total is second only to Syria globally ([IDMC](#)). The enduring presence of dozens of armed groups across eastern DRC means such insecurity is likely to continue in 2021, particularly if they come to see the proposed reduction in the size of the DRC peacekeeping force, MONUSCO, as an opportunity to expand their influence. Additionally, the northeastern province of Ituri has seen increased violence largely along ethnic lines since 2018, although the reasons for the escalation remain opaque, and this instability is likely to continue into 2021. The DRC was the second deadliest of the Watchlist countries for civilians in 2020, with over 1,800 deaths in the first three-quarters of the year ([ACLED](#)). It also saw the second highest number of aid workers being kidnapped in 2020 (33 as of writing), after only Mali ([AWSO](#)).
- ▶ **Conflict, economic collapse and the COVID-19 pandemic could push food insecurity to famine levels.** 21.8 million people are experiencing Crisis (IPC 3) or higher levels of food insecurity ([IPC Info](#)) - a 40% rise compared to the last food insecurity assessment from mid-2019 and the highest absolute number ever recorded in any country ([OCHA](#)). Conflict-driven displacements are a major cause of food insecurity since families often have to abandon their agricultural activities. IRC teams in the DRC have noted that COVID-19 restrictions are likely responsible for a 15% drop in children being treated for malnutrition in 2020 despite the rapidly rising food insecurity ([IRC](#)). The DRC is also one of the ten countries globally most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change ([ND-GAIN](#)) and COVID-19 has further weakened the Congolese economy, making it more difficult for families to meet their needs.
- ▶ **Multiple diseases will continue to spread, not just COVID-19.** The DRC's eleventh Ebola outbreak was declared over in November 2020, and was far smaller (119 confirmed cases and 55 deaths - [WHO](#)) than the tenth outbreak – which killed 2,287 people in North Kivu and Ituri between mid-2018 and mid-2020 ([WHO](#)). In mid-2020 Congolese health authorities also announced the end of a 25-month measles outbreak that had killed over 7,000 children. Weak health infrastructure in many areas, particularly low vaccination coverage, means that disease outbreaks are a constant risk for 2021, though the DRC now has significant expertise in containing outbreaks.
- ▶ **Needs are growing rapidly yet funding for the humanitarian response is falling.** 19.6 million people will be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2021, making it the third-largest humanitarian crisis ([OCHA](#)). However, the HRP has become more underfunded each year since 2015. Just 35% of the humanitarian funding required for 2020 has been received to date ([FTS](#)), raising questions about whether many needs can actually be met.

### THE IRC IN DRC

The IRC has operated in the DRC for over two decades (since 1996). We provide life-saving services related to health, epidemic control, water, sanitation, and support for survivors of violence. We work with communities on peace-building projects aimed at conflict reduction and economic recovery. The IRC has launched emergency responses to contain Ebola outbreaks in recent years, including the latest Ebola outbreak in western DRC. The IRC's response to COVID-19, Ebola, and other health crises includes training health workers, rehabilitating hospitals and clinics, and providing essential medicine. Learn more about the [IRC's DRC Response](#).



# 5. ETHIOPIA

New conflict threatens the region



## KEY FACTS

Population: **115.0 million**

**21.3 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**8.5 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**1.8 million** people internally displaced

**792,000** refugees hosted, mostly from South Sudan (359,000), Somalia (201,000) and Eritrea (179,000)

**84th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**121st** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**157th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**3/5** score for severity of access constraints (before escalation in Tigray)

**55%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: The IRC constructed a water point in Tuli Guled in Ethiopia's Somali region, allowing Anab Farah to spend more time working on her family farm as she used to walk six hours to collect water.

## PROBABILITY

**7** HUMAN THREAT

**5** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**7** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**8** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Ethiopia features on the Watchlist for the third year in a row but rises into the top five for the first time due to escalating conflict. At the same time, climate change, desert locusts and the COVID-19 pandemic all further deepen the challenges facing the country in 2021, and drive up the number of people in need to the second highest in the world.**

Ethiopia enters 2021 with a major confrontation underway in the northern Tigray region between the federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which rules the Tigray region and was a key power in Addis Ababa until recently. Conflict in Tigray has already sparked a rapid increase in humanitarian needs and has the potential to allow instability to grow in other parts of Ethiopia as well. The rapid deterioration in the situation in Tigray comes at a particularly delicate time for the country. COVID-19 has exacerbated needs, particularly for communities that had already been affected by conflict and natural events. Similar shocks are likely to recur in 2021 due to climate change, political tensions, and the fact that Ethiopia is at the epicenter of the biggest locust outbreak in living memory, which could severely worsen food insecurity in the year ahead.

"In 2020 severe flooding, desert locusts, the COVID-19 pandemic, and internal conflicts have pushed Ethiopia into an extremely vulnerable and precarious state, placing additional burdens on many families whose coping capacities were already stretched. With over 21 million people already in need of humanitarian assistance and this number now rising due to the crisis in Tigray, we must ensure that nothing disrupts humanitarian access and programming, rather in this context we are morally obliged to strive to expand the scale, reach and efficiency of our efforts to address the needs of the community."

- Richard Data  
Interim Deputy Director Emergencies, IRC Ethiopia



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Conflict in the Tigray region is driving a rapid rise in humanitarian needs, including refugee movements into Sudan, amid allegations of violence against civilians.** Tensions that had been growing steadily between the federal government in Addis Ababa and the TPLF in Tigray escalated rapidly in November 2020, when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed accused the TPLF of attacking a military base. [Amnesty International](#) has also documented allegations of at least one massacre of civilians since fighting escalated in Tigray. The situation is still evolving rapidly, but the UN has estimated that 9 million people are living in areas that could be affected by fighting ([OCHA](#)). The IRC and other NGOs working in Tigray are planning for as many as 2 million people to be displaced internally and for around 400,000 to flee to Sudan.
- ▶ **The conflict in Tigray and enduring political tensions increase the risk of greater conflict in other parts of Ethiopia as well.** The factors that have contributed to conflict in Tigray are also present in many other parts of Ethiopia, in particular political tensions sparked by the political transition that started with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed coming to office in 2018 and longstanding border disputes between regions formed along ethnic lines. Elections due to be held in 2021 mean that political tensions are likely to remain elevated. Moreover, if the federal security forces are focused in Tigray then armed groups in other parts of the country may be emboldened to step up their activities. The conflict in Tigray, particularly if it becomes prolonged, consequently has the potential to spark far wider instability in Ethiopia - and in neighboring countries, given Ethiopia's powerful role in the region, particularly Somalia.
- ▶ **COVID-19 is driving a massive increase in humanitarian needs.** Even before the outbreak of conflict in Tigray, which is likely to compound the economic challenges facing Ethiopia, the number of people in need had more than doubled during 2020, from 7 million before COVID-19 to 16.5 million by mid-2020 ([OCHA](#)). Ethiopia is second only to Yemen for the total number of people in need in 2021 ([GHO](#)). Rising need was primarily driven by the way COVID-19 limited economic activities and increased unemployment while interrupting the education of more than 26 million children across the country ([OCHA](#)). The [IMF](#) is now estimating that GDP growth will drop to 0% in 2021.
- ▶ **Ethiopia is the epicenter of the largest locust outbreak in decades.** Unusually good summer rains led to numerous new swarms forming in October 2020 ([FAO](#)). At least 1 million Ethiopians suffered crop losses due to the locusts ([OCHA](#)). As a result, 11 million Ethiopians are forecast to be facing crisis (IPC 3 or higher) levels of food insecurity in the first half of 2021 ([IPC Info](#)). Children are particularly affected; the number of children admitted to health facilities for Severe Acute Malnutrition already reached record levels in 2020 ([OCHA](#)). Efforts to control the locust swarms are underway, but the scale of the challenge and the reality that locust control activities are impossible in parts of neighboring Somalia - and may be disrupted by conflict in Tigray - mean that there is a real risk of further growth in locust numbers and major disruption to agricultural activities in 2021, which would significantly worsen food insecurity. Moreover, one million people were affected and [30,000](#) people displaced by flooding in 2020 alone ([OCHA](#)) and, with climate change increasing the frequency of extreme weather patterns, 2021 may also see major natural-driven emergencies.

### THE IRC IN ETHIOPIA

The IRC provides a wide range of assistance for refugees living in camps and for vulnerable Ethiopian communities throughout the country who have been affected by drought, flooding, conflict and COVID-19. We distribute cash and basic emergency supplies, build and maintain safe water supply systems and sanitation facilities and deliver protection services to women and girls. The IRC also supports government partners and community workers in primary healthcare clinics, constructs classrooms and trains teachers and provides livelihoods-related training and job opportunities to youth and vulnerable households. Learn more about the [IRC's Ethiopia response](#).



• ADDIS ABABA

# 6. BURKINA FASO

The world's fastest growing displacement crisis



## KEY FACTS

Population: **20.9 million**

**3.5 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**1.6 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**1 million** people internally displaced

**145th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**136th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**159th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**3/5** score for severity of access constraints

**55%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

## PROBABILITY

**7** HUMAN THREAT

**4** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**7** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**8** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Burkina Faso entered the IRC's Watchlist for the first time last year and it is now ranked at six as conflict activity continues to rise rapidly and spread, driving steep increases in humanitarian need, one of the world's fastest growing displacement crises and - with COVID-19 - bringing a risk of famine.**

Just two years ago, Burkina Faso faced virtually no mass conflict or displacement. But in the first half of 2020, the country reported the third-largest increase in IDPs in the world - surpassed only by Syria and the DRC ([IDMC](#)). Over 1 million Burkinabes are now internally displaced, more than double the number at the start of 2020, as a result of violence involving both militant groups and communal militias ([UN](#)). Food security has deteriorated significantly at the same time, and the [UN](#) is now warning of a risk of famine. With conflict activity continuing to spread, needs are set to grow even further in 2021 and will be compounded by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Although newly established in Burkina Faso, the IRC carries out multiple successful emergency response activities. Unfortunately, the scale of the crisis is rapidly growing and the resources to respond to it remain below expectations. If this crisis persists without adequate resources and funding, poor access to basic social services will leave thousands of people vulnerable to extreme poverty."

- Dr. Leonard Kiema  
Health and Nutrition Coordinator, IRC Burkina Faso



Above: The IRC distributes soap and helps train community members in northern Burkina Faso to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Conflict involving a complex array of government forces, local militias and militant groups may spread across even more of the country, affecting a larger share of the population.** Since 2018, militant activity has grown rapidly and become particularly entrenched in northern and eastern parts of Burkina Faso, in turn sparking conflict with local self-defense groups and militias. During 2020, violence has also spread to other parts of the country. The authorities' increasing reliance on communal militias to fight militant groups may actually have contributed to the growing conflict by feeding cycles of retaliatory violence along communal lines, in particular between farming and herding groups ([International Crisis Group](#)). Burkina Faso is now the epicenter of violence in the Central Sahel region and there is a risk of instability spreading from the country into other neighboring states, such as Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.
- ▶ **The conflict is increasingly deadly for civilians and disruptive to critical services.** Data from [ACLED](#) shows a 660% rise in fatalities caused by incidents identified as "violence against civilians", rising from 173 in 2018 to 1,319 in 2019. In the first nine months of 2020, Burkina Faso saw the third-highest civilian deaths (886) of all Watchlist countries and the fifth highest globally ([ACLED](#)). A wide range of militant groups, communal militias and official security forces are implicated in the killings, which have remained at similarly high levels so far in 2020 and appear set to persist into 2021. Meanwhile, nearly 300 local health centers are closed or are restricting services due to the conflict, limiting the healthcare that 1.1 million people can obtain ([ECHO](#)). Children are particularly affected; over 2,500 schools are shut, depriving 350,000 children of an education ([OCHA](#)) while over one third of children are at risk of protection concerns, including recruitment by armed groups and forced labour ([OCHA](#)).
- ▶ **There is a risk of famine due to the conflict and disruption to markets from COVID-19.** Even before the pandemic, an IRC assessment found that populations in conflict-affected areas were at risk from disease outbreaks and malnutrition because families were struggling to afford enough food to eat ([IRC](#)). Conflict is the key factor driving up food insecurity but COVID-19 has made it even harder for many Burkinabes to afford enough food, and the country is now at risk of famine ([FAO-WFP](#)). The number of people facing Crisis (IPC 3) or worse levels of food insecurity has more than tripled compared to pre-COVID levels ([WFP](#)). At least 11,000 Burkinabes are now experiencing the worst (IPC 5, "catastrophe") levels of food insecurity ([WFP](#)) - levels only seen in Yemen and Burkina Faso. Food insecurity is likely to grow in the next year, particularly in the conflict-affected north of the country, and Burkina Faso is one of four countries at risk of famine ([WFP](#)).

### THE IRC IN BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso is the IRC's newest country program, launched in 2019 following an emergency response. The IRC's response started in Djibo, which hosts a large IDP population. We are delivering clean water, bolstering sanitation services, and have established a primary healthcare program, which includes reproductive healthcare and community-based services devoted to childhood illnesses and disease prevention. Learn more about the [IRC's Burkina Faso response](#).



OUAGADOUGOU

# 7. SOUTH SUDAN

Recovery from civil war at risk



## KEY FACTS

Population: **11.2 million**

**7.5 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**7-8 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**2.6 million** people internally displaced

**2.2 million** South Sudanese refugees

**305,000** refugees hosted, mostly from Sudan

**180th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**163rd** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**4/5** score for severity of access constraints

**51%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Ongoing conflict in South Sudan has forced thousands to flee their homes. Many have fled through the swamps to seek safety on "islands" where they live without access to food, clean water or healthcare. The IRC works in the areas surrounding Nyal to provide primary and reproductive healthcare and protection services to the locals and displaced South Sudanese.

## PROBABILITY

**7** HUMAN THREAT

**4** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**10** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**10** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**South Sudan's high ranking on Watchlist is driven by widespread and complex humanitarian needs and a fragile peace deal that could unravel under the additional strain of COVID-19.**

COVID-19 has arrived in South Sudan at a particularly delicate moment. A new unity government took office in early 2020 and faces the challenge of leading the country's recovery from large-scale civil conflict amid persistent localized conflict, economic crises and now an unprecedented pandemic. The COVID-19 outbreak is occurring in one of the world's weakest health systems and driving wider economic and food insecurity crises. The country is one of four countries at risk of famine.

"South Sudan is recovering from decades of conflict as a new government struggles to strengthen systems and help citizens rebuild their lives. Women and girls have faced one of the highest levels of violence around the globe and require a major increase in protection services. I am proud to work with the IRC to support survivors' physical and psychological wellbeing. The ability to work with people, whose smiles have been robbed, and give them hope and a reason to smile again is extremely rewarding."

- Elijah Gatchang  
Women's Protection and Empowerment Manager,  
IRC South Sudan

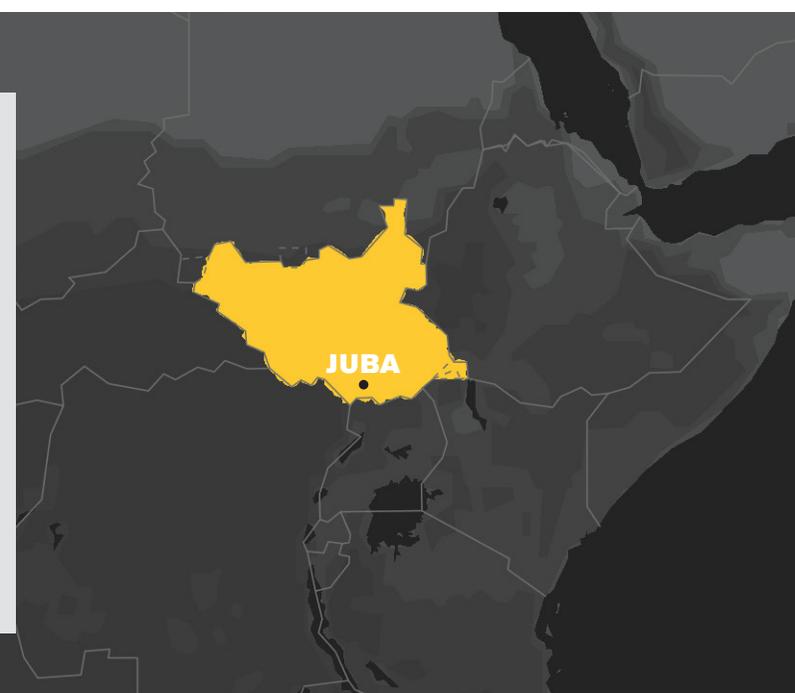


## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **The 2018 peace deal remains fragile going into 2021 and even if it holds, localized conflict will continue, with civilian populations and humanitarians caught in the middle.** The government signed an agreement with armed groups, particularly the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition, in 2018, contributing to reduced violence since. While the drop in conflict is a promising sign for 2021, there are still armed groups that reject the peace deal and so continue to fight the government. Tensions in the new unity government (formed in February 2020) could also worsen as COVID-19-induced economic downturns and drops in oil prices constrain the government's ability to implement the peace deal, whose implementation is already heavily delayed. In a worst-case scenario, a resumption of larger scale conflict could occur given the fragile nature of the peace deal.
- ▶ **Civilians and aid workers continue to face harm.** [ACLED](#) recorded over 500 fatalities in "violence against civilians" incidents in the first nine months of 2020, making South Sudan the tenth deadliest country for civilians in the world - though many incidents likely go unreported. Women and girls face particular risks; previous IRC research found that up to 65% of women and girls interviewed had experienced physical or sexual violence ([IRC](#)). South Sudan also had the second-highest number of attacks on aid workers in 2019 and topped the list in each of the previous five years ([AWSO](#)). Humanitarian access is "very highly constrained" according to [ACAPS](#), reflecting high levels of violence against aid workers, ongoing hostilities and restrictions on movement within the country and efforts by parties to the conflict to interfere with humanitarian assistance.
- ▶ **A perfect storm of crises - persistent conflict, desert locust swarms, an economic crisis, recurrent flooding and COVID-19 - is driving up food insecurity and increasing the risk of famine in 2021** ([WFP](#)). These factors leave populations displaced, crops destroyed and livelihoods lost, with flooding alone affecting over half the country's counties and 800,000 people in 2020 ([OCHA](#)). Since the arrival of COVID-19, the daily income spent on food has risen 27%, requiring 186% of income and making South Sudan the most expensive place in the world for food relative to average income ([WFP](#)). Much of the population cannot withstand these additional shocks. As a result, more than half of the population is currently facing acute food insecurity ([IPC Info](#)). Children are likely to suffer most, given that South Sudan already has one of the world's highest rates for child malnutrition.
- ▶ **COVID-19 threatens to exacerbate the country's health crises, given its extremely low coping capacity.** More than half of the population has no access to primary health services, which, alongside limited access to clean water, poor sanitation services and extremely low immunization rates, has left the population highly susceptible to diseases like COVID-19 ([OCHA](#)). In fact, NGOs provide 80% of the country's health services ([OCHA](#)). Before COVID-19, 44% of the population was at risk from diseases ([OCHA](#)) and 75% of child deaths were due to preventable diseases ([OCHA](#)). The pandemic is now stretching health services, while also derailing vaccination campaigns and other routine care. People may be deterred from seeking non-COVID care due to fear of infection and misinformation; IRC-supported clinics reported a 19% drop in patients for acute malnutrition despite growing food insecurity ([IRC](#)).

### THE IRC IN SOUTH SUDAN

The IRC is one of the largest aid providers in South Sudan, operating there for over 30 years and delivering emergency assistance and supporting vulnerable populations in hard-to-reach areas. Our health response includes capacity building in state clinics, training of local health workers, nutrition programs, and sanitation services. We also provide support to survivors of sexual violence and child protection services. Community leaders and government officials are trained on the importance of upholding human rights. The IRC helps empower people through cash assistance, job and livelihoods training. Learn more about the [IRC's South Sudan response](#).



JUBA

# 8. NIGERIA

## Conflict and famine risk in the northeast



### KEY FACTS

Population: **206.1 million**

**8.9 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**8.7 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**1.2 million** people living in areas “inaccessible” to humanitarians

**2.8 million** people internally displaced

**300,000** Nigerian refugees, mostly in Niger and Cameroon

**50%** of health facilities in the northeast are fully functional

**96th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**145th** (of 167 countries) for women’s equality

**160th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**4/5** score for severity of access constraints

**50%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Hawwa and her young twins at the IRC stabilization center for severely acutely malnourished children in Maiduguri, NE Nigeria.

### PROBABILITY

**8** HUMAN THREAT

**4** NATURAL THREAT

### IMPACT

**7** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**7** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Nigeria’s ranking among the top ten on Watchlist is primarily due to the crisis in the northeast, where humanitarian needs are only growing and deepening after ten years of conflict.**

The main humanitarian crisis in Nigeria is in the northeast, where violence is still growing even after years of conflict, driving large-scale displacement and high levels of food insecurity. Civilians are bearing the brunt of the conflict; Nigeria was the deadliest crisis for civilians in 2020 out of all twenty Watchlist countries. Violence has also been rising in other parts of northern Nigeria, particularly in the northwest where signs of militant activity are starting to emerge. COVID-19 threatens to create famine conditions in the northeast in 2021, while protests against police brutality have sparked unrest in Lagos and other major cities in late 2020 that could continue into 2021. Despite rising needs, Nigeria remains a challenging operating environment for humanitarians.

“Northeast Nigeria has suffered volatile humanitarian crisis for over a decade with high levels of poverty, malnutrition and disease outbreaks now exacerbated by COVID-19. Growing conflict and severe weather shocks in recent years have increased displacement and restricted humanitarian access. Being a Nigerian citizen from Borno state, one of the areas worst hit by conflict, I have personally witnessed the level of suffering and humanitarian crisis. Whilst the situation is dire and seems to continue unabated, I consider myself very privileged to be on the forefront providing humanitarian services and giving back to my community.”

- Fatima Baba Isa  
Senior Health Capacity Building Officer, IRC Nigeria

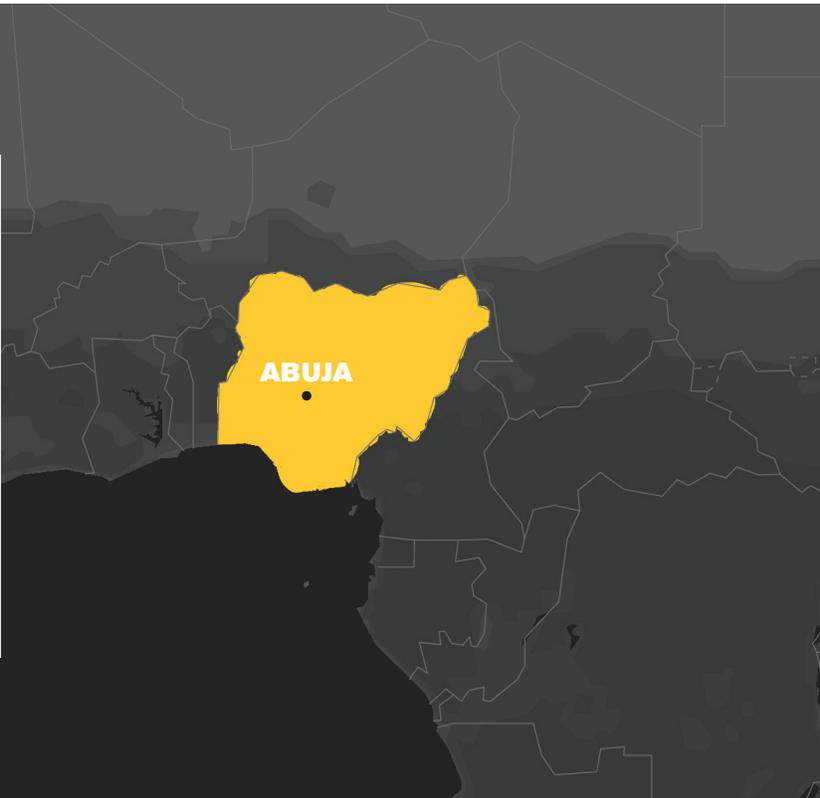


## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Conflict in the northeast is escalating, driving greater humanitarian needs.** 8.9 million people - two thirds of the region's population of 13.4 million - are in need of assistance ([OCHA](#)). A decade of conflict has also decimated civilian infrastructure, leaving hospitals, schools, water and sanitation systems and other basic infrastructure damaged, reducing basic services for vulnerable populations. Despite the protracted nature of the crisis, conflict is once again increasing in intensity - a trend that may well continue into 2021. Indeed, the first nine months saw more fatalities from violence against civilians in the northeastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe than during the same period in any year since 2015 ([ACLED](#)).
- ▶ **Conflict involving communal and criminal groups is growing in northern and northwest Nigeria.** Violence from incidents identified by ACLED as targeting civilians killed more people in the northern states of Kaduna and Katsina in the first nine months of 2020 (699) than the northeastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe have seen in any full year since 2015 ([ACLED](#)). Moreover there are preliminary indications of militant groups from elsewhere in the region starting to establish a presence in northwest Nigeria, which could be a sign of greater and protracted insecurity to come ([International Crisis Group](#)). There is also a persistent risk of farmer-herder conflict in central areas of Nigeria and, separately, anger at police brutality sparked widespread - and at times violent - protests in Lagos and other major cities in late 2020.
- ▶ **All sides in the conflict are, at times, acting in ways that increase harm for civilians and constrain humanitarian access.** Nigeria was the deadliest of the Watchlist countries for civilians in the first nine months of 2020, with 1,856 deaths in "violence against civilians" incidents ([ACLED](#)). In a sign of the risks to aid workers, humanitarians are almost exclusively reliant on UN helicopters to reach many vulnerable populations as roads become too dangerous. Additionally, the conflict has left 1.2 million people in the northeast inaccessible to humanitarians since they are living in areas that are effectively under the control of armed groups ([OCHA](#)). Only limited information is available about the conditions of civilians in these areas but needs are likely even more severe there than in the rest of the northeast.
- ▶ **COVID-19 is pushing the country towards potential famine in 2021.** Vulnerable populations across the country face lost incomes due to lost livelihoods related to COVID-19 restrictions and conflict, climate change impacts on crop production and drops in remittances. In parts of the northeast, levels of acute malnutrition for children under five are already above emergency thresholds, leading to an average of three children dying of malnutrition every day in 2020 ([OCHA](#)). Northeast Nigeria is now at risk of famine in 2021 ([WFP](#)). Moreover, needs are also rising due to COVID-19 and conflict in other parts of the country too, particularly in central states and the northwest.

### THE IRC IN NIGERIA

The IRC has been working in Nigeria since 2012. The IRC operates in all three states in northeast Nigeria (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe). We provide both immediate life-saving and life-sustaining activities as well as medium-term recovery programs. The IRC's programming includes primary health, nutrition and reproductive healthcare activities; educational support services for out-of-school youth, women's protection and empowerment activities, water and sanitation programming and economic recovery and development activities. Learn more about the [IRC's Nigeria response](#).



ABUJA

# 9. VENEZUELA

COVID-19 compounds years-long economic crisis



## KEY FACTS

Population: **28.7 million**

**7 million** people in need of humanitarian aid (25% of population)

**9.3 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+) before COVID-19

**5.4 million** Venezuelans displaced abroad (second-largest external displacement)

**90%** of hospitals face shortages of medicine and critical supplies

**70%** of hospitals do not have regular access to water

**30%** of medical personnel estimated to have left the country

**176th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**84th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**134th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**4/5** score for severity of access constraints

**20%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: A mother consults with a healthcare provider in a resource center on the Colombian border with Venezuela, where the IRC is also providing medical services to displaced Venezuelans.

## PROBABILITY

**6** HUMAN THREAT

**7** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**5** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**5** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**COVID-19 – and the restrictions and wider humanitarian crises it is creating – are deepening needs inside Venezuela, driving new humanitarian, political and economic crises for the country, and compounding one of the largest external displacements in the world.**

Venezuela is five years into a spiraling economic crisis that has devastated the health system, massively increased food insecurity, caused catastrophic shortages of basic items and triggered one of the largest displacement crises in the world. COVID-19 restrictions leave Venezuelans stuck in limbo as needs deepen inside the country but they are unable to leave to seek safety or services abroad. Meanwhile, lockdowns in Latin America are forcing displaced Venezuelans to return home to a country unable to meet existing needs. As the pandemic exacerbates the existing economic crisis, it is likely to fuel greater social unrest. Venezuela has moderate quantitative scores on Watchlist due to extremely limited official data but maintains a high ranking due to the IRC's qualitative analysis of the situation and indicators of rising need.

“The humanitarian emergency in Venezuela is unfolding with little support from the international community. Needs are far outstripping available services both inside Venezuela and in host communities across the region. The UN's Humanitarian Response Plan for Venezuela and the regional response plan are severely underfunded. The international community must step up its funding if we are to have any hope of meeting needs and addressing a pandemic on top of it all!”

- Marianne Menjivar  
Country Director, IRC Venezuela and Colombia



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **COVID-19 is deepening Venezuela's economic and hunger crises.** The economy has contracted by a further 26% in 2020 ([OCHA](#)). The collapse of Venezuela's oil industry - which [historically](#) accounted for 25% of GDP and 95% of exports - has been a key factor in the deepening economic crisis in Venezuela in recent years. Oil exports dropped in October 2020 to the lowest levels for [70 years](#) and ever-tightening US sanctions mean there is little likelihood of major recovery in 2021. In fact, Venezuela's economic crisis is likely to deepen even further in 2021 due to the pandemic, while restrictions aimed at controlling the pandemic have eliminated many people's livelihoods. Moreover, key countries that are hosting Venezuelans - like Colombia (1.7 million) and Peru (1 million) - are also being affected by the economic consequences of COVID-19 ([R4V](#)). Remittances, which reached 35% of households, fell as Venezuelans abroad lost their incomes ([The Inter-American Dialogue](#)). The economic crisis creates the conditions for deepening poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition in 2021 in what was already the world's fourth-largest food crisis ([WFP](#)).
- ▶ **Drivers of displacement are rising and yet Venezuelans' legal routes to leave are increasingly limited, deepening needs inside the country.** The top factors driving Venezuelans to leave the country are food shortages, high food prices and lack of jobs – all challenges that have drastically worsened due to the pandemic ([WFP](#)). Humanitarian needs are certain to rise as borders remain closed, not only for those seeking to flee abroad but also for the 50,000 Venezuelans who entered Colombia each day to access goods and services ([International Crisis Group](#)). At least 130,000 Venezuelans abroad returned home in 2020 as restrictions aimed at containing COVID-19 caused them to lose their livelihoods ([HRW](#)). Once COVID-19 restrictions ease across the region, there will likely be mass movements out of Venezuela once again.
- ▶ **Social unrest is likely to continue to grow.** The pandemic and deteriorating economic situation are leading to reductions in public services, shortages of food and fuel, and growing government restrictions that are likely to worsen already high tensions and grievances. By September 2020 Venezuela averaged an estimated [40 protests a day](#) – nearly a [doubling](#) since July. Criminal violence is also rising. In 2019 the country saw [16,506](#) murders and a rate of 60.3 violent deaths per 100,000 inhabitants - one of the highest rates in the world.
- ▶ **The already strained humanitarian response is likely to face even greater constraints.** Venezuela's Humanitarian Response Plan was the second-least funded in the world in both 2019 and 2020 ([FTS](#)). At the same time, growing fuel shortages in late 2020 continue to drive up the costs for humanitarian operations, including transportation of goods and personnel. [OCHA](#) also reports that administrative restrictions are a key factor restricting the ability of humanitarian actors, particularly international NGOs, to respond to the growing needs in Venezuela, restricting both the entry of personnel and supplies to the country and their movements within it. According to [ACAPS](#), humanitarians working in Venezuela face “very high” access constraints, the second highest level possible.

### THE IRC IN VENEZUELA

The IRC has supported vulnerable populations inside Venezuela by working with nine local partner organizations since 2018. Our partners provide vital access to quality maternal healthcare (including birthing kits for pregnant women), sexual and reproductive healthcare, GBV prevention and response, child protection services, cash assistance and child malnutrition services. We also support the COVID-19 response inside Venezuela through the provision of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for doctors and nurses. The IRC is in the process of building relationships with local partners in Táchira on the border area with Colombia. Learn more about the [IRC's Venezuela response](#).



CARACAS

# 10. MOZAMBIQUE

Humanitarian needs rise rapidly as insurgency intensifies



## KEY FACTS

Population: **31.3 million**

**1.3 million** people in need of humanitarian aid (in Cabo Delgado)

**900,000** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**43%** of children face chronic malnutrition

**500,000** people internally displaced

**153rd** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**110th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**154th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**2/5** score for severity of access constraints

**100%** of funding received for 2020 Cabo Delgado Rapid Response Plan

## PROBABILITY

**6** HUMAN THREAT

**6** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**7** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**8** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Rapidly escalating conflict in northern Mozambique is the key factor that has pushed the country not just onto Watchlist for the first time, but straight into the list's top ten countries of most concern.**

An insurgency broke out in the northern Cabo Delgado province in late 2018 and has intensified markedly in 2020, triggering a rapid increase in violence, civilian harm and internal displacements. The number of people in need has nearly doubled for 2021 compared to early 2020. This poorly understood violence will certainly persist into 2021. Moreover, the country is still struggling to recover from two cyclones that struck the country in 2019 and damaged critical infrastructure such as health facilities. Conflict, natural disasters, and COVID-19 are all likely to continue to harm livelihoods and exacerbate food insecurity in 2021.

"Violence that emerged in northern Mozambique in 2017 has become bolder and more violent in the ensuing years. What started as hit and run looting with bladed weapons has turned into the organization of complex, coordinated assaults with the use of guns and mortars. 2020 has seen significant population centers in Cabo Delgado taken and held for a period of months, and the violence is growing and spreading across the north of the country leading to increased displacement. Following a sharp escalation in violence in early 2020, the IRC has been closely watching the situation."

- Edmond Suluku

Director of People and Operations in Emergencies,  
IRC Emergencies and Humanitarian Action Unit



Above: Makhuwa family in Nampula, Mozambique [WikiCommons](#)

## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Displacements and attacks on civilians will continue to rise as the insurgency grows in Cabo Delgado.** Since March 2020 in particular, violence has intensified and armed groups' are increasingly able to occupy population centers for extended periods of time. The situation in Cabo Delgado is still opaque and reflects decades of perceived marginalization and under-investment in the region, which remains Mozambique's poorest despite hosting massive energy resources. At the same time, at least one armed group operating in Cabo Delgado claims to be part of Islamic State's Central Africa Province. The crisis has forced over 500,000 people to leave their homes and the number of IDPs has more than quadrupled during 2020 ([OCHA](#)). The conflict is affecting an area that has historically been under-developed relative to the rest of Mozambique, and where Cyclone Kenneth caused major damage to road, medical and other infrastructure and created significant humanitarian needs. 36% of health facilities in Cabo Delgado are damaged or destroyed, while several of the most affected districts do not have a single functional facility ([OCHA](#)). The conflict has exposed women and children to greater risks of exploitation and abuse, including sexual violence and forced recruitment ([OCHA](#)). Displacements are likely to continue growing in 2021 given repeated attacks on civilians by armed groups and deportations of those fleeing by neighbors like Tanzania.
- ▶ **Conflict and restrictions imposed by the security forces are limiting efforts to reach people in need.** Many humanitarian actors have pulled out of smaller towns in Cabo Delgado due to the rising insecurity. They are instead focusing their activities in major population centers that are receiving growing numbers of IDPs. Meanwhile, humanitarians' ability to reach vulnerable populations is constrained by both poor road infrastructure and the Mozambique authorities' restrictions on movement along some routes ([ACAPS](#)).
- ▶ **Climate change is compounding the risks facing Mozambique.** When Cyclones Idai and Kenneth struck Mozambique in March and April 2019, they caused massive damage. Dozens of medical facilities were damaged and hundreds of thousands of people were left homeless, many for extended periods ([ACAPS](#)). Kenneth was the strongest cyclone to hit the continent of Africa and, highly unusually, it was the second to affect Mozambique within a single cyclone season. It was also the first to make landfall in the country's far north. The cyclones of 2019 suggest that climate change is increasing the risk of Mozambique experiencing a major natural shock.
- ▶ **Food insecurity will likely emerge as a growing concern in 2021 due both to the conflict and the impact of COVID-19.** Limited data makes it difficult to assess the spread of COVID-19 in Mozambique but the pandemic is presumably affecting livelihood activities as it has in other countries. Moreover, armed group attacks are disrupting farming, fishing and other key activities in Cabo Delgado, making it even harder for families to afford enough food. Over 900,000 people in Cabo Delgado and its two neighboring provinces, Niassa and Nampula, are experiencing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity ([OCHA](#)).

### THE IRC IN MOZAMBIQUE

The IRC is not currently present in Mozambique but we monitor and classify ongoing emergencies to inform decisions about if and when to enter a new location. As part of the IRC's Strategy 100 we commit to entering places where there is conflict and organized violence driving humanitarian need; there is unmet humanitarian need and we can add value; and there is funding forecasted to deliver programs and ensure financial stability. To read more about the IRC and our Strategy 100, visit [Rescue.org](https://www.rescue.org).



# CAMEROON

Caught in the middle of dual conflicts



## KEY FACTS

Population: **26.5 million**

**4 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**4.9 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**1 million** people internally displaced, of which 720,000 in Northwest/Southwest and 320,000 in the Far North

**430,000** refugees hosted, mostly from Central Africa Republic (310,000) and Nigeria (117,000)

**115th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**51.1%** of women over 15 report they have ever experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner

**148th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**145th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**3/5** score for severity of access constraints

**43%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Women at an IRC center in Cameroon cut and sew masks to earn an income and bolster local COVID-19 mitigation measures.

## PROBABILITY

**7** HUMAN THREAT

**4** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**6** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**8** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Cameroon's continued presence on the Watchlist is rooted in two distinct violent conflicts in the Northwest/Southwest regions and the Far North, neither of which has an end in sight.**

Increasing violence and insecurity from two distinct conflicts in Cameroon has left over a million people internally displaced. Conflict persists in the Northwest and Southwest regions between separatists and the government, rooted in longstanding grievances including the marginalization of the minority English-speaking regions. Meanwhile, the Far North is experiencing violence driven by armed groups based in the Lake Chad Basin. COVID-19 is exacerbating needs, which drove a nearly **60%** increase in the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance during 2020. The lack of progress towards political solutions and continued violence are likely to result in further displacement and increases in humanitarian needs in 2021.

"Cameroon faces multiple distinctive humanitarian crises and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has severely exacerbated the situation. Many Cameroonians are in dire need of protection services, particularly women and girls who face high levels of violence. The IRC is working across the country, from the Far North to the Southwest and Northwest regions, to prevent the spread of COVID-19, protect women and girls and help people survive and earn an income."

- Hannah Gibbin  
Country Director, IRC Cameroon



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Cameroon is rapidly evolving into a protracted emergency, which COVID-19 has dramatically compounded.** Cameroon has seen a rapid rise in humanitarian needs, from [2.8 million](#) people in need in December 2016 to [4 million](#) in 2021. Militancy spilling over from northeast Nigeria first started to affect the Far North of Cameroon in 2014 and continued at high levels into 2015 before dropping back down again. Then, in 2017, an insurgency broke out in the Northwest and Southwest regions, which are mostly English-speaking, leading to levels of violence against civilians that rapidly surpassed those in the Far North. At the same time, eastern Cameroon hosts over 280,000 refugees from CAR. COVID-19 has exacerbated needs in each area and led to a doubling in the number of people facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3-5) to 2.1 million ([FAO-WFP](#)).
- ▶ **Conflict between separatists and government forces will continue to drive needs in the Northwest and Southwest.** The conflict has resulted in over 3,000 deaths and displaced 600,000, while leaving 80% of health and education services non-functioning ([OCHA](#)). The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Northwest/Southwest has more than doubled since 2019, rising to 3 million by mid-2020 ([OCHA](#)). While one armed group unilaterally declared a ceasefire in the wake of COVID-19, none of the other dozen or more secessionist groups did, nor did the Cameroonian military. Some village chiefs are even reportedly creating militias ([VOA](#)) for protection in a sign that conflict - and the number of actors involved - is likely to rise.
- ▶ **Cameroon also faces renewed violence from armed groups in the Far North.** The conflict has killed 2,000 people, displaced 250,000 and left over [1 million](#) people in need of humanitarian assistance by mid-2020. While violence against civilians in the Far North of Cameroon has remained broadly steady for the last five years, it has been rising across the wider Lake Chad Basin in both 2019 and 2020. This pattern suggests a real risk that Cameroon will see greater violence in 2021. Moreover, the disruption to livelihoods and social services over a period of several years increases the vulnerability of the local population, while Cameroon continues to host 117,000 Nigerian refugees fleeing violence in northeast Nigeria.
- ▶ **Cameroon is an increasingly challenging environment for humanitarians.** Attacks on aid workers in Cameroon rose sharply in 2020 with 19 attacks – more than double the attacks in the previous decade combined ([Aid Worker Security Database](#)). IRC and partners have even witnessed attacks on civilians during humanitarian distributions ([IRC](#)). In the Northwest and Southwest, around 65% of areas are inaccessible to aid workers, while humanitarians' movements are increasingly undermined by checkpoints and lockdowns ([UN](#)). At the same time, Cameroon is consistently one of most underfunded humanitarian responses in the world.

### THE IRC IN CAMEROON

The IRC has responded to humanitarian needs in the Far North and the Southwest and Northwest since 2016. We work in communities with large displaced populations, where we provide basic supplies, cash assistance, clean water, improve sanitation facilities, emergency case management and help individuals obtain identification documents. We support the restoration of livelihoods for conflict affected populations through cash assistance, agricultural inputs, business grants, vocational training opportunities, and Village Savings and Loan Associations. The IRC supports women and girls through safe spaces and counseling, referral pathways for survivors of sexual assault, and support for community-level protection committees, protection monitoring and alert systems. We also help children access education through safe learning spaces. Learn more about the [IRC's Cameroon response](#).



YAOUNDE

# CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Rising needs in a forgotten crisis



## KEY FACTS

Population: **4.8 million**

**2.8 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**1.9 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**641,000** people internally displaced

**622,000** Central African refugees

**188th** (of 189 countries) for human development

**159th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**68%** of women and girls married before the age of 18

**160th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**179th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**3/5** score for severity of access constraints

**64%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Hawaou Ibrahim, 15, attended an IRC-run youth program in Bangui, Central African Republic after she and her family returned from Cameroon, having fled armed violence.

## PROBABILITY

**7** HUMAN THREAT

**4** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**10** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**10** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**CAR's inclusion on Watchlist 2021 is driven both by the persistent armed conflict within the country and the likelihood that any shock will have a particularly severe impact given the extreme vulnerability of the population and the country's limited response capacity.**

CAR saw major conflict after armed groups overran the capital in 2013 and, while the situation has since calmed, armed groups continue to control large swathes of territory, driving widespread instability. Most armed groups continue to observe the 2019 peace deal but it has come under growing pressure as political tensions intensified in 2020. Over half of the population is already expected to need humanitarian assistance in 2021 ([OCHA](#)) and this number could rise rapidly if there is any recurrence of major conflict or natural disasters. CAR will enter 2021 days after it holds both presidential and legislative elections, which could spark further instability and challenge efforts to respond to the country's crises.

"The Central African Republic is one of the world's most forgotten crises. With 40% of people in need of critical humanitarian aid, the attention and funding the country receives from the world is not proportionate to the need. Years of violence coupled with the impact of COVID-19 have led to a near doubling of the rates of violence against women and girls. The world must wake up to the situation in CAR and do more to help the most vulnerable."

- Elisabeth Mekougou Obama Epse Ndjella  
Women's Protection and Empowerment Coordinator, IRC  
Central African Republic



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Acute needs are already at the highest level for the past five years due to a combination of conflict, COVID-19, economic conditions and natural events.** 40% of the population faces acute needs, more than at any point in the last five years ([OCHA](#)). COVID-19 is having a major impact, particularly on economic well being. Increased controls on movements across the border with Cameroon have pushed up the prices of imported rice, oil and sugar. Alongside crop diseases, renewed conflict and poor rains, COVID-19 has severely compounded food insecurity, leaving 1.9 million people (40% of the population) facing crisis (IPC 3) or worse levels of food insecurity, including 408,000 at emergency (IPC 4) levels ([IPC Info](#)). This figure is expected to rise to 2.3 million people in mid-2021 ([IPC Info](#)). The pandemic has also had a major impact on the safety of women and girls. Restrictions related to COVID-19, for example on movement and employment, have also prompted a near doubling in the number of cases of violence against women and girls ([OCHA](#)).
- ▶ **Armed groups continue to control much of the country, driving persistent volatility and ongoing threats to civilians and humanitarian access.** CAR has seen ongoing instability since an alliance of armed groups overran the capital in 2013, causing a dramatic spike in conflict. As a result, a quarter of the population is displaced - internally or abroad - with more than 640,000 people currently displaced internally ([OCHA](#)). Most, but not all, armed groups signed a peace deal in Khartoum in 2019 but conflict has persisted in parts of the country since then, albeit at far lower levels than in 2013-2014. Armed groups in the west of the country have been particularly disruptive during 2020, but seasonal violence also occurs along transhumance routes, as herders move their cattle to pasture ([OCHA](#)). The run-up to the planned December 2020 elections has been a key factor driving instability in 2020. If the election results are disputed or the vote is delayed, for example due to COVID-19, then political tensions could drive conflict in 2021 and further threaten humanitarian access.
- ▶ **Threats to the safety of humanitarians are growing.** There have been over 40% more incidents affecting humanitarians in the first ten months of 2020 than over the same period in 2019 ([OCHA](#)). So far in 2020, nine aid workers have been killed in addition to 21 injured and nine kidnapped, placing CAR firmly in the top ten globally on all three fronts ([AWSO](#)). CAR is also just one of eight countries that [ACAPS](#) gave a maximum score of 3/3 for the level of violence against humanitarian personnel, facilities and assets, contributing to an overall environment of “high” access constraints - though physical impediments such as poor roads are an important factor too.
- ▶ **CAR will be particularly affected by any shocks that do occur in 2021.** The country is one of just two countries (along with Somalia) on the Watchlist to score a maximum of ten for both the existing vulnerability of the population and the country's lack of response capacity. CAR also ranks in the top five countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change ([ND-GAIN](#)) and there is a persistent risk of natural events sparking new crises like the major flooding that displaced 100,000 people in late 2019 ([REACH](#)).

### THE IRC IN CAR

The IRC has been working in the Central African Republic since 2006. The IRC aids conflict-affected and internally displaced communities through emergency relief, food distributions, healthcare, psychosocial support to women survivors of violence, and building and restoring clean water sources. We also support children's well-being by building and supporting schools and safe spaces for children to learn and play. Learn more about the [IRC's Central African Republic response](#).



# CHAD

On the frontlines of climate change and conflict

## KEY FACTS

Population: **16.4 million**

**4.8 million** in need of humanitarian assistance (in 2020, 2021 figures are still being finalized)

**1 million** expected to be facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**336,000** people internally displaced

**483,000** refugees hosted, including 370,000 from Sudan, 95,000 from Central African Republic and 16,000 from Nigeria

**150th** (of 195 countries) capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**67%** of women and girls married before age of 18  
**156th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**156th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**181st** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**3/5** score for severity of access constraints

**43%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: A child receives treatment at an IRC health center in Mangalmé, Guéra region, Chad where over 1 million children suffer from acute malnutrition and IRC is piloting a new malnutrition solution designed to increase access to treatment and nutrition services.

## PROBABILITY

**7** HUMAN THREAT

**5** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**10** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**9** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**COVID-19, climate change and rising conflict are all driving up the humanitarian risks facing Chad in 2021.**

Chad is a major host of refugees from other countries on this year's Watchlist, particularly from Sudan, Central African Republic and Nigeria ([UNHCR](#)). The country is also itself affected by the conflict in the Lake Chad Basin region, which includes Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon (all on Watchlist 2021) as well as several more localized conflicts that are often driven by struggles over resources. Instability may well worsen ahead of planned presidential elections in 2021. At the same time, Chad is the most vulnerable country in the world to climate change. As climate change and the economic impacts of COVID-19 put ever greater pressure on the population, food insecurity may rise in 2021.

"Chad is facing multiple endemic and complex crises, and a resurgence of violence which has resulted in increased poverty and food insecurity and a major spike in humanitarian needs. Child acute malnutrition is rising, with a more than 30% increase since 2019. The IRC is helping Chad work towards long lasting, durable solutions to help people living in crisis not only survive but also rebuild and recover for the future"

- Francis Sala-Diakanda  
Country Director, IRC Chad



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **The economic impacts of COVID-19 have triggered a massive increase in needs that is likely to deepen over the coming year.** Economic conditions were already precarious for many Chadians; there is chronic poverty and [UNDP](#) ranks the country at 187 out of 189 globally for human development. Surveys conducted in mid-2020 showed that the pandemic had already led to reduced incomes for many households, contributing to a 155% rise in the number of people facing food needs ([OCHA](#)).
- ▶ **COVID-19, insecurity and flooding all mean that malnutrition and health needs will remain widespread in 2021.** Both chronic and acute malnutrition rates have remained at critical levels for more than ten years. Of the country's 23 provinces, nine are seeing critical rates of severe acute malnutrition ([SMART Survey 2019](#)). Nearly two million people are affected by health emergencies, the most vulnerable of whom are children under the age of five, pregnant and nursing women, people with disabilities and the elderly. Children are likely to be particularly affected; between 2019 and 2020 the number of children under five with Severe Acute Malnutrition jumped by a third to 461,000 and COVID-19 is only likely to worsen this delicate situation ([IPC](#)).
- ▶ **Instability in the wider Lake Chad Basin region is driving rising violence in Chad.** At the point of writing, 2020 is already Chad's deadliest year for conflict and political violence in over a decade. 44,000 people were displaced due to conflict in the first half of the year alone ([IDMC](#)). Data from [ACLED](#) shows that the key cause of conflict-related fatalities in Chad (70% of deaths) is instability in the western Lac region, which borders the other Lake Chad Basin countries. Violence in Lac has led to 336,000 IDPs by October 2020 - a 93% increase compared to 2019 - and is likely to persist in 2021 ([IOM](#)).
- ▶ **Climate change means that Chad is increasingly exposed to unpredictable weather patterns that cause drought and flooding.** In fact, Chad is the most vulnerable country in the world to the impacts of climate change ([ND-GAIN](#)). Chad saw major flooding in August 2020 in 20 out of Chad's 23 provinces that affected 388,000 people ([UNHCR](#)) and displaced nearly 120,000 ([IOM](#)). Seasonal flooding also damages critical infrastructure, like sanitation systems, needed to help prevent COVID-19 and increases the risk of cholera and malaria outbreaks. Damage to agricultural land may also cause longer-term damage to food security and nutrition.

### THE IRC IN CHAD

The IRC began its humanitarian program in 2004, when we responded to refugees from Darfur to eastern Chad. Over time, IRC has extended its action and influence in country with the implementation of integrated interventions in response to humanitarian needs in Health (including Nutrition, Reproductive Health, Water, Hygiene and Sanitation, and Mental Health), in Women's Protection & Empowerment (with a focus on the fight against Gender-Based Violence), and in Economic Recovery (with an emphasis on Cash transfer and Income-Generating Activities) to reinforce the resilience of refugee populations, internally displaced peoples and host communities, in particular girls and women, in the East, West and Central regions. Learn more about the [IRC's Chad response](#).



N'DJAMENA

# COLOMBIA

## Peace deal at risk from renewed violence



### KEY FACTS

Population: **50.9 million**

**6.7 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**5.6 million** people internally displaced (second highest figure in the world)

**1.8 million** Venezuelans hosted

**55%** of Venezuelans in Colombia facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**65** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**104th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**89th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**3/5** score for severity of access constraints

**18%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (lowest funding rate in the world for a country HRP)

Above: Individuals observe social distancing as they queue for IRC-provided health services at a center in Cúcuta, Colombia near the border with Venezuela.

### PROBABILITY

**6** HUMAN THREAT

**8** NATURAL THREAT

### IMPACT

**4** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**5** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Colombia is a new addition to Watchlist this year, rising to the IRC's countries of concern for 2021 largely due to increasing violence that threatens the 2016 peace accord as well as COVID-19's devastating impact on displaced Venezuelans and Colombian host communities.**

COVID-19 is driving both a new economic crisis and rising conflict activity in Colombia. Criminal and armed groups are seeking to exploit the pandemic to expand their influence and, unchecked, the violence threatens fragile progress made in the peace accord between the government and the country's main armed group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), to end the country's decades-long civil conflict. The economic impacts of COVID-19 are also exacerbating food insecurity, particularly for displaced Venezuelans, and are contributing to a sharp rise in xenophobia towards Venezuelans that, together with escalating violence from armed groups, sets the stage for greater social unrest and violence in 2021.

"Displaced Venezuelans in Colombia are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19's impacts on livelihoods and food insecurity and face little access to social services. Thousands of Venezuelans are returning to Venezuela. Our clients tell us if they're going to die, they would rather die in their native country. I am moved to tears by the crisis and how my team has adapted during the pandemic, helping thousands of people each day and maintaining hope. The reality is that the situation won't improve unless the international community increases its support for Colombia."

- Clara Gamiz de Luna  
Deputy Director of Programs,  
IRC Colombia and Venezuela



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Armed groups are taking advantage of the pandemic to expand their reach, leading to rising violence.** Violence had already been rising in Colombia prior to COVID-19 but armed groups have exploited the disease outbreak and related restrictions on movement and stretched government capacity. These groups include dissident factions of the FARC and the country's other main guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN). Violence linked to armed and criminal groups is most prevalent in areas that were previously controlled by the FARC, particularly any that are strategic locations for illegal mining and drug-trafficking. In some places, armed groups have enforced their own "quarantines" to control populations. There was a 32% increase in the number of displacement events in the first half of 2020 ([OCHA](#)), a 113% increase in forced recruitments of children and a 63% increase in attacks on health workers and medical missions during the first three quarters of 2020 ([OCHA](#)). 68 massacres have occurred in 2020 – the highest number since 2014 ([Indepez](#)). As the national budget is stretched to respond to COVID-19, the implementation of the peace accord may be further slowed. Rising conflict would drive greater internal displacement, forced recruitments, and constraints on humanitarian access in the affected areas in 2021.
- ▶ **Lost livelihoods will drive massive increases in food insecurity.** COVID-19 containment measures eliminated livelihoods for many people given much of the population worked in the informal sector, doubling unemployment to 21.4% ([International Crisis Group](#)). Venezuelans' needs in particular are likely to deepen as nearly 60% lack regular status, which would enable legal work, and they are excluded from national systems like social safety nets. ([R4V](#)). In an IRC survey of Venezuelans at the border just two months into the pandemic, every respondent said they had lost a steady income ([IRC](#)). As a result of lost income, the number of people experiencing food insecurity is projected to double, with 84% of displaced populations at risk of food insecurity ([OCHA](#)). At the same time, the HRP for Colombia is the most underfunded in the world so far in 2020 (excluding COVID-19 intersectoral appeals), challenging humanitarians' ability to meet rising needs ([FTS](#)).
- ▶ **The economic crisis is likely to exacerbate social tensions and drive greater xenophobia towards Venezuelans.** Colombia is the second-largest host country in the world, welcoming 1.8 million Venezuelans and adopting policies early on to support their integration ([UNHCR](#)). However, IRC staff report rising xenophobia towards displaced Venezuelans and a shift in attitude against welcoming more Venezuelans in the country as the pandemic persists, which is likely to worsen as the situation deteriorates in Colombia. Social tensions could worsen in late 2021 as border restrictions and lockdowns ease and the number of Venezuelans entering Colombia is likely to drastically increase; over 200,000 people are expected to enter the country by the end of 2020 ([UNHCR](#)). Much larger movements can be expected in 2021.

### THE IRC IN COLOMBIA

The IRC supports displaced Venezuelans and host communities in Colombia. Our response includes protecting children and adolescents with psychosocial services and education, protecting and empowering women, providing access to healthcare and supporting people's economic well being. In response to COVID-19, the IRC set up mobile health clinics at four sites across the country, including at the Venezuela border, expanded cash programming and adapted existing protection and health services to enable remote assistance. In 2020, the IRC launched the Colombia instance of the Global Signpost project, [InfoPalante](#), a digital platform to help displaced populations access information on civil and legal rights, jobs, access to healthcare and COVID-19. The IRC is also in the process of building relationships with local partners at Colombia-Ecuador border. Learn more about the [IRC's Colombia response](#).



# LEBANON

Explosion adds to spiraling economic crisis



## KEY FACTS

Population: **6.9 million**

**1 million** people in need of humanitarian aid (after Port of Beirut explosion)

**1.5 million** Syrian refugees hosted

**-25%** projected change in GDP in 2020

**85%** increase in consumer prices (annual change)

**73rd** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**146th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**110th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**2/5** score for severity of access constraints

**45%** of funding received for 2020 Lebanon Flash Appeal

Above: Mariam and her husband fled war in Syria for Lebanon eight years ago. She now lives in Bekaa, Lebanon and works as a community educator and Women's Rights advocate with the IRC.

## PROBABILITY

**6** HUMAN THREAT

**5** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**4** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**5** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Lebanon was already in crisis when the August 2020 explosion in Beirut pushed the country to a breaking point, with wide ranging political, economic and humanitarian implications.**

Before the explosion, Lebanon already faced a spiraling economic crisis, a rampantly spreading COVID-19 outbreak, rising social unrest and the spillover effects of the protracted conflict in neighboring Syria. The explosion and arrival of COVID-19 have both placed enormous pressure on the highly vulnerable population. The Lebanese population and large Syrian refugee populations hosted are now more likely to be impoverished and food insecure heading into 2021. Ongoing political and economic crises show no signs of progress to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the immediate term.

"The crisis in Lebanon is unprecedented in complexity. Responding as both an aid worker and a Lebanese citizen is very challenging. We work to address the crisis as professionals but we are also experiencing it ourselves and seeing the repercussions on our own communities and families. It has been hard for people in Lebanon to imagine how life can be made better going forward so I feel privileged to be able to contribute to solutions and support people in need through IRC's work."

- Dima Wehbi  
Policy, Advocacy and Communications Advisor,  
IRC Lebanon



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

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- ▶ **The port explosion has created significant immediate humanitarian needs that will continue to shape 2021.** The explosion, equivalent to a [3.3 magnitude](#) earthquake on the Richter scale, occurred at the Port of Beirut on August 4th and caused up to USD 4.6 billion in damage, with up to USD 1.46 billion required in 2021 alone for reconstruction and recovery ([World Bank](#)). The explosion left over 300,000 people displaced, one-third of them children, destroyed thousands of homes ([UN](#)) and damaged two hundred schools ([UNICEF](#)). The crisis creates particular risks for women and girls, especially those in overcrowded shelters or living in insecure living conditions in damaged homes where they are even more vulnerable to sexual violence, exploitation and abuse. The IRC estimates a quarter of children in Beirut are at risk of missing out on an education due to the scale of damage to schools ([IRC](#)).
- ▶ **The explosion and COVID-19 are exacerbating the country's economic crisis.** The Lebanese pound lost 80% of its value in 2020 and 45% of the Lebanese population is at risk of becoming impoverished in the coming months due to COVID-19 and the explosion ([World Bank](#)). The estimated [1.5 million](#) Syrian refugees living in the country, in addition to migrant workers and other vulnerable populations, will be particularly affected and among those least equipped to handle these latest crises. An IRC survey found concerning increases in child labor and persistent reports of forced and early marriage of girls, as well as other negative coping mechanisms as economic conditions worsened. ([IRC](#)).
- ▶ **A food insecurity crisis is looming for 2021.** The price of a monthly food basket more than doubled in 2020, making it even more difficult for people to afford food as they simultaneously face lost incomes. On top of this, Lebanon's economic crisis means the Central Bank will [reportedly](#) be unable to continue subsidizing basic commodities into 2021, suggesting the price of fuel, wheat and other essentials may increase by 50%. Refugees will be particularly vulnerable; within the first month of COVID-19 lockdowns, the IRC found that the number of Syrian refugees reporting they were in critical need of food had risen from 32% to 90% ([IRC](#)).
- ▶ **Social unrest and political uncertainty are likely to continue.** Socioeconomic grievances sparked persistent anti-government protests throughout 2020 that have only grown since the port explosion and are likely to characterize 2021 as well. The government's resignation following the Beirut port blast creates new uncertainty over the country's future as a new government takes power and faces a rapidly deteriorating situation. The country requires significant investment in recovery and reconstruction that is unlikely to happen without major progress in political stability and efforts to root out corruption.

### THE IRC IN LEBANON

The IRC provides support to both Syrian refugees and the Lebanese communities hosting them. We have been providing economic support, cash assistance, legal services, education, and protection for the most vulnerable, including the elderly and people with disabilities, since 2012. Together with Sesame Workshop (the nonprofit, educational organization behind 'Sesame Street'), IRC has created [Ahlan Simsim](#), an innovative education program for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and other host countries. After the Beirut Port Explosion on August 4th 2020, the IRC launched an emergency response to provide immediate cash, protection and economic assistance to those impacted and displaced by the explosion in Beirut. Learn more about the [IRC's Lebanon response](#).



• BEIRUT



# MALI

## Fragile transition begins amid rising conflict

### KEY FACTS

Population: **20.3 million**

**7.1 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**757,000** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**287,500** people internally displaced

**140,000** Malian refugees in Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso

**147th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**159th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**169th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**4/5** score for severity of access constraints

**45%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Families at a compound in Sirakoro, southwest Mali share their experiences of surviving displacement and disaster.

### PROBABILITY

**6** HUMAN THREAT

**5** NATURAL THREAT

### IMPACT

**7** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**8** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Rising violence in central and northern Mali is the key reason Mali features on Watchlist since it is driving up needs and all too frequently affecting humanitarian action.**

Mali has faced persistent insecurity since 2011. Conflict activity has grown rapidly in the north from 2012, in central areas since 2015/2016, and over the last two years increasingly in the south. Adding to the unstable situation, members of the armed forces ousted President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in August 2020. Mali may see uncertainty and risk of instability over the coming year as 2021 represents a critical transitional period for the country until elections due in early 2022. This transition will be further strained by COVID-19 and its wider economic harm.

“In Mali, the IRC is operating in an increasingly complex security and humanitarian environment. With many areas under the control of armed groups and militias, the international community must prioritize long-term humanitarian and emergency programming in line with international humanitarian principles. The most vulnerable within displaced communities including women and children must be protected from violence, harm and malnutrition. We must also focus on strengthening the resilience of affected communities by implementing livelihood programs and ensure unfettered humanitarian access to education, water, sanitation and hygiene.”

- Amadou Guindo  
Field Coordinator, IRC Mali



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Conflict continues to escalate rapidly across the country.** Key players in the violence include both militant groups and militias formed along communal lines. 12.9 million people - nearly 70% of the population - are affected by the crisis ([OCHA](#)). The escalating conflict has left nearly 290,000 people displaced within Mali, double the figure recorded in early 2019, and food insecurity is steadily rising ([OCHA](#)). Nearly all of the border zone with Burkina Faso and Niger is now experiencing Crisis (IPC 3) levels of food insecurity ([ECHO](#)). Violence has also spread to the center of the country and increasingly the south as well. The central Mopti region is the worst affected, seeing high levels of both militant and communal violence, which have left the area with the most significant humanitarian needs in the country ([OCHA](#)).
- ▶ **Humanitarians' ability to meet rising needs is increasingly hampered by access constraints, particularly threats to their safety.** Since the start of 2019, more aid workers have been reported kidnapped in Mali (37) than any other country in the world ([Aid Worker Security Database](#)). Violence against aid workers is one of the key factors that has led [ACAPS](#) to rank humanitarian access constraints in Mali as "very high." The existence of multiple armed forces in Mali - the Malian Armed Forces, France's Operation Barkhane, the UN's Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the G5 Sahel cross-border joint force (made up of troops from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) - further complicates already weak civil-military coordination. Moreover, some of these armed forces engage in "quick impact projects" in health, education and/or water and sanitary health. The focus on military-led initiatives can lead to confusion between humanitarian and military actors and exacerbate suspicion of humanitarian activities on all sides.
- ▶ **The political situation is highly uncertain.** The ousting of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta in August 2020 by members of the military means that 2021 will likely be dominated by campaigning and positioning by different political factions ahead of promised elections in early 2022. This could be a factor that compounds insecurity and hampers the government's ability to address Mali's long-standing economic challenges, which have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. The new government will also be challenged to make any progress on reinvigorating or expanding political agreements given the strains of rising conflict and COVID-19. Even before these new pressures, a 2015 localized peace deal between the government and armed groups in the North stalled early on and was never fully implemented.
- ▶ **COVID-19 and climate crises are compounding needs.** Mali is highly vulnerable to climate change, as evidenced by regular flooding and droughts, which has strained natural resources, damaged crops and increased the risks of diseases. 1.2 million people are at risk of water-borne epidemic diseases. COVID-19's wider impacts on livelihoods, protection, food insecurity and nutrition are now pushing already vulnerable households and communities to the brink. Limited social services make it difficult for Malians to recover from each crisis. This is particularly true for those displaced or living in conflict-affected areas, where nearly a quarter of health facilities are offline and basic services are even more limited.

### THE IRC IN MALI

The IRC supports vulnerable households and people displaced by conflict by providing emergency relief, clean drinking water, healthcare services and other life-saving assistance. The IRC also supports local communities through village savings and loan associations and income-generating activities, particularly for women. We support children and parents with psychosocial support to help them heal from trauma. Learn more about the [IRC's Mali response](#).





# NIGER

**Instability in the Sahel pushes conflict to record levels**

## KEY FACTS

- Population: **24.2 million**
- 3.8 million** people in need of humanitarian aid
- 1.5 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)
- 266,500** people internally displaced
- 230,000** refugees hosted, mostly from Nigeria (168,000) and Mali (60,000)
- 132nd** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics
- 76%** of women and girls are married before age of 18
- 155th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality
- 173rd** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change
- 3/5** score for severity of access constraints
- 58%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Malian children attend an IRC-supported school in Tabareybarey camp, Niger near the border with Mali.

## PROBABILITY

- 7** HUMAN THREAT
- 5** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

- 8** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE
- 9** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**The main reason that Niger remains on the Watchlist for the third year in a row is the intensifying armed conflict that now affects two distinct parts of the country, disrupting livelihoods, forcing people to leave their homes, and restricting humanitarian access.**

Niger is caught in the middle of two distinct conflicts, with the Central Sahel crisis affecting western Niger and the Lake Chad Basin crisis spilling over into the East of the country. Violence is rising rapidly in the country's western Tillaberi and Tahoua regions, which sit in the tri-border area with Burkina Faso and Mali. In 2020, recorded conflict-driven fatalities in these regions surpassed those in the Diffa region of the Lake Chad Basin for the first time. Adding to this situation, conflict in northern Nigeria has driven a rapid influx of refugees into Niger's southern Maradi region, reaching 70,000 by October 2020 - along with 17,000 Nigeriens who are now displaced internally in Maradi due to the instability spreading across the border ([UNHCR](#)). Moreover, climate change is increasing the risk of natural shocks like drought and flooding. The COVID-19 pandemic has therefore hit Niger at a particularly vulnerable time for the country.

"Heightened insecurity and COVID-driven economic downturns are limiting the ability of Niger to address the full scale of its humanitarian crisis, which floods caused by heavy rainfall are further worsening. Access remains particularly challenging with a concerning rise in attacks on humanitarian assets. Yet, the protection of civilians and humanitarian considerations have come too low on the priorities of the international community. The international community should promote the neutrality and independence of humanitarians, the safety of aid workers and their unfettered access to vulnerable populations."

- Adam Lewa  
Emergency Response Manager, IRC Niger



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Violence is escalating rapidly and is set to reach record levels in 2020, principally due to growing instability in the tri-border area with Burkina Faso and Mali.** According to [ACLED](#), the previous bloodiest year in Niger was 2015, when the Diffa region was heavily affected by conflict spilling over from northeast Nigeria. Conflict activity then dropped rapidly in 2016 and 2017, but has been rising steadily ever since – now driven by rapidly growing conflict in the tri-border area with Burkina Faso and Mali on top of the ongoing violence in Diffa. Moreover, there is also regular violence along communal lines, particularly between farming and herding communities, which militant groups have sought to exacerbate. Principally due to conflict, almost 257,000 Nigeriens had been displaced internally as of October 2020 ([UNHCR](#)).
- ▶ **The number of people in need of assistance more than doubled between 2019 and 2020 (OCHA) as COVID-19 has compounded the impact of rising conflict.** Even before the pandemic and the record conflict seen so far in 2020, Niger was already ranked lowest in the world by [UNDP](#) for Human Development and 40% of the population was impoverished ([World Bank](#)). Market closures and other measures to control COVID-19 have destroyed livelihoods for many people. The population has long suffered from chronic food insecurity and malnutrition. 2.7 million people face food insecurity, nearly 10% of the total population ([OCHA](#)). The number of people facing Crisis (IPC 3) or worse levels of food insecurity has increased by 77% in just two years ([OCHA](#)) and is likely to grow in 2021.
- ▶ **Restrictions on humanitarian access complicate the response.** However, ongoing conflict activity as well as measures enforced by the Nigerien authorities, particularly requirements for humanitarians to use military escorts, at times limit the ability of the IRC and other NGOs to help meet these growing needs. For instance, OCHA reports at least six assessment missions in Tillaberi and Tahoua were canceled due to requirements for escorts in the first seven months of 2020, affecting aid for thousands of people at a time when needs were rising due to the pandemic ([OCHA](#)). Conflict and states of emergency also limit the population's access to humanitarian services as well as livelihoods and markets.
- ▶ **Climate change is increasing the frequency of natural shocks, particularly droughts and flooding.** Niger ranks in the bottom ten countries globally for high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change ([ND-GAIN](#)). In 2020, Niger experienced the worst floods in its history, which affected over half a million people, damaged large swathes of farmland, and disrupted other livelihoods such as fishing ([FAO](#)).

### THE IRC IN NIGER

The IRC supports displaced populations and local communities in the Diffa, Tillaberi and Agadez regions and plays a leading role in the rapid response mechanism in Niger. We provide vulnerable populations with cash transfers, food vouchers, agricultural support and protection programs for women and children. The IRC's health response includes screening and treating severely malnourished children and providing healthcare centers with essential equipment and medicine. Learn more about the [IRC's Niger response](#).



NIAMEY



# PALESTINE

New risks in one of the world's most protracted crises

## KEY FACTS

Population: **5.1 million**

**2.4 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**75%** of Gazans in need of humanitarian aid

**64%** of Gazans food insecure even before COVID-19

**5.6 million** registered Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate

**49.1%** unemployment rate in Gaza

**4/5** score for severity of access constraints

**55%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Please note Palestine is not covered by the ND-GAIN Index for vulnerability to climate change, the Global Health Security index or the WPS index of women's equality.

Above: In 2012, the IRC worked with primary school-aged children through a Healing Classrooms curriculum in the West Bank. The IRC does not currently work in Palestine.

## PROBABILITY

**6** HUMAN THREAT

**3** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**3** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**5** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**COVID-19, economic pressures, funding shortages and regional tensions all increase the risk of escalation in one of the most protracted situations on this year's Watchlist, whose origins lie in the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967.**

The people of Palestine are facing multiple emergencies that threaten their survival and wellbeing, in one of the most politicized crises in the world. Around half of all Palestinians are in need of humanitarian assistance, with needs most widespread in Gaza - accounting for 64% of those in need ([OCHA](#)) - due largely to the impacts of thirteen years of blockade and tensions between the de facto authorities in Gaza and the Israeli government. COVID-19 and measures introduced to slow its spread have further worsened the economic situation. Moreover, any recurrence of conflict in Gaza or widespread unrest, for example following renewed moves by Israel to further annex parts of the West Bank, or continued demolitions and forced displacement of Palestinians, could result in increased humanitarian and protection needs and major disruption to people's livelihoods.

"The situation in Palestine is dire, notably in Gaza where there is a double lockdown – a 13 year long blockade and now restrictions related to the pandemic. COVID is spiking in an area with one of the highest population densities in the world, and where access to medical care and clean water is severely lacking. The humanitarian situation in the West Bank, while less severe, is characterized by ongoing protection and human rights violations. The US decision to withdraw funding from the Palestinian Authority, the United Nations and the NGO community has had a devastating impact. It is imperative to prioritize the crisis in Palestine and contribute to the betterment of Palestinian lives."

- Su'ad Jarbawi  
Regional Vice President,  
IRC Middle East and North Africa



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **COVID-19 is driving a rapid deterioration in the economic situation, while humanitarian agencies are facing record low funding levels.** Even before the pandemic, Palestine's economy was expected to fall into recession in 2020-2021. COVID-19 has significantly exacerbated the situation; household poverty rates are expected to rise from 53% to 64% in Gaza and double to 30% in the West Bank ([OCHA](#)). Gaza has been particularly affected, with unemployment rates reaching an unprecedented 49% ([OCHA](#)). The authorities there responded to the pandemic by imposing restrictions that have helped bring down the number of COVID-19 cases but also constrained economic activity. Increased socio-economic challenges are, in turn, likely a key factor in reported increases in psychosocial distress and gender-based violence ([OCHA](#)).
- ▶ **COVID-19 has compounded the thirteen-year blockade of Gaza, to cut civilians off from critical supplies.** Gaza remains heavily isolated by Israel and, since COVID-19 began, the number of people crossing in and out of the territory has dropped significantly, as have imports of fuel and cooking gas (from 26.6 million litres in September 2019 to 6.3 million in September 2020) ([OCHA](#)). All the while, funding levels for humanitarian agencies, particularly UNRWA, are at record lows and the humanitarian response has been particularly challenged. UNRWA is the second largest employer in Gaza, with [11,000](#) staff, and so shortfalls in its funding threaten to push unemployment there - which is already 50% - even higher.
- ▶ **The deteriorating humanitarian situation and enduring risk of major conflict in Gaza may be heightened by economic, political and regional trends that will continue into 2021.** A range of factors – like the risk of discontent and unrest in Gaza due to the deepening economic crisis, political tensions with Israel, and more – could all increase the risk of major conflict in Gaza during 2021. Previous major outbreaks of violence in 2008-2009, 2012 and 2014 killed many Gazan civilians, caused massive damage to homes and critical infrastructure in Gaza and displaced thousands of residents. Conflict escalation in Gaza has already injured Palestinian civilians and damaged civilian infrastructure and the [UN](#) has noted “a pervasive crisis of accountability, with no effective remedy for the vast majority of alleged violations of international law, to ensure justice for the victims and to prevent future violations.”
- ▶ **Palestinians are increasingly vulnerable as years of violations of IHL and human rights continue and risk escalating further.** On November 3, the largest single demolition of civilian structures in a decade occurred, when three quarters of the population of Humsa Al Bqai'a in the West Bank had their homes destroyed. As of November, 689 structures had been demolished across the West Bank, more than in any full year since 2016, rendering 869 Palestinians homeless ([OCHA](#)). Moreover, the Palestinian Authority reduced its cooperation with Israel in protest at Israel's annexation plans, which has [reportedly](#) removed one route previously available for Palestinians living in the West Bank to try and address challenges they faced accessing services such as healthcare.
- ▶ **Any renewed moves by Israel to further annex parts of the West Bank could trigger wide-scale protests and unrest, disrupting livelihoods and humanitarian action.** Israel delayed its announced plans to further annex parts of the West Bank in mid-2020 but, should it revive this idea, there would likely be a major backlash, including potentially violent protests in both the West Bank and Gaza that – along with the likely Israeli security response – would likely further restrict Palestinian freedom of movement, increase protection concerns and disrupt many Palestinians' livelihoods.

### THE IRC IN PALESTINE

The IRC is not currently present in Palestine but we monitor and classify ongoing emergencies to inform decisions about if and when to enter a new location. As part of the IRC's Strategy 100 we commit to entering places where there is conflict and organized violence driving humanitarian need; there is unmet humanitarian need and we can add value; and there is funding forecasted to deliver programs and ensure financial stability. To read more about the IRC and our Strategy 100, visit [Rescue.org](https://www.rescue.org).



JERUSALEM



# SOMALIA

Floods and locusts arrive after years of conflict

## KEY FACTS

Population: **15.9 million**

**5.9 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**2.1 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**2.6 million** people internally displaced

**12.2%** under-five mortality rate, the highest in the world

**194th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**154th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**179th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**4/5** score for severity of access constraints

**78%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Meymun fled her hometown to escape violence when she was just 14. Now 18 and the mother of two children, she is determined to give her children a better life. The IRC provides support to Meymun and her family through comprehensive malnutrition services.

## PROBABILITY

**9** HUMAN THREAT

**7** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**10** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**10** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Somalia's humanitarian situation is characterized by a protracted crisis that could well worsen in 2021 as the country faces active conflict, the largest desert locust invasion in decades, worsening climate-related disasters, the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and deepening food insecurity.**

Somalia enters 2021 amid a delayed election process that could trigger greater conflict and crisis over the course of the year. While conflict remains the key driver of instability in the county, climate-related disasters are increasingly driving needs and displacements. COVID-19 has compounded the existing economic and food insecurity crises in the country. Somalia's ability to withstand additional shocks was already limited, as evidenced by the country's extremely low coping capacity and the population's high vulnerability, due to decades of conflict and instability.

"Somalia needs the world's attention as it faces increasing conflict, flooding, COVID-19 and desert locusts. These crises are exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation. The economy is deteriorating, leaving many Somalis unable to feed themselves and their families. I am proud that the IRC has been able to use quick, flexible cash transfers and employment programming to help the most vulnerable families survive during this particularly trying time."

- Ali Farah  
Senior Program Officer, IRC Somalia



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Conflict between government forces and al-Shabab will continue to drive new needs and displacement.** The country saw 189,000 new displacements due to conflict in the first half of 2020 - one of the top five increases in the world ([IDMC](#)). Ongoing conflict between government forces and al-Shabab is likely to persist in 2021 and remain the major driver of insecurity in the country. Moreover, tensions around delayed elections could set the stage for wider crises. Parliamentary elections are now planned for December 2020 and the presidential election for February 2021. In the run up to both elections, al-Shabab is likely to increase its attacks to disrupt the process and exploit the distraction of the government.
- ▶ **The cumulative shocks of natural disasters, locust invasions and COVID-19 are deepening needs. Somalia ranks in the top five countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change ([ND-GAIN](#)).** In the first half of 2020, displacements due to natural disasters were more than twice the number of conflict-driven displacements ([IDMC](#)). Flooding affected nearly 1.6 million people ([OCHA](#)) and displaced over 840,000 people in 2020 - a doubling compared to the previous year ([OCHA](#)). At the same time, desert locust infestations affected 685,000 and were declared a national emergency by the Somali government ([OCHA](#)). Efforts to contain locusts were undermined by conflict and COVID-19 restrictions, which could enable more swarms to occur in 2021.
- ▶ **Food insecurity is likely to rise in the next year as locusts and natural disasters destroyed farmlands and this year's harvests.** In an IRC assessment in September 2020, 70% of people reported they did not have access to enough food. Food insecurity is expected to be even worse in 2021, as the 2020 harvests in southern and northwest Somalia are estimated to be 40% and 45% lower, respectively, than their long-term averages ([OCHA](#)). La Niña is also very likely to occur in late 2020 or early 2021 and exacerbate food insecurity as Somalia would be one of the countries hit hardest by the subsequent drought ([WFP](#)). 849,900 children under the age of five are now projected to be acutely malnourished through mid-2021 ([IPC Info](#)).
- ▶ **Somalia's coping capacity for crises in 2021 is extremely limited.** Somalia is one of just two countries on Watchlist 2021 to score a maximum of ten for both the existing vulnerability of the population and the country's lack of response capacity. These scores reflect the impacts of decades of insecurity, economic under-development and political instability.

### THE IRC IN SOMALIA

The IRC first began assisting Somalis in 1981. The IRC supports Somalis' economic well-being through job training, food vouchers, direct cash assistance to farmers, shepherds and small business owners and village savings and loan groups and job-training programs that help women meet their families' needs and increase their decision-making power. We also help prevent and address health crises by building and rehabilitating water systems and other critical infrastructure, providing primary healthcare services via both static and mobile clinics to underserved people and training health workers. Learn more about the [IRC's Somalia response](#).



**MOGADISHU**

# SUDAN

## Political transition strained by COVID-19



### KEY FACTS

Population: **43.8 million**

**13.4 million** people in need of humanitarian aid (30% of population)

**9.6 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**2.6 million** people internally displaced

**1.1 million** refugees hosted

**163rd** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**157th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**174th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**3/5** for severity of access constraints

**52%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Recently arrived Ethiopian refugees are registered at Um Raquba in eastern Sudan.

### PROBABILITY

**8** HUMAN THREAT

**5** NATURAL THREAT

### IMPACT

**7** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**8** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Sudan is entering 2021 navigating a fragile political transition and major economic challenges that are hampering the country's recovery after decades of conflict and under-development.**

2021 will test the ability of Sudan's young transitional government – the first new leadership in the country in three decades – to address the concerns of opposition groups and the needs of the population, including a recent fragile peace deal with some of the armed groups active in Darfur and Blue Nile/South Kordofan. The transition is further complicated by the need to overcome decades of large-scale conflict and under-development and the likelihood that refugees, and possibly instability, will flow into the country from Ethiopia. The government's ability to effectively adopt critical political and economic reforms will be further strained by a set of complex humanitarian crises, including the highest level of people in need in a decade, some of the worst climate-related disasters in decades, an economic crisis deepened by COVID-19, the highest levels of food insecurity in a decade and millions of people still displaced in the country.

"The political developments of 2019 were a watershed moment for the people of Sudan. Despite political changes, any new government faces enormous challenges including a collapsed economy, heavily underdeveloped social services, multiple disease outbreaks, large swaths of hard-to-reach areas and a history of tension between different groups. There is a mix of optimism and concern in the air and the next year will be incredibly important for charting a new path for Sudan."

- Ari Berkowitz  
Emergency Program Coordinator, IRC  
Emergencies and Humanitarian Action Unit



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **COVID-19 will put further pressure on the fragile political transition process and hamper Khartoum's ability to address the deepening economic crisis, which is driving record levels of food insecurity.** Sudan has been ruled by a transitional government since August 2019, when a power-sharing agreement was reached. COVID-19 is exacerbating the country's economic crisis, further complicating the transition and driving up humanitarian needs. Inflation rates reached 212% in September 2020, compared to 57% at the start of the year ([OCHA](#)). The price of the local food basket increased by 200% in 2020 ([OCHA](#)) in a country where 90% of families already spent most of their income on food before the pandemic ([OCHA](#)). As a result, Sudan is seeing record levels of food insecurity ([WFP](#)). The U.S. announced in October 2020 that it intends to remove Sudan from its State Sponsors of Terrorism list, which would open the door to greater financial investments and debt relief after 27 years of sitting on this list ([State Department](#)).
- ▶ **The absence of key armed groups from a peace deal signed in late 2020 suggests conflict may recur in parts of the country.** The government signed a peace agreement in September 2020 with several armed groups. The deal is an important step forward in ending conflict in Darfur and the southern regions of South Kordofan and the Blue Nile and could lead to improved humanitarian access to these areas. However, some key armed groups are not yet party to the deal and so there is a risk conflict could resume. The worsening economic crisis may also limit the government's ability to fully implement the deal.
- ▶ **Refugees and possibly instability are likely to flow into the country from Ethiopia.** The conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region is escalating rapidly and has already driven tens of thousands of people to seek refuge in Sudan, not least because Tigray's other borders - with Eritrea and internal borders with the rest of Ethiopia - are closed. Over 43,000 Ethiopian refugees have already entered Sudan since tensions and violence escalated in early November 2020 in Tigray and these numbers are likely to grow significantly in 2021 ([UNHCR](#)). Such an influx would result in a roughly 30% increase in the total number of refugees in Sudan and would likely be hosted in remote eastern areas, putting even greater strain on the existing humanitarian response in the country.
- ▶ **Climate-related disasters are worsening and driving greater needs in a country with limited coping capacity and high vulnerability.** Sudan has very high exposure to natural hazards, which can spark major disease outbreaks given the country's weak health, water and sanitation infrastructure. Sudan ranks in the top ten countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change ([ND-GAIN](#)), increasing the risk of natural shocks. In 2020, the country experienced the worst flooding in over three decades, which affected over 875,000 people and contributed to more than 10 million people being at risk of water-borne diseases and 4.5 million people at risk of vector-borne diseases ([OCHA](#)). Moreover, desert locust swarms have destroyed crops and farmland during 2020 and will remain a threat in 2021 as well.

### THE IRC IN SUDAN

The IRC began moving forward with the re-launch of humanitarian programs in Sudan in 2019, marking its first return to the country since its departure in 2009 amid mass NGO expulsions. The IRC had spent 28 years in Sudan providing healthcare, water, sanitation, education, livelihoods and women's health and protection services. IRC has used unrestricted, emergency and COVID-19 response funds to facilitate the opening of the country office. Current programming includes direct and partner implementation in health and WASH. Going forward the team will focus on building up the program portfolio to address needs as they unfold. Learn more about the IRC's work at [Rescue.org](#).





IRC WATCHLIST 2021

**ANNEX**

## PURPOSE

The IRC has drawn up an Emergency Watchlist every year since 2007 with the goal of identifying which countries face the greatest risk of major deterioration in the humanitarian situation over the coming year. The inclusion of a country in the Watchlist therefore represents our best judgment based on the available data of the humanitarian risk facing a country in 2021, not just an assessment of the current extent or severity of humanitarian needs in the country.

### The Watchlist serves three key purposes:

1. Raise concern externally about crises that the IRC sees as being at risk of major deterioration.
2. Inform internal resource allocation, in particular to identify countries for emergency preparedness efforts.
3. Focus the IRC's Crisis Analysis and monitoring capabilities on countries facing greatest humanitarian risk.

Please note that the IRC decides whether to respond to a new emergency by using the IRC's Emergency Classification System to assess its scale and severity, not on the basis of the Watchlist.

If you have questions about the 2020 Emergency Watchlist or the IRC's other Crisis Analysis work, please contact [Crisis.Analysis@rescue.org](mailto:Crisis.Analysis@rescue.org).

## METHODOLOGY

The IRC uses a multi-stage process of quantitative and qualitative analysis to draw up the Watchlist. This process allows the Watchlist team both to identify the countries at greatest risk from human-driven or natural shocks and to understand, given the existing vulnerability of the population and/or the country's response capability, whether such an event is likely to trigger new or more severe humanitarian needs.

A detailed description of the quantitative analysis conducted can be found [here](#). A brief overview of the process follows.

### STEP 1: INITIAL QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

85 different indices were compiled, including data from INFORM, Verisk Maplecroft and ACAPS. Countries that consistently flagged by these sources, for example because they ranked in the top 25 for multiple indices, were then included in a preliminary long list.

### STEP 2: VALIDATING INITIAL QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS AGAINST QUALITATIVE SOURCES.

The preliminary long list was then compared with comparable lists, for example those drawn up by think-tanks like the Council on Foreign Relations and International Crisis Group. The Watchlist team also compared the preliminary long list with crises the IRC had been monitoring throughout 2020 while the IRC's program teams around the world also provided inputs on countries to be considered. This enabled further countries to be flagged for inclusion in the long list, particularly those with deterioration late in 2020.

### STEP 3: SCORING EACH COUNTRY ON THE LONG LIST FOR BOTH RISK AND IMPACT THROUGH A SECONDARY PROCESS OF QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS.

64 indices were brought together in different groupings to develop four different measures for each country's scorecard. Two scores were developed for the likelihood of a country experiencing a shock or shocks during the course of 2021:

**HUMAN THREAT** – the risk of the country experiencing human-driven events such as political instability, armed conflict and/or economic collapse.

**NATURAL THREAT** – the risk of the country experiencing natural events such as a flood, earthquake or storm.

And two measures to assess the likelihood that an event – whether human or natural – would cause new or more severe humanitarian needs:

**EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION** – the existing vulnerability of the population in that country, including the IRC’s existing “pre-crisis vulnerability” measure as well as indices produced by Verisk Maplecroft.

**CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSES** – whether a country has the governance structures and physical/communications infrastructure to respond effectively to a crisis. This measure is taken directly from INFORM’s Index for Risk Management.

#### **STEP 4: DEVELOPING MULTIPLE MATHEMATICAL MODELS TO COMBINE THE DIFFERENT SCORES.**

By using several different approaches to combine and weight the four different scores, a preliminary short list and ranking of the countries was developed.

#### **STEP 5: COMBINING QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS TO DEVELOP THE FINAL SHORTLIST AND RANKING OF TOP TEN COUNTRIES.**

The key reference points for this stage were:

**1. The mathematical models** developed in Step 4, in particular seeing which countries consistently appeared at specific rankings across multiple different models.

**2. Reviewing the data sources** lying behind each country’s four scores to see if there were reasons they might over or under-state the situation. For example, data for some countries was outdated or entirely lacking, and there were strong reasons to believe that the country would have scored more highly if recent data had been available. In other cases, data used to develop a score had been influenced by developments in 2020 that are unlikely to recur in 2021.

**3. Qualitative analysis by the IRC’s Crisis Analysis team** to identify the risk of further deterioration in the humanitarian situation in countries on the preliminary short list.

**4. Qualitative inputs from IRC teams** familiar with the countries in question.

**5.** The scale and severity of emergencies that had occurred in those countries during 2020, as measured objectively by the **IRC’s Emergency Classification System**.

**6. Analysis from other sources of the impacts of COVID-19.** In particular, the IRC Crisis Analysis team drew on analysis from the following:

- a. [FAO and WFP](#) on the projected impact of COVID-19 on food insecurity
- b. [GeoQuant](#) on the projected impact of COVID-19 on political risk
- c. The Danish Refugee Council on the projected impact of COVID-19 on displacement in the Sahel
- d. [INFORM](#) and the underlying vulnerability of countries to COVID-19

## STEP 6: DRAFTING COUNTRY SECTIONS AND KEY THEMES

The Key Themes and Country Profiles sections of Watchlist 2021 draw on the analysis from Steps 1-5 as well as data and analysis from the following sources:

- Humanitarian needs data from the Global Humanitarian Overview and country Humanitarian Needs Overviews, via the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#))
- Food insecurity data from Integrated Food Security Phase Classification ([IPC Info](#)), the Famine Early Warning Systems Network ([FEWS NET](#)) and the Food Security Prevention Network ([RPCA](#))
- Displacement data from the UN High Commission for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East ([UNRWA](#)) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre ([IDMC](#))
- Conflict data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project ([ACLED](#)) and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program ([UCDP](#)).
- The Global Health Security ([GHS](#)) index of countries' capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics and pandemics.
- The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security ([WPS](#)) index of women's wellbeing and their empowerment in homes, communities and societies more broadly
- The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative ([ND-GAIN](#)) index of countries' vulnerability and readiness to successfully adapt to climate change and other global challenges.
- Analysis of humanitarian access constraints from [ACAPS](#)
- UN OCHA's Financial Tracking Service ([FTS](#)).
- The UN Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index ([HDI](#)) and Gender Development Index ([GDI](#))
- Other open-source humanitarian, media and think-tank reporting

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) helps people affected by humanitarian crises to survive, recover and rebuild their lives. We deliver lasting impact by providing health care, helping children learn, and empowering individuals and communities to become self-reliant, always with a focus on the unique needs of women and girls. Founded in 1933 at the call of Albert Einstein, we now work in over 40 crisis-affected countries as well as communities throughout Europe and the Americas.

Page 6: IRC mobile health teams deliver health and nutrition services to Yemeni people living in remote villages in the mountains.

Page 13: Maryan, 23, is a community Health Worker in Mogadishu, Somalia. She has been working for the IRC since 2011. Maryan fled the Bay Region in Somalia when she was fourteen years old due to fighting and insecurity.

Page 14: IRC staff put on their personal protective equipment at an IRC triage space in Goma, DRC.

Page 55: Farhiyo brings her four month old son, Mohamed, into an IRC clinic for nutrition services at Arif Health Facility in Somalia.

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