

The Price of Inaction

How conflict, COVID-19 and climate change have led to an unprecedented global food crisis

Guyo Gonjoba, a member of the locust surveillance team in North Horr, Kenya inspects plants eaten by locusts. Photo: Ed Ram/ Concern

As COVID-19 took hold in 2020, Concern warned of the impact of the pandemic on the extreme poor, those without the means to withstand recurrent lockdown, sudden unemployment and destitution.

A year later, we see a world going in opposite directions. As wealthier countries plan for reopening and booster vaccines, lower income countries are facing further lockdowns as vaccine access remains shamefully inequitable.

Higher food prices and reduced incomes mean more and more households are eating less, and those dependent on daily labour, cannot afford to buy food every day.

Without an urgent global effort: leadership, funding, political and public commitment, millions of people will suffer as the world ignores those trapped by conflict, extreme poverty and rising hunger levels in 2021.

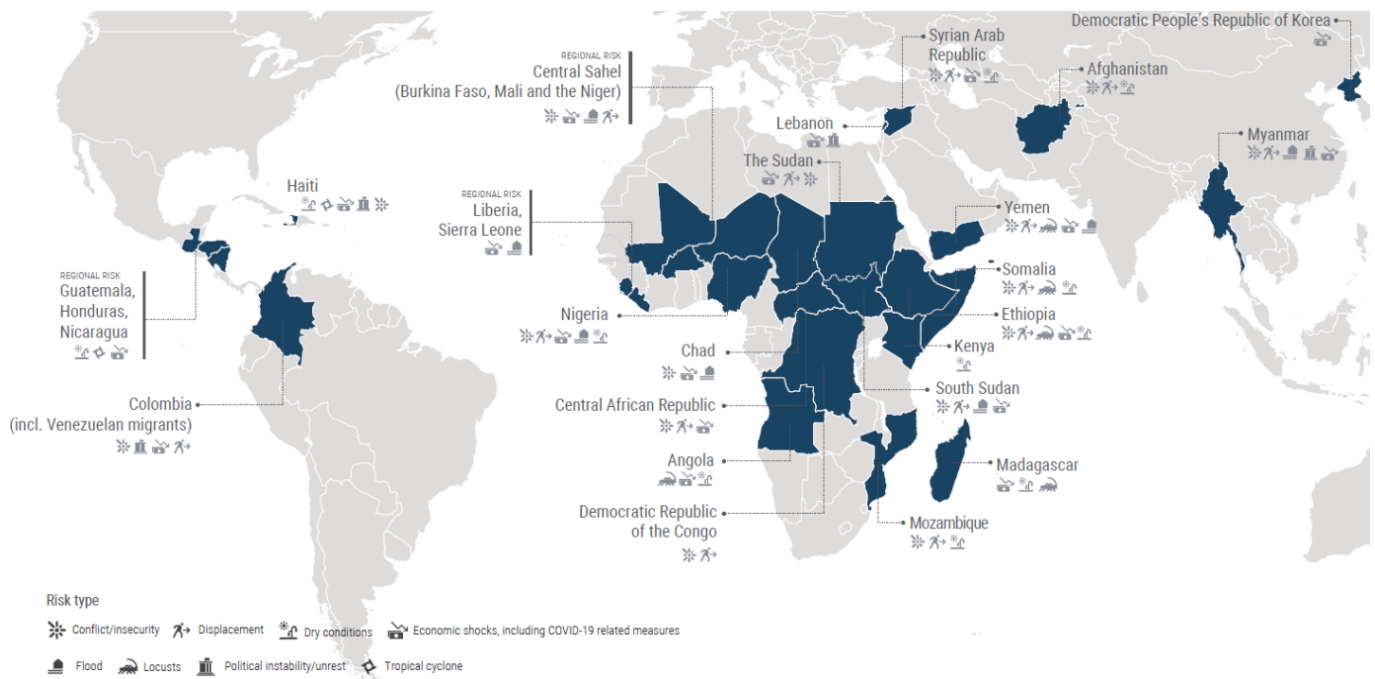
Hunger in 2021 – a bleak picture

The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the increasingly unequal global response, has fundamentally altered the world, causing the deaths of millions of people and devastating the lives of millions of others. It has also caused widespread societal and essential health service disruption, economic devastation and has exacerbated an already challenging global food security outlook. For the world's most vulnerable people - those already caught up in conflict, displaced by crises or experiencing the impact of rapid climate change- this has been an especially disastrous year.

What is emerging is a deeply unequal pattern of how countries are adapting to, and coping with the multiple impacts of the pandemic, and the multiple shocks of climate change, conflict and hunger.

For decades, it looked likely that the fight to end global hunger could be won. From 1991 to 2014, hunger levels had significantly decreased but, since then, it has slowly been on the rise again. Acute food insecurity – the most urgent form of hunger- has been rising in the last 5 years, driven primarily by conflict. 2021 saw an unprecedented jump in the number of people experiencing **crisis levels of food insecurity** - an increase of 20 million people from 2019 - bringing the number to 155 million.

Of these people, more than 40 million, over 25%, are at **risk of dying of hunger**. The threat of famine has returned to many parts of the world, with crises accelerating this year throughout Burkina Faso, Madagascar, South Sudan, parts of Ethiopia, Yemen and Afghanistan.



Acute food insecurity hotspots August to November 2021 Outlook. Source: Hunger Hotspots – Global Network against Food Crises (World Food Programme and Food and Agriculture Organisation).

What are the levels of food security?

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) and the Cadre Harmonisé (CH) are systems used to measure the food security of populations. Populations in Crisis (IPC/CH Phase 3), Emergency (IPC/CH Phase 4) and Catastrophe (IPC/CH Phase 5) are those in need of urgent action:

INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY PHASE CLASSIFICATION (IPC) & CADRE HARMONISÉ (CH)

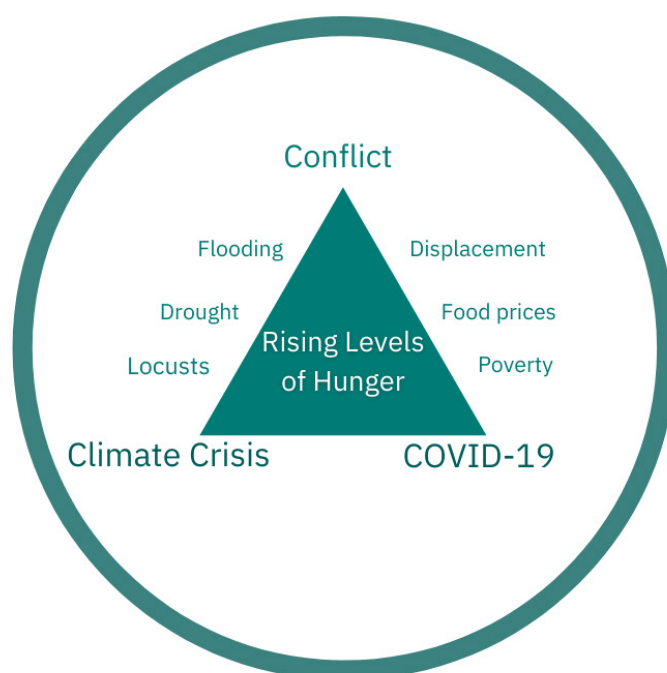
Phase 1 Minimal	Phase 2 Stressed	Phase 3 Crisis	Phase 4 Emergency	Phase 5 Catastrophe/Famine
Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical, unsustainable strategies to access food and income	Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in detrimental coping strategies	Households have food consumption gaps with high or above usual acute malnutrition OR accelerated depletion of livelihood assets that will lead to food consumption gaps	Households have large food consumption gaps resulting in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality OR face extreme loss of livelihood assets that will lead to food consumption gaps	Households have an extreme lack of food and other basic needs. Starvation, death and destitution are evident
Action for disaster risk reduction and livelihoods protection		Urgent action required		

Source: Global Report on Food Security Crises 2019

What is driving food insecurity?

The period 2020-21 marked the most severe increase in global food insecurity to date, due to multiple drivers of hunger including:

- Surging conflict and displacement across many regions;
- Worsening effects of climate change;
- The economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The ongoing effects of 2020 locust infestation;



Conflict driving up needs

Conflict is the single biggest driver of hunger around the world, and the primary driver of hunger for almost 100 million people across 23 countries . The link between conflict and hunger is clear with nearly all countries reporting a significant number of people in IPC Phase 4, and all countries with pockets in IPC Phase 5, affected by conflict. An increase in conflict through 2021-22 is expected, as civil unrest has increased in many countries in the last year including Haiti, South Africa, Lebanon and Colombia.

More broadly, protracted conflict, political instability and further displacement continue to be the main drivers of **increasing global humanitarian needs**. Securing access, safeguarding civilian infrastructure and expanding humanitarian action is critical for all conflict-affected countries, but **violations of International Humanitarian Law** and **attacks on aid workers** have all increased in the last decade.

The number of people who are **forcibly displaced** has increased significantly in recent years to 82.4 million people, including 26 million refugees and 48 million people who are internally displaced due to conflict and violence . This figure is the highest ever recorded.

Women and men do not experience the impact of conflict equally. Not only are women and girls often victims of violence due to resource scarcity , they are often made particularly vulnerable to sexual and **gender based violence**, when forced to migrate.



CONFLICT



HUMANITARIAN ACCESS



INTERNALLY DISPLACED



SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Climate change

The impact of climate change is evident in temperature increases, changing distribution and access to water, an increase in the intensity and frequency of extreme natural events such as flooding and droughts, and rising sea levels. These changes directly affect agriculture, food production and food security.

The recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that the climate crisis is unequivocally caused by human activities and is unequivocally affecting every corner of the planet's land, air and sea already. Climate driven disasters are now more frequent, more unpredictable and more intense, with lower-income countries that have contributed the least to carbon emissions already suffering the worst consequences of climate change. In Madagascar, the impact of the climate crisis has now become so severe that it is a key driver in pushing the country towards **famine**.

The worst **locust infestation** in 70 years hit the Horn of Africa in 2020. Studies have linked a hotter climate to more damaging locust swarms, leaving Africa disproportionately affected.



DROUGHT



FLOOD

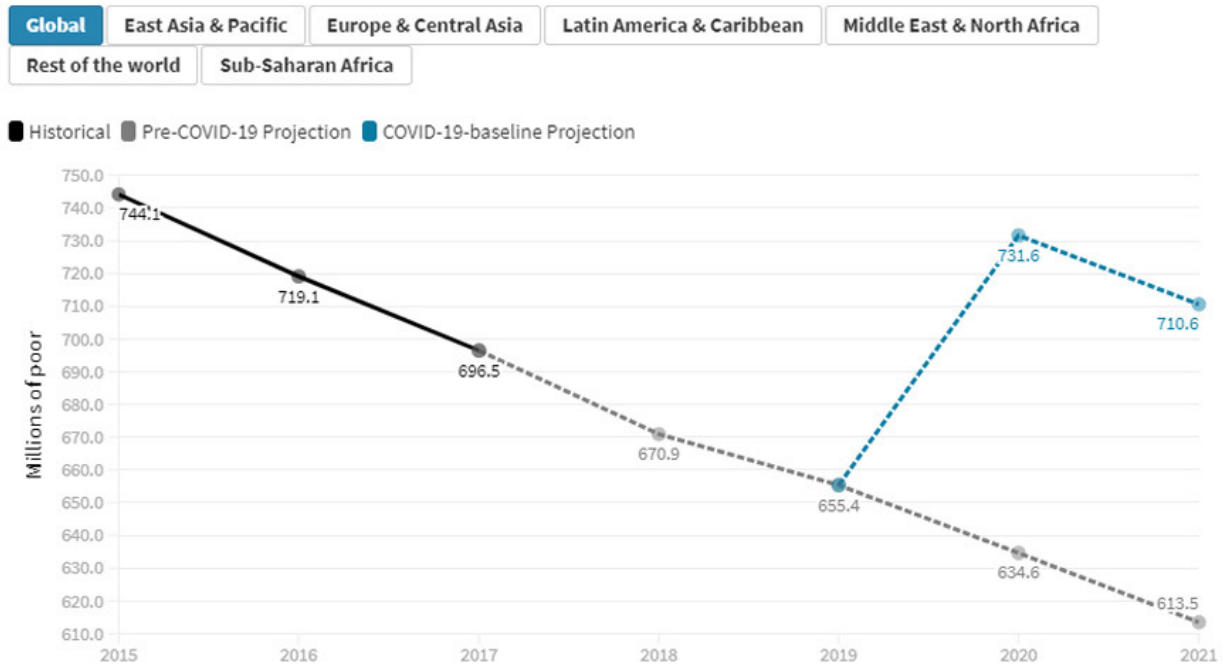


LOCUST INFESTATION

COVID-19 and poverty

The COVID-19 pandemic reversed progress in reducing global poverty, and pushed an additional 97 million people into poverty in 2020 alone, according to the World Bank's most recent estimates. The pandemic has also increased in-country tensions & civil unrest. Pandemic-related violent incidents occurred in 158 countries around the world.

Extreme poverty, 2015-2021



For lower income countries with health systems unequipped to cope with COVID-19, extended lockdowns have been used as a first line of defence and prevention against the spread of the virus. This has been especially challenging for those who work in the informal and service sectors, as extended lockdowns have decimated their income.

Restrictions on cross-border travel has also meant that communities depending on seasonal migration to work and earn, as well as provide essential remittance payments, now have nothing. As countries face new waves of the virus (including Lebanon, Afghanistan, Haiti, and Sierra Leone), millions of people have no savings left to fall back on and limited numbers have access to social protection.



Dieujuste Bazar, of Concern during a distribution of hygiene kits by Concern in Cite Soleil, a district of Port-au-Prince, Haiti Photo: Dieu Nalio Chery/ Concern

At the same time, food prices increased across the world in 2020. Changes in demand for food stocks coupled with restrictions that affected supply chains have had an immediate impact on what the poor could afford to eat. The cost of food imports went up, which in turn increased demand for locally produced food and thus increased its price, leaving poor families, particularly those in urban areas with limited purchasing power and choice, to further ration food intake.

The pandemic and related global restrictions also disrupted agri-food supply chains, and imports of agricultural equipment and pesticides. **Women, who are more likely to live in poverty than men are, but equally likely to be farmers, are disproportionately affected by these developments.** More than 60% of all employed women in Sub Saharan Africa work in agriculture yet less than 20% of land globally is owned by women.

Concern continued to provide as much support as possible to communities as lockdowns spread, documenting their experiences to advocate for better support systems, and to adapt programmes to respond to the effects of the pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, people spoke most about their fear of the virus. Fear was soon replaced by desperation as people felt the impact of disruption to their livelihood. Without economic safety nets, people spent savings in the expectation that things would return to 'normal' quickly.

In a survey of 16,000 households across 25 countries, communities described the impact on multiple levels: health, access to food (60% of respondents cut meals), education, domestic violence, and livelihoods. Women have been particularly badly affected and under pressure to provide for their families - *'If I don't work today, we don't eat tonight'*.

Social protection- a lifeline for the world's poorest people

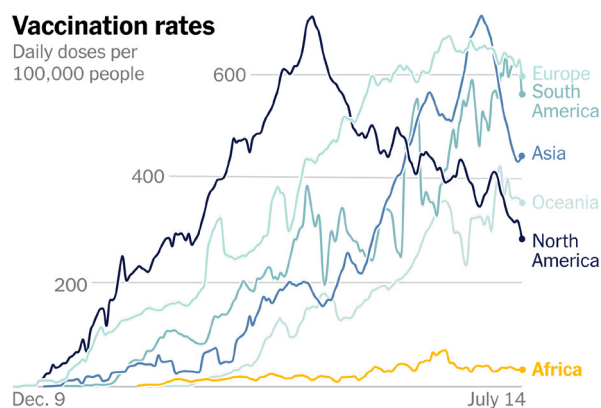
Social protection systems have been an essential part of the response to the pandemic in many countries, ensuring access to health care and income security for those affected directly and indirectly by the pandemic.

Currently, only **45% of the global population is covered by at least one social protection benefit**. The remaining population – more than 4 billion people – is completely unprotected.

Vaccines- the new frontier of inequality

How the pandemic has reshaped global inequality should alarm us all, but the next stage of the pandemic is poised to be even more divisive than the last. While many low-income countries, particularly in Africa, did not see large numbers of recorded COVID-19 deaths as anticipated in 2020, in 2021 the situation is deteriorating.

The Delta variant of the virus is driving the pandemic forward in Africa, with rapid increases in infections and a very concerning increase in the number of reported deaths. Africa has recorded an **89% monthly increase in COVID-19 deaths** during July, as hospital admissions increase rapidly and countries face shortages in oxygen and intensive care beds.



Vaccination rates as of July 14th. Source: NY Times

At the same time, extremely unequal distribution of vaccines has left lower income countries defenceless in the fight against the Delta variant that has been detected in 21 African countries.

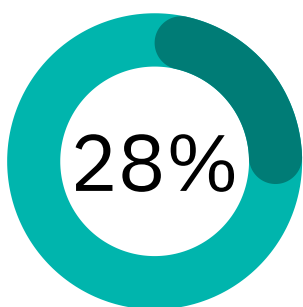
Wealthy nations have bought up almost all doses of the main vaccines for 2021, securing the vaccination for their entire vulnerable population and most of the remaining population. Globally, 27.6% of the world's population has received one dose and 14.1% are fully vaccinated. **To date, only 1.1% of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose.** Approximately 1.5 % of Africa's more than one billion people have been fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

The International Monetary Fund proposes that pandemic policy be viewed as a solid economic case as there is no durable end to the economic crisis without an end to the health crisis. The position is logical and affordable, based on the original (and now somewhat forgotten) premise that 'no-one is safe until everyone is safe'. Failure to vaccinate the world is not just economically and epidemiologically foolish but diplomatically and morally unacceptable.



In the cramped conditions of Cox's Bazaar refugee camp, Bangladesh, it is even more urgent to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. Social distancing simply is not possible for the 1 million Rohingya refugees who live the camp, which has experienced devastating fires and flooding this year.

Funding Shortages



The global humanitarian response plan to respond to the most urgent needs requires funding of \$39.93 billion. More than half-way through the year, **less than a third of the plan is funded**

The growing gap between the financial requirements and the resources to meet them is a deep cause of concern. There simply is not enough funding to reach all those in need of assistance. Funding cuts to development and humanitarian budgets are already hitting the poorest communities hardest.

The unanticipated shock of the pandemic placed further strain the humanitarian system, with over 235.4 million people now in need as assistance. This is 1 in 33 people worldwide - a significant increase from 1 in 45 at the launch of the Global Humanitarian Overview 2020.

The pandemic has exacerbated the strain on overseas development assistance. Major economies, the financial foundations on which the humanitarian system depends, were also threatened by the global recession. Despite the dramatic increase in need caused by the pandemic, international humanitarian spending by public donors dropped by \$284 million between 2019 and 2020, primarily as a result of the UK government decision to cut funding to humanitarian aid by €900 million. However, increased generosity from the general public in 2020 helped to shore up support for increased humanitarian needs.

As needs continue to rise rapidly in both low and middle-income countries, it is extremely worrying that sufficient funding is not forthcoming. The extreme poor across the world, especially those affected by conflict are already struggling to access food, water, healthcare and education as they fight to cope with the impact of COVID-19. It is not possible to provide the level of response needed to prevent greater tragedy without additional funding.

ACTIONS NEEDED TO MEET GLOBAL NEEDS

STRENGTHEN GLOBAL SOLIDARITY TO AVERT CATASTROPHIC LEVELS OF SUFFERING AND FAMINE

Governments must collaborate to urgently fund principled humanitarian responses at scale and ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches the most vulnerable people.

Global solidarity and political will must be strengthened to secure immediate and adequate action to respond to conflict, COVID-19 and the climate crisis.

URGENTLY FUND EFFORTS TO AVERT FOOD CRISES IN 2021

National and county governments must release available funding to finance national emergency programmes in response to needs before food security crisis levels (IPC 3) are reached, protecting development gains and the resilience capacity of affected communities.

Donors must advocate for and release anticipatory financing and early action to protect affected households, and support longer-term recovery and resilience. Long-term investment in education, social protection, health and nutrition are essential safeguards in preventing future crises.

ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO VACCINES

Covid-19 vaccines must be a universal common good. Increasing local and regional manufacturing capacity will help ensure equitable access to vaccines as well as create sustainable and resilient systems for this and future pandemics. The TRIPS waiver is a vital step to clearing intellectual property obstacles for vaccine production.

All governments must urgently commit to funding and facilitating equitable access to and rollout of vaccines by:

- raising the ambition to vaccinate 60% of the planet;
- removing intellectual property rights on vaccines and COVID-19 knowledge;
- investing in manufacturing more vaccine doses around the world;

STRENGTHEN HEALTH SYSTEMS

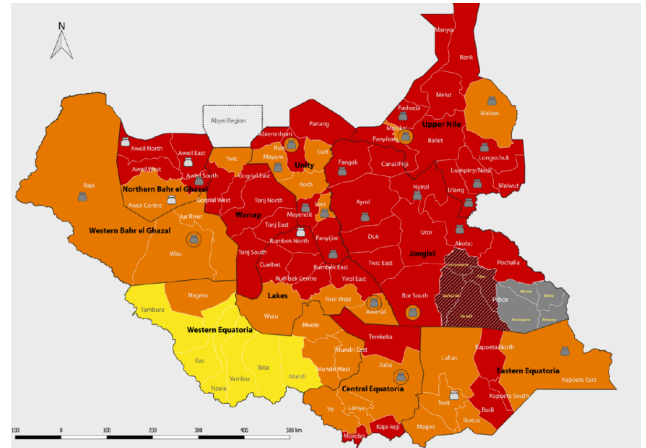
Governments and donors must ensure adequate funding is available to protect frontline and supporting health workers with personal protective equipment (PPE), infection, prevention and control (IPC) commodities and COVID-19 vaccine access as a priority to maintain delivery of essential health and nutrition services.

Governments must protect essential health services to support prevention, halt transmission and secure the treatment and care of people infected and affected by COVID-19, protecting lives and livelihoods.

Regional Snapshots of Food Insecurity

South Sudan

A decade on from gaining independence, the world's newest country is slowly recovering from the five-year civil war (2013-18) that killed an estimated 400,000 people. Although a peace agreement signed in 2018 is holding, localized violence has surged in the last year, and millions remain displaced after years of intense conflict. Since 2013, nearly four million people have been displaced, including 1.6 million people still internally displaced, and 2.2 million South Sudanese refugees. South Sudan also hosts about 319,000 refugees from Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and the Central African Republic.



7.2 million people are estimated to be experiencing crisis levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). Source: IPC

Far from the international spotlight, the food security situation has been deteriorating rapidly in parts of South Sudan over the past year. The economy has suffered from the disruption of COVID-19, as well as a collapse in global oil prices, and a rise in basic food prices. 7.24 million South Sudanese are facing crisis levels of hunger, double the level recorded ten years ago. **Of these, over 100,000 people are feared to be on the brink of famine**, if assistance is not scaled up immediately.

Delivering assistance is also challenging in South Sudan, not only because years of conflict have resulted in a chronically deprived health system, but also because the country remains one of the most insecure for aid workers, with 24 aid workers killed in 2020, compared to 6 in the previous year.

Main Drivers of Food Insecurity



CONFLICT



INTERNALLY DISPLACED



FLOOD



ECONOMIC CRISIS



Concern Nutrition Facilitator, Angelina Nyagan, works at the Nutrition Centre in a protection of in Juba. Photo: Samir Bol / Concern Worldwide

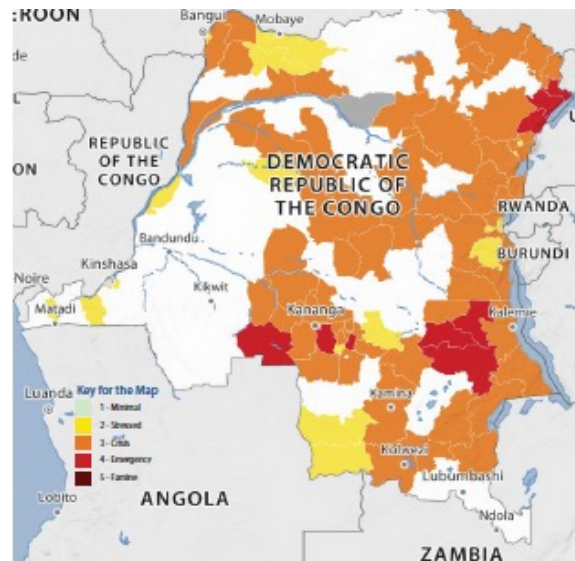
Concern is responding

Concern is responding to the growing needs in South Sudan through emergency programming that includes activities around health, food security, and water sanitation and hygiene. This work includes programmes to prevent and manage acute malnutrition in children under 5 years and pregnant and nursing women, through the provision of therapeutic nutrition services. We also work to support longer-term needs, increasing agriculture and livestock production, improving community-based agricultural extension services, improving market access, and developing skills among women and male youth to improve their livelihoods.

Democratic Republic of Congo

The highest number of acutely food insecure people in the world live in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where **an estimated 27 million people - over one third of the country's population -** are now acutely food insecure. Insecurity, conflict and displacement have soared over the past two years, becoming the main drivers of hunger.

The disruption brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened the country's crisis. As the virus has now reached all 26 provinces of the vast central African nation, vaccines remain in short supply, while measles vaccination- particularly essential in DRC has been severely disrupted because of the pandemic.



Adding to an already complex humanitarian crisis in the eastern part of the country, the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in May of this year forced hundreds of thousands to flee. Thousands of houses and public buildings, along with water and other infrastructure, were destroyed or damaged.

Drivers of food insecurity:



CONFLICT



INTERNALLY
DISPLACED



EPIDEMIC



VOLCANO



HUMANITARIAN
ACCESS



FLOOD

Concern is responding

Concern has been present in DRC for over two decades, working with communities on both emergency responses and development programming. With a wide regional presence, we have been working to scale up response to the COVID-19 crisis, as well as assisting those displaced due to conflict and the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo. In 2020, Concern's mobile Rapid Response team responded to five displacement crises, providing emergency support to 159,000 people fleeing conflict or natural disasters, and helping them to buy food, access clean water and receive hygiene kits.



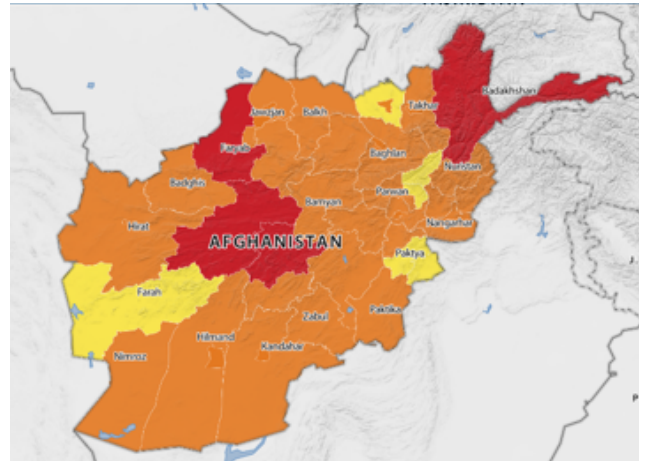
However, in 2021 DRC is challenged by an increasingly complex humanitarian crisis. Although humanitarian responders, including Concern, have stepped up, overall funding for humanitarian response in the country remains in short supply.

After the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano, north of Goma, Concern worked to prevent the spread of water-borne diseases such as cholera, with the support of support of Irish Aid, Photo: Concern/Russell Gates

Afghanistan

Decades of conflict, high exposure to natural disasters and deepening poverty were already devastating Afghanistan before the pandemic, and increased political turmoil and conflict, placed greater strain on the country.

Approximately 270,000 Afghans have been displaced by conflict since January, bringing the total population forced from their homes to more than 3.5 million. Halfway through 2021, Afghan civilians are being killed at a faster rate than any time since the war in 2003.



11 million people in Afghanistan are experiencing crisis levels of hunger and require urgent assistance

At least 18.4 million people require humanitarian assistance, including 3.1 million children at risk of acute malnutrition. But funding to meet the rising humanitarian needs is seriously inadequate. The original Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2021 for the country is only 38% funded, leaving a shortfall in funding of \$793 million. It is inevitable that funding estimates will need to be revised upward, as the scale of need becomes clearer. It is impossible for the humanitarian community to provide the most basic level of assistance without an urgent increase in flexible and unrestricted funding to meet the increasing needs in a complex and rapidly changing context.

Main Drivers of Food Insecurity:



CONFLICT



INTERNALLY
DISPLACED



EPIDEMIC



HUMANITARIAN
ACCESS



ECONOMIC
CRISIS



DROUGHT

Concern is responding

Concern has worked in Afghanistan since responding to a major earthquake in 1998. Working alongside communities as the country goes through an extremely difficult period, the team continues to respond with emergency, resilience and long-term development programming. A central focus of this programming is to help communities to withstand the shocks caused by climate change and on-going conflict. A commitment to social inclusion and equality is central to our work.



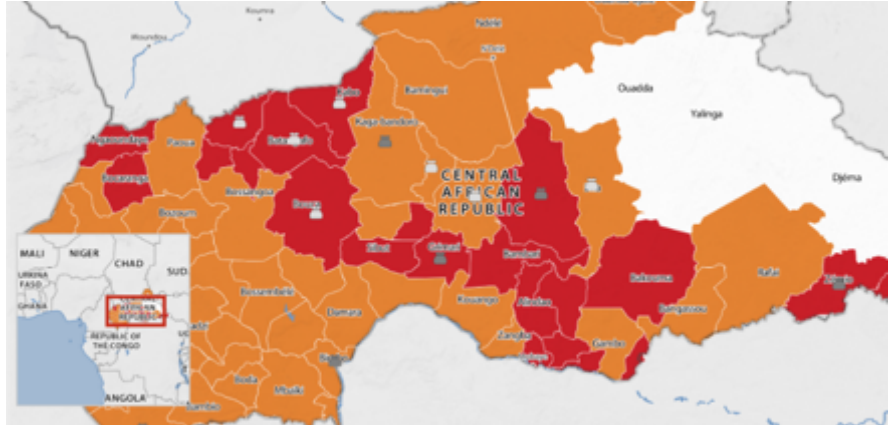
In a rural village in Northern Afghanistan, villagers are busy constructing a watershed that will help prevent future flooding. Photo: Stefanie Glinski/ Concern

Central African Republic

Since 2013, Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced prolonged violence and instability. Despite a peace agreement signed in 2019, a spike in violence over the past year has driven widespread hunger and displacement, with huge sections of the population cut off from access to their land, food and essential health care.

Some 2.3 million people in CAR, almost half of the population, are estimated to be acutely food insecure during the current lean season, as the disruption of COVID and conflict has sent inflation soaring while access to farms and markets is cut off.

The humanitarian response is increasingly constrained due to rapidly shifting lines of conflict and alliances prevent humanitarian organisations from reaching populations in need.



Almost all areas and nearly half of the overall population are suffering from surging acute food insecurity in the Central African Republic as the country reels from the impacts of ongoing conflict and COVID-19. Source: FAO/ IPC Analysis Portal

Main drivers of food insecurity:



Social Cohesion staff member Madeleine Nzabba during a session with a local women association. Concern's efforts in Kouango aim to promote integrated, connected, community-based resilience and recovery for an area of CAR that has suffered greatly. Photo: Emma Howie/ Concern

Concern's Response:

Concern has worked with communities in Central African Republic since 2014, providing humanitarian assistance, and working to build resilience of communities and alleviate the suffering of conflict-affected communities.

Escalating conflict and insecurity has forced the regular suspension of programming for many NGOs, and even forced some to leave the country but work is ongoing to ensure populations in dire need continue to receive support, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of an emergency response to ongoing conflict and displacement, we are working to provide over 3,800 households with 8 months of emergency food assistance in Ouaka prefecture. Cash-for-Work activities create temporary employment to enhance the livelihoods of affected communities while improving access to markets and villages through the rehabilitation of roads and bridges

The Syrian Crisis

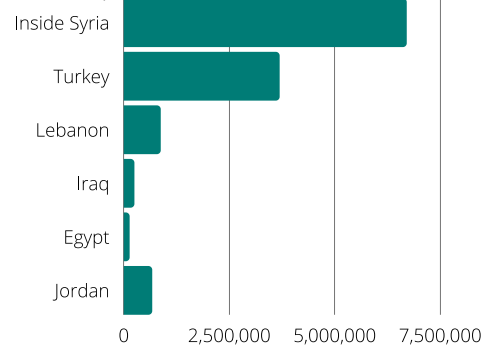
After a decade of devastating conflict in Syria, more than 13 million Syrians have been displaced across the region, both internally and in neighbouring countries, with 3.7 million Syrian refugees (two thirds of the total number of Syrian refugees) now living in Turkey.

In Syria and the surrounding countries, the pandemic has further stressed coping mechanisms and the existing humanitarian crisis. **Now in its eleventh year of conflict, Syrian society has been torn apart by one of the fiercest conflicts in modern history. While the scale of fighting has abated this year, the severity and complexity of needs across Syria remain overwhelming.**

A spiralling economic crisis has driven a rapid fall in the value of the Syrian currency and sent inflation of basic foods soaring, worsening food insecurity dramatically in the last year. Over 12 million people - 60% of the population, now lack access to sufficient food. The World Food Programme estimates that the number of Syrians who are severely food insecure, meaning they cannot survive without food assistance, has doubled in the past year to 1.3 million, and that another 1.8 million people are at risk unless urgent action is taken.



Location of Displaced Syrian Population



Source: UNCHR

Main Drivers of Food Insecurity:



CONFLICT



HUMANITARIAN
ACCESS



INTERNALLY
DISPLACED



ECONOMIC
CRISIS



EPIDEMIC

Concern is responding

Since 2013, our programmes in Syria have been helping those affected by the conflict. We are also supporting Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. Concern provides multi-sector emergency assistance for the most vulnerable internally displaced people (IDPs), host community households and returnee families in conflict areas of Syria. This includes the provision of food, clean water, livelihoods and protection services. Syria is one of Concern's largest programme responses to war, and last year, we continued to provide urgently needed assistance to almost 160,000 people in northern Syria affected by on-going conflict.

Haiti

Haiti, which is still recovering from and rebuilding in the wake of the 2010 earthquake and a series of ferocious hurricanes, is experiencing a truly catastrophic year. After an intense surge in violence and political instability, a devastating earthquake hit the south west of the county on the 14th of August, killing, injuring and displacing thousands of people.

Due to the pandemic, Haiti's hospitals have been overwhelmed by cases of COVID-19, but chronic oxygen shortages have hampered the medical response, while many Haitians are unable to access hospital treatment. According to the World Health Organization, Haiti is one of a handful of countries that have not begun vaccination programmes.



With almost all regions of the county experiencing critical levels of food insecurity, 4 million Haitians are in need of immediate assistance

The situation, which has been exacerbated by falling remittances from overseas as a result of COVID-19, has led to critical levels of food insecurity, with 12% of the population classified in the IPC emergency phase 4. At the same time, the humanitarian funding crisis has deepened. Half way through this catastrophic year, Haiti's Humanitarian Appeal - \$235 million to cover only the most urgent of needs - remains less than 6% funded.

Main drivers of food insecurity



CONFLICT



ECONOMIC
CRISIS



DROUGHT



VIOLANT WIND



Cherica, two years and six months old washes her hands in front of her grandmother's home in Cite Soleil, a district of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Photo: Dieu Nalio Chery/ Concern

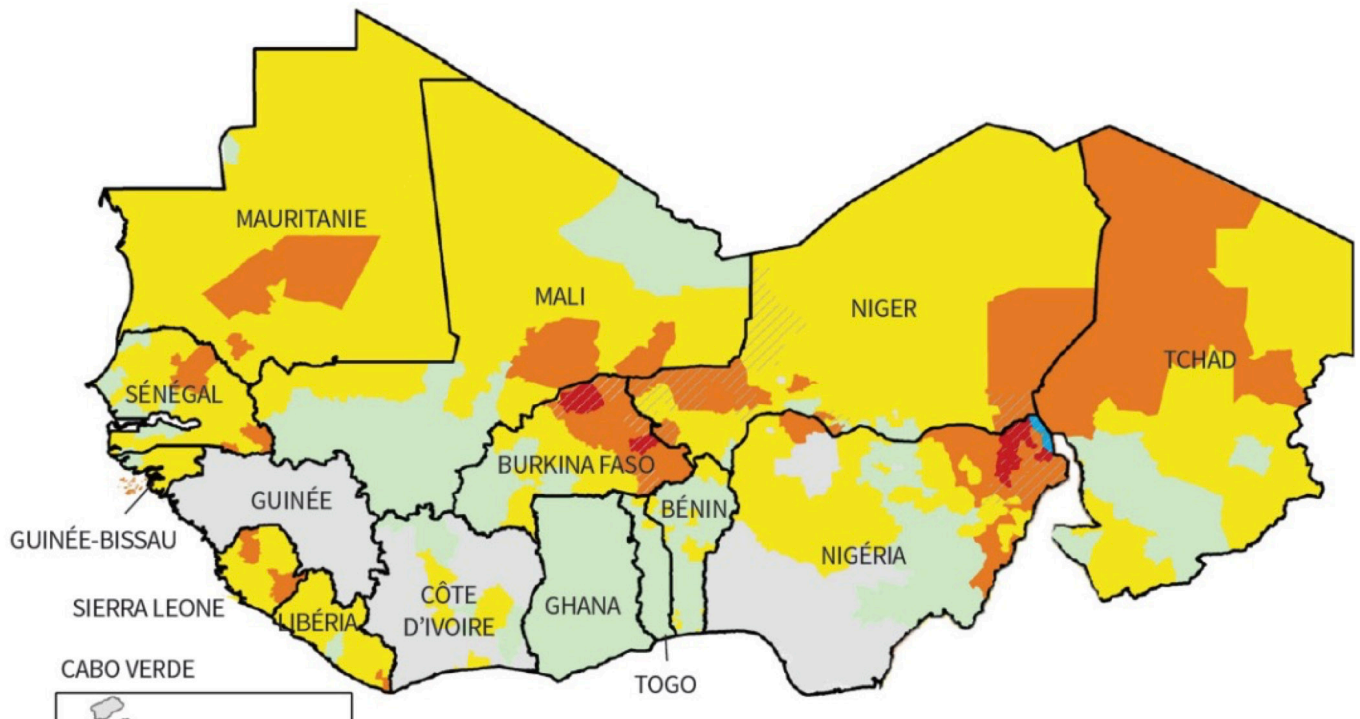
Concern's Response:

Concern has been working in Haiti since 1994, in response to Hurricane Gordon, and has since responded to more than ten major disasters since then. Concern's focus is on improving living standards and economic status for the most vulnerable communities, particularly in the poorer areas of Port au Prince.

In the last year, the Concern team in Haiti has focused on responding to the threat of COVID-19, reaching over 265,000 people with their COVID-19 response, which included raising awareness, setting up of handwashing stations, distributing WASH kits and arranging cash transfers for 4,000 vulnerable households. The team are now scaling up emergency operations to help communities respond to the impact of the earthquake and prepare for the hurricane season.

The Sahel Regional Crisis

According to the United Nations, 29 million Sahelians in six countries – **Burkina Faso, northern Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and northeast Nigeria** – are now in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, five million more people than last year. Almost 14 million people in the Sahel will face food insecurity in 2021, a 76% increase in the past two years.



The Sahel map of food insecurity shows the extreme levels of hunger concentrated around the Lake Chad Basin and parts of Burkina Faso. Conflict is the main driver of this hunger. Source: Food Crisis Prevention Network

Each of these countries has experienced worsening conflict in recent years, with civilians increasingly caught up between armed groups, intercommunal violence and military operations. From 2015 to 2020, the number of violent attacks increased eight-fold in the Central Sahel and tripled in the Lake Chad basin.

The affected communities are already struggling with extreme challenges brought about by deepening poverty and the worsening effects of the climate crisis. The Sahel region is among the most severely affected regions in the world by climate breakdown, with dramatic consequences for people's livelihoods that, in turn, is driving up conflict and outward migration.



Families in the Lake Chad region have been increasingly caught up in conflict and displacement. Photo: Gavin Douglas/ Concern 2020

Main drivers of food insecurity:



CONFLICT



DROUGHT



INTERNALLY DISPLACED



HUMANITARIAN ACCESS



ECONOMIC CRISIS

Concern's Response

Concern has worked in **Niger**, one of the poorest countries in the world, since 2003. As the country is highly dependent on agriculture, even minor climate shocks directly affects the livelihood of thousands of households. This situation is aggravated by the presence of armed conflicts at Niger's borders causing massive displacement and increasing vulnerability.

More than 2.9m people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance in Niger, and here Concern harnesses a long-term presence to implement both humanitarian and development programmes, in order to provide basic needs and, at the same time, improve the resilience of local communities.

In neighbouring **Chad**, where Concern has worked since 2007, we are responding to the humanitarian needs of host communities and displaced populations in the Lake Chad area - an epicentre of severe malnutrition, implementing health and nutrition programmes to deliver life-saving assistance and access to basic health, water, and hygiene and sanitation services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Burkina Faso has become one of the fastest deteriorating humanitarian crises on earth. What was one of the most peaceful countries in the region is now experiencing soaring violence, which is rapidly driving displacement and food insecurity. The conflict and violence have led to the displacement of more than one million people in just two years and has left 3.5 million people in need of assistance – a 60 per cent increase from January 2020 to January 2021.



Burkina Faso is the world's fastest growing displacement crisis, with over 1.2 million people displaced in two years



A woman who is participating in the Jardin (Garden) Potager programme which belongs to the community group of Village Toungailli in Niger. Photo: Ollivier Girard/Concern Worldwide



Concern in Chad, with the support of the EU, is building a new Health Centre in Fourkoulom, the biggest site of internally displaced persons in the Lake Chad Province. A fast construction method will make the site accessible to 30.000 people by the end of August. Photo: Laurent deRuyt/Concern

In 2020 alone, the number of food insecure people increased by 65.7%, with 1.8 million people plunged into emergency levels of food insecurity and over **11,000 people were thought to be experiencing famine-like conditions**. Following a needs assessment in 2020, Concern launched an emergency programme in the East and Centre-east regions, in partnership with Alliance2015 members, focussing on emergency nutrition, health, and cash transfer support to displaced populations.

East Africa

In the last two years, East Africa has been affected by a multitude of crises. The scale and severity of food insecurity in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia has soared because of the conflict, while Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan continue to face increasing levels of humanitarian need and food insecurity, primarily due to conflict and displacement.

The entire region has been disrupted, not only by the secondary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also the impact of the 2019-20 Locust infestation.

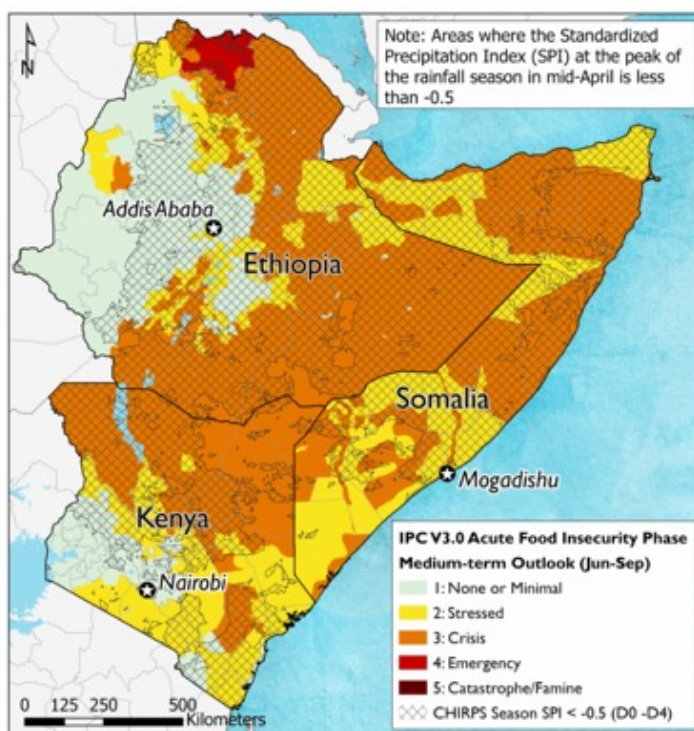
Successive failed rains have also led to extended drought in northern Kenya, compounding the devastation left by locusts. For pastoralist herders, the drought is leading to a deterioration in the body conditions of livestock and resulting poor milk production and consumption. As herders are forced to take their livestock further away from family, children have to go longer without essential milk.

In addition, long-range forecasts indicate that La Niña-like conditions are highly likely to re-emerge in late 2021, raising the likelihood of a third consecutive season of below-average rainfall across the region.

Tigray conflict driving a rapid surge of catastrophic food insecurity

The Tigray region of northern Ethiopia had already been devastated by the infestation of crop-destroying locusts when conflict broke out in November of last year. The conflict has now caused an extreme humanitarian crisis, with the UN now estimating that 5.2 million of the 5.5 million people in Tigray need humanitarian assistance.

Thousands of civilians have been killed and at least 2 million people have been displaced, mostly inside Tigray, while **400,000 people are experiencing “catastrophic levels of hunger”**. This is in addition to four million people in Crisis or Emergency (IPC Phase 3 or 4) located in Tigray region and neighbouring zones of Amhara and Afar regions. **Tigray is now the most urgent food security crisis in the world.**



Food assistance needs are sharply increasing in the Horn of Africa, driven by consecutive below-average rainfall seasons in late 2020 and early 2021, as well as conflict in Tigray and Somalia. Source: Famine Early Warning Systems Network

The number of people experiencing catastrophic levels of hunger is higher than anywhere in the world and the highest in any country since the Somalia famine of 2011, when over 250,000 people died from starvation.

Somalia

Three decades of conflict and instability in Somalia has resulted in extreme intergenerational poverty and severe food insecurity. Food security levels worsened last year as successive failed rains drove largescale drought, alongside the ongoing locust infestation. In other areas of the country, flooding has displaced 400,000 people.

COVID-19 has added another layer to Somalia's complex humanitarian crisis, while conflict continues to disrupt humanitarian responses and drive more people from their land. At the same time, inflation is pushing the price of personal hygiene equipment such as facemask up, deepening exposure to COVID-19 and other communicable diseases for displaced people in crowded settlements.

An estimated 5.9 million people need humanitarian assistance in Somalia. Despite the extreme needs, the current available funding to respond to humanitarian needs in Somalia is the worst in six years.

Main drivers of food insecurity



CONFLICT

INTERNALLY
DISPLACEDHUMANITARIAN
ACCESS

DROUGHT

LOCUST
INFESTATION

FLOOD

Concern is responding

Over many years, Concern has worked closely with communities strengthening systems to effectively support early warning, early action programming before the onset of crisis and to scale up in times of emergency. Our emergency team provides a multi-sectoral response to households affected by drought, floods and displacement across the country.

A key pillar of our response is unconditional cash transfers delivered through mobile phones, which enable families to quickly receive money to buy what they most need from local markets to feed their family and meet other basic needs such as healthcare. The Somali Cash Consortium, led by Concern, has distributed over €15 million to over 300,000 beneficiaries through mobile cash transfers across the country, making a lifesaving impact for those most vulnerable to drought and insecurity.

Since 2016, displacement has risen sharply across Somalia, due not only to conflict, but also the worsening effects of the climate crisis



IDil (22 and her daughter Sagal* (2), pictured in 2019. Sagal was malnourished and with no support in rural Somalia, her mother had to travel 250 kilometres by road to bring her to Banadir hospital, which was supported by Concern. Photo: Gavin Douglas/Concern*

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