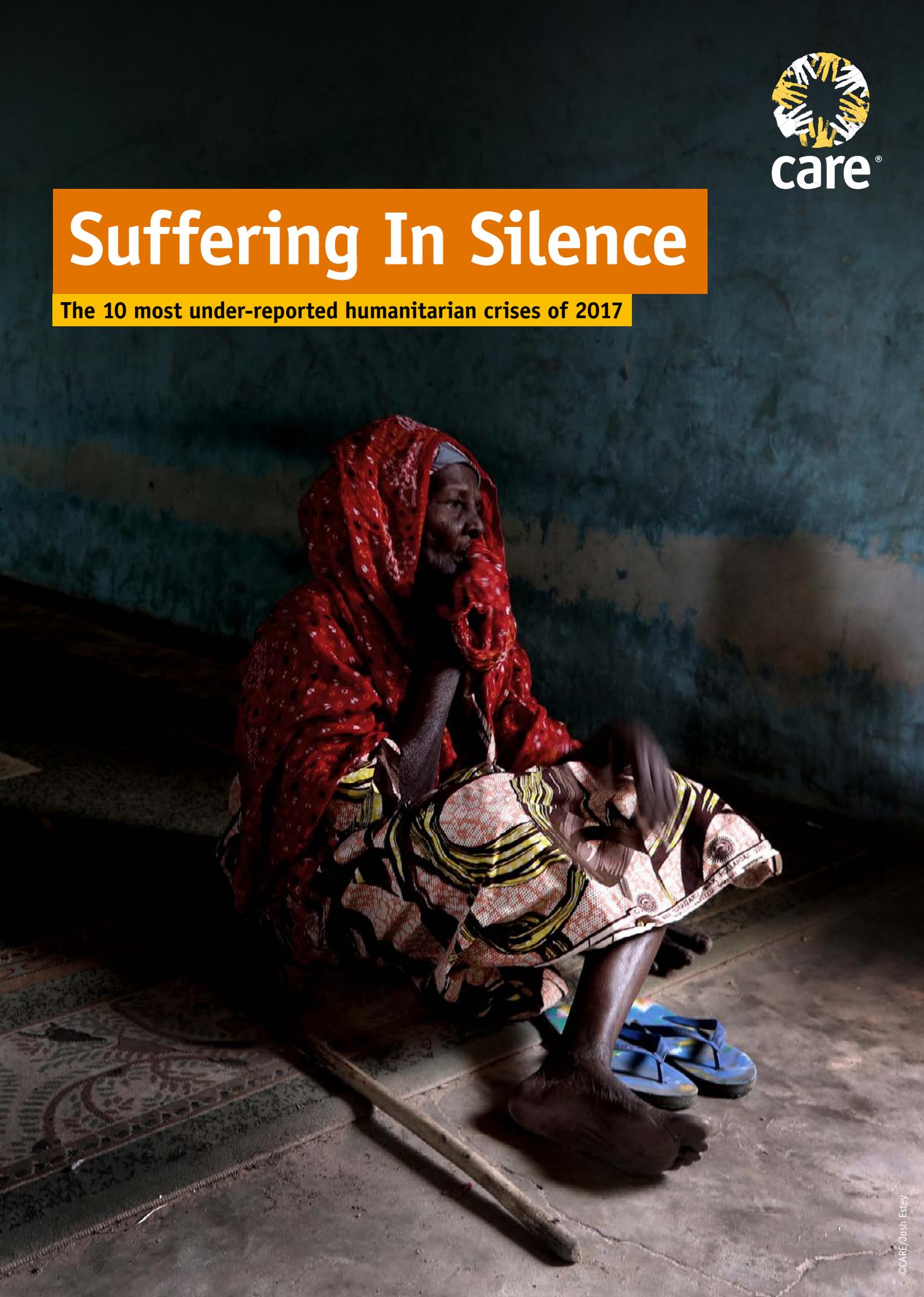




# Suffering In Silence

The 10 most under-reported humanitarian crises of 2017





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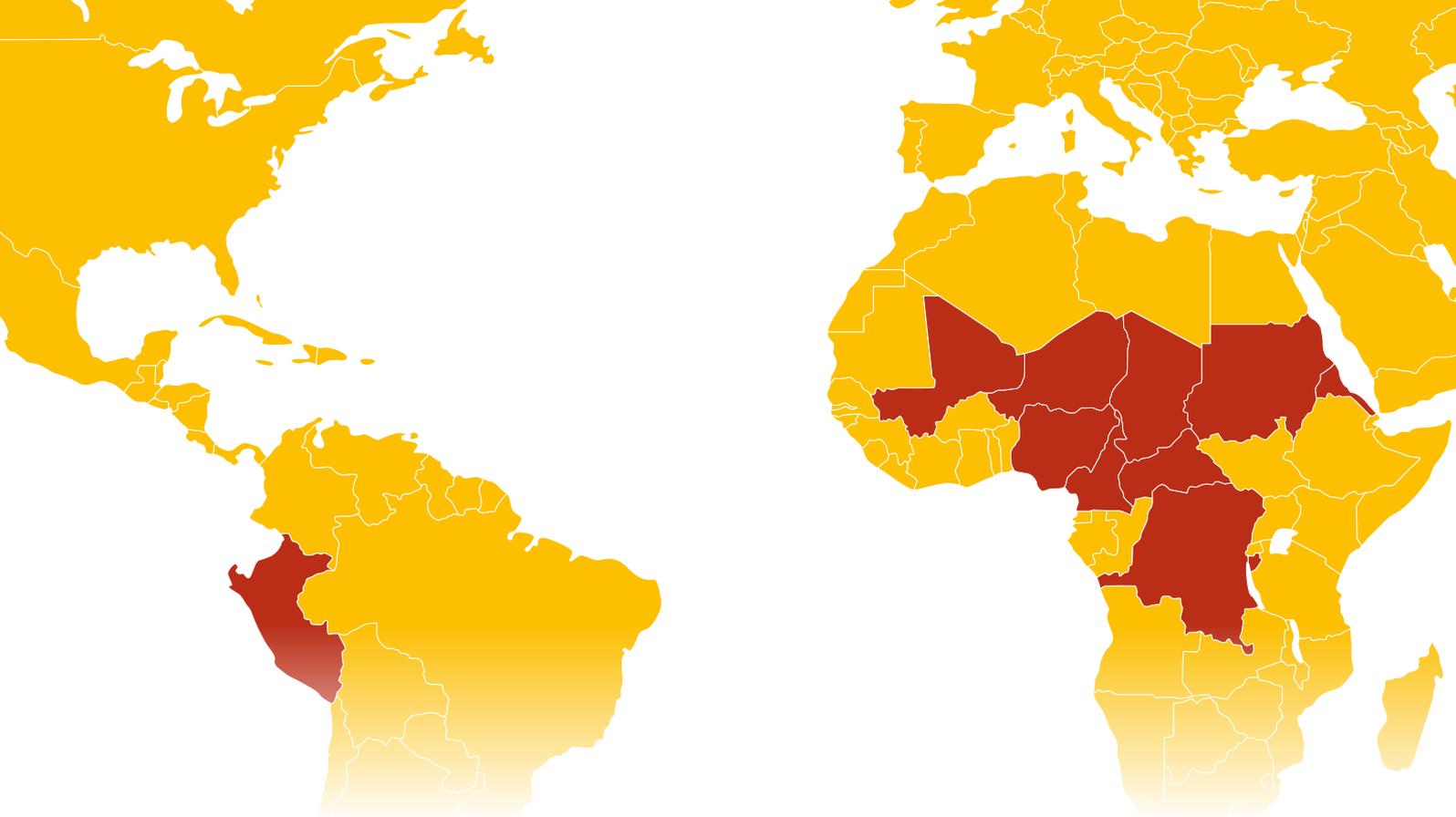
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\*Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria

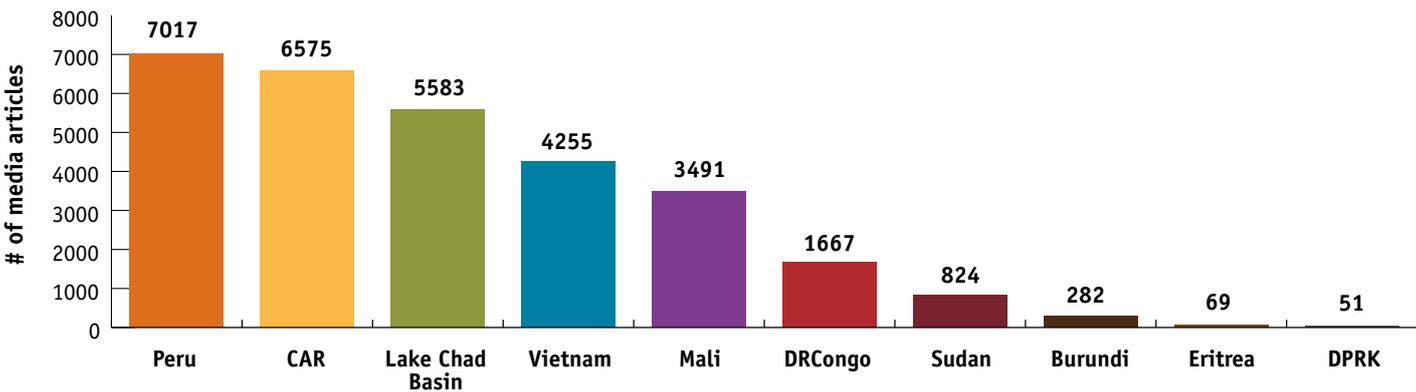


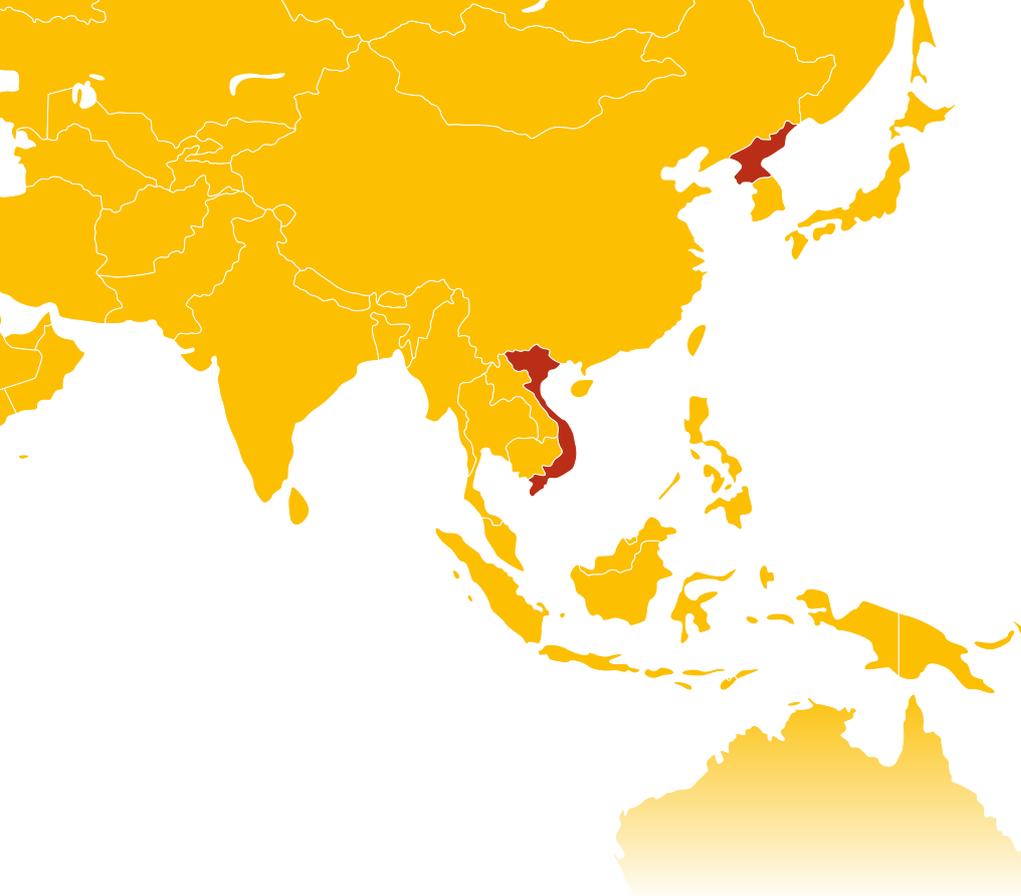
# Introduction

There is a place on earth where every day, on average, over 5,000 people have to flee their homes. There is a country in which nearly half of all young children are malnourished. Do you know these places? If the answer is “no”, you are not alone. The news media is facing daunting challenges covering domestic news – which can lurch from issue to issue based on little more than a tweet – let alone all the death and destruction happening globally. A dizzying array of disasters, wars and other crises rage across the world, making it hard to focus on all of them. Dwindling funds leave fewer journalists available to cover disasters, particularly those in war-torn countries that are extremely difficult to access. Yet telling the world about people who are facing their darkest hours is more important than ever.

The year 2017 was marked by scores of humanitarian crises: armed conflicts, devastating natural disasters, climate shocks, hunger, millions of people fleeing their homes. The Syrian war – and the massive refugee crisis it has spawned – is headed into its eighth year. After more than 1,000 days of war, the number of cholera cases in Yemen passed the one million mark. The world shuddered at horrific images of children starving to death. The most powerful Atlantic hurricane season in a decade wreaked havoc across the Caribbean and southern United States. Almost one million refugees from Myanmar sought shelter and safety in overcrowded camps in Bangladesh after a catastrophic outbreak of violence in their home country.

## Most-underreported crises of 2017





## Methodology

Using the media monitoring services of Meltwater Group, CARE International analysed those humanitarian crises that received the least amount of media attention in 2017. More than 1.2 million online articles were monitored from 1 January to 22 December 2017.

To filter according to scale, we chose those countries in which at least one million people were affected by natural or man-made disasters. The result was a list of almost 40 crises that were analysed and ranked by the number of articles mentioning each. This report lists the 10 most under-reported crises in reverse order, number one being the most under-reported. The overall number of people affected by each emergency derived from UN OCHA's Global Humanitarian Needs Overview, Reliefweb, ACAPS, and CARE. Countries that were affected by the same crisis were grouped together into one emergency. The analysis that underpins the report is drawn from coverage in English, German and French outlets given their broad reach, and to maximize the English analysis service commonly offered by most global media companies. With additional resources, CARE hopes to widen the scope and look at significant coverage in other languages, for example, Chinese, Arabic and Spanish. Though not universal in scope, the report represents a contribution to a broader, global discussion with the ultimate aim to promote awareness and deliver humanitarian aid to those in need.

In 2017, the world was reminded again that crises can take many shapes and have various causes. From natural to man-made, from conflict to climate-shocks, from displacement to persecution. Whatever the backdrop or cause, they share one trait: unimaginable suffering for millions of women, men and children.

While most of these crises made the headlines, there are others which barely made the news. Rarely do we hear about people suffering in parts of the world that are not popular tourist destinations, considered a low priority for global security or simply too hard to reach. And when crises are under-reported, they are often consequently underfunded. Public awareness and funding for humanitarian causes are closely intertwined. Six of the 10 most under-reported crises in this report also appear in the UN's list of most underfunded emergencies in 2017.<sup>1</sup>

Women and girls suffer the most in disasters. They are less likely to survive natural disasters than men, are also often the last ones to eat during drought and are at increased risk of being attacked during conflict. Social inequality and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war leave them highly vulnerable and less able to protect themselves during disasters.

CARE acknowledges that each emergency is unique in its causes, needs and complexities, and the suffering of one group of people is not comparable with the suffering of another. This report does not intend to rank crises as "better or worse" or critique media exposure, but instead looks objectively at news coverage as a means to show how much – or little – of the world's attention was focused on humanitarian crises in 2017.

CARE produced this report to highlight those crises that, though large, have gotten so little attention. "Suffering In Silence" is a call for the global community to help and to advocate for people in crises who are otherwise forgotten.

As humanitarian organisations, CARE International and others work hard to deliver aid to places that are difficult to reach. In order to create meaningful change, all actors have to work together. Those with a voice in public, from media representatives to politicians, have a social and moral responsibility to support crises that are mostly off the radar.

<sup>1</sup> UN Central Emergency Response Fund, 2017 First and Second Rounds: <https://cerf.un.org/apply-for-a-grant/underfunded-emergencies>

# Ranking: The 10 most under-reported crises of 2017

10

Peru

## The worst flooding in decades

**T**orrential rains, leading to flooding, landslides and mudslides, scoured the dry landscape of coastal Peru in March 2017. Large parts of the country were severely affected, including the capital city of Lima. The rains caused the worst flooding in 20 years, with 10 times the normal levels of rainfall across Peru. By April, nearly half the country was in a state of emergency. Public health emergencies were declared in seven regions.

The disaster was the result of a natural phenomenon called El Niño Costero (coastal El Niño), which came off the back of ocean warming due to man-made climate change. In contrast to the "regular" El Niño phenomenon, it was less predictable. Exceptionally warm water along the coast of northern Peru triggered torrential rain affecting over 1.7 million people; almost a third were children and adolescents. This resulted in flooding and landslides, which killed more than 150 people and caused US\$3 billion worth of damage.<sup>2</sup> Over 210,000 homes were taken away by the floods or severely damaged, leaving thousands of people homeless. Affected communities,

most of them extremely poor, lost their livelihoods and means to provide food for their families. Agriculture had been the main source of income for most of the communities impacted. The country's infrastructure was also hit hard. More than 260 bridges collapsed and almost 3,000 km of roads were destroyed, cutting off hundreds of villages and towns.<sup>3+4</sup>

The flooding happened after a period of prolonged drought. The increasingly extreme nature of the weather and climate events in Peru has had a detrimental impact on economic growth and food prices.

When the emergency hit, CARE Peru was already working in the affected areas in the north of the country. Stagnant waters offered breeding grounds for mosquitoes and with this, increased prevention efforts against disease outbreaks became key. CARE distributed water, sanitation and hygiene kits including soap, water treatment tablets, mosquito nets and repellents, and other sanitary materials to the most vulnerable families. Basic tools and farming supplies were also provided to help people begin to recover lost livelihoods.



Over **210,000** homes were taken away by the floods or severely damaged, leaving thousands of people homeless.

2 UN, Peru: Rainy season - Situation Report No. 12: <https://reliefweb.int/report/peru/peru-rainy-season-situation-report-no-12-27-june-2017>

3 The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/apr/13/peru-prevent-floods-landslides-climate-change>

4 ACAPS, Peru Floods Briefing Note: <https://www.acaps.org/country/peru/special-reports#container-859>



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# Central African Republic

In the heart of Africa but off the radar

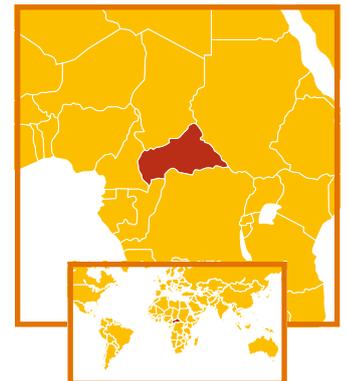
**Unknown to many and largely under-developed, the Central African Republic (CAR) has been suffering from recurring outbreaks of violent clashes. Inter-communal tensions are fuelled by armed groups and political turmoil. About 2.5 million people, more than half of the population, are in need of aid and desperate for food.**

The situation has deteriorated massively since the beginning of 2017, with nearly 70 per cent of the country now being controlled by armed groups. In particular, attacks against women and children have increased drastically. By September 2017, a total of 1.1 million people were displaced – this is a sad new record in CAR. Since the beginning of the conflict, nearly 600,000 people fled their homes and about 512,000 sought shelter in neighbouring countries, such as Cameroon, Chad or the Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>5</sup>

Most areas are hard to reach due to regular attacks of various armed groups who roam the streets in even the smallest villages. The increase in violence against aid workers hinders the delivery of much-needed aid, while every second person depends on assistance. In several regions, aid agencies were forced

to reduce or suspend their operations due to insecurity or under-funding. Widespread violence destroyed health, water and sanitation systems. Food rations were halved, jeopardising the survival of 1.4 million people without regular access to food. The number of malnourished children has increased and is currently among the highest in the world. Around 40 per cent of children below five years of age are malnourished.<sup>6</sup>

Fatimé is one of the many refugees who fled the country for its northern neighbour, Chad. “It started at 3 a.m. in the morning, we heard heavy artillery and gunfire. Fifty-five people in our neighbourhood were killed with machetes. Pregnant women were slit up and their unborn children cut into pieces. There was death all around us. You just take your children and run. We didn’t have time to pack anything,” she says. As part of a women’s cooperative supported by CARE<sup>7</sup>, Fatimé was able to save money, earn a living and start a new life in Chad, which hosts more than 76,000 refugees from the Central African Republic. CARE also supports Central African refugees and host communities in other neighbouring countries, such as Cameroon.



*“Fifty-five people in our neighbourhood were killed with machetes. Pregnant women were slit up and their unborn children cut into pieces. There was death all around us.”*

<sup>5</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2018: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GHO2018.PDF>

<sup>6</sup> EU Central African Republic Fact Sheet: [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/africa/central-african-republic\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/africa/central-african-republic_en)

<sup>7</sup> Known as CARE Village Savings and Loan Associations: <http://www.care.org/vsla>



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# Lake Chad Basin<sup>8</sup>

At the crossroads between conflict, hunger and displacement

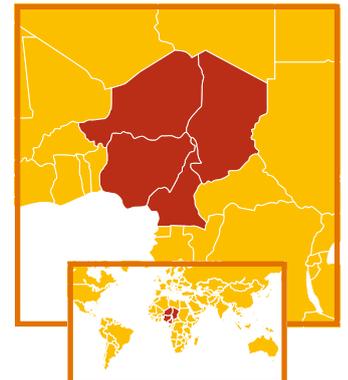
**Eleven million people in the Lake Chad Basin region (North Cameroon, West Chad, South-East Niger and North-East Nigeria) – have seen their lives threatened and their chances for survival decreased over the last years. Eight years of conflict and ongoing attacks related to Boko Haram has meant lost lives and livelihoods, abandoned homes and villages, and deserted farmland, crippling large parts of the Lake Chad Basin.**

Half of the population needs urgent humanitarian assistance. And the situation is getting worse every day: The number of displaced people has tripled in the past two years to 2.4 million people. Most are sheltered by communities already poor and struggling themselves. Continued cycles of displacement, limited access to the most vulnerable people, and insufficient basic services worsen the situation, increasing people's need for aid and protection. Lack of food has reached critical levels. A total of 7 million people and almost half a million children are acutely malnourished.<sup>9</sup>

While military operations decreased during 2017, high levels of violence and insecurity still limit humanitarian and media access to some of the most affected areas in the Lake Chad Basin. Reduced freedom of movement limits

people's ability to access support and basic services, such as health care. The underlying causes of the conflict, including poverty, economic fragility, climate change, rapid population growth and lack of social services, have remained. In particular, women and children have suffered horrific abuse and remain exposed to harm. Many displaced women and girls report incidents of sexual violence. They are also vulnerable to abduction, and as such used as bargaining tools with the government or as suicide bombers. Young boys are at constant risk of being forcibly recruited to fight.

In Niger, 35-year-old Lami Mahamadou recalls her tragic journey fleeing violence from Nigeria to Niger. "I was hopeless and powerless. Seeing my children suffering from hunger and becoming weaker day after day broke my heart. We would go several days without eating. Sometimes, when we encountered well-meaning people, they would give us some food. I'd manage to split the food, which was meant for one person, among all of my children," she says. Today, her children have enough to eat at CARE's Child Friendly Space, a playground and a place where children can get psychological assistance to deal with their trauma. "I was more than glad when I heard the Child Friendly Space will give children breakfast every morning and lunch twice a week. My children finally started recovering," Lami adds.



<sup>8</sup> This includes Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. These four countries were grouped together as they are affected by the same crisis.

<sup>9</sup> Sahel Overview of humanitarian needs and requirements 2017: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HNRO\\_Sahel-2017-EN\\_1.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HNRO_Sahel-2017-EN_1.pdf)

In 2017, CARE International reached about 650,000 people with life-saving assistance including food, cash, shelter, water and reproductive health in the Lake Chad region. In Niger, CARE has provided food, clean water and household items to over 250,000 people and provides psychological support to children and mothers, such as Lami.



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# Vietnam

## A destructive typhoon in the shadows of many

**Although considered the most powerful storm in a decade, little is known about Typhoon Doksuri, the tenth storm to affect Vietnam in 2017. The powerful typhoon tore a destructive path through seven central provinces in Vietnam in September, flooding hundreds of thousands of homes, whipping off roofs and knocking out power.**

According to authorities, 14 people were killed, 112 injured and four others went missing. Doksuri caused widespread rainfall and left about 1.5 million people without power. Homes, schools, public buildings, as well as river and sea banks were extremely damaged.<sup>10</sup> Over 11,000 hectares of rice fields and other crops were ruined following heavy downpours unleashed by the typhoon, affecting the livelihoods of local farmers. Government and aid agencies were able to quickly assist communities and restored most of the damaged infrastructure, including powerlines and communications systems.<sup>11</sup>

Pham Thi Tuat is one of the many people whose thatched roof was blown away by the typhoon. "Water comes in all the time. When the storm hit, the leaves

[covering my roof] were all blown away. I want to borrow money, but I am poor and old, no one wants to lend me any," she says. With CARE's cash assistance, the 87-year-old was able to restore her roof. "Now that I've got the money, I'll manage to cover my house with canvas. I'm really glad," Pham Thi says.

Vietnam is one of the most hazard-prone countries in Asia and the Pacific. According to the World Bank, about 70 per cent of its population is exposed to risks such as typhoons, floods, droughts, storm surges, sea water intrusion, landslides, forest fires and occasional earthquakes. Global climate change and fossil fuel emissions are further exacerbating those risks. The combined impacts of natural disasters in Vietnam hinder development and engender high rates of poverty. About 13-20 storms hit the country every year. In 2017, CARE responded to severe drought and salt intrusion (causing contaminated drinking water) in southern Vietnam, a typhoon in the central part of the country, and a heavy flood in the north. CARE provided food, safe water, shelter, essential items and support to recover livelihoods. CARE also works with communities to help them prepare for disasters, adapt to climate change impacts and reduce risks.



*With CARE's cash assistance, Pham Thi was able to restore her roof. "Now that I've got the money, I'll manage to cover my house with canvas. I'm really glad."*

<sup>10</sup> IFRC, Typhoon Doksuri - Operation update: <https://reliefweb.int/report/viet-nam/vietnam-typhoon-doksuri-operation-update-dref-n-mdrvn015>

<sup>11</sup> UN OCHA, Weekly Regional Humanitarian Snapshot: <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/asia-and-pacific-weekly-regional-humanitarian-snapshot-12-18-september-2017>

6

# Mali



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## Trapped in a vicious circle of aid dependency and malnutrition

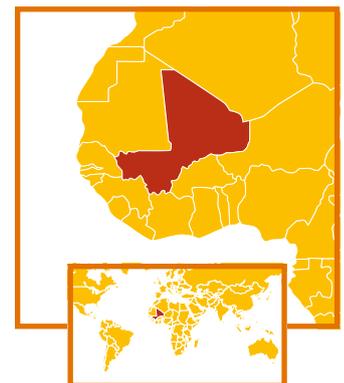
**More than five years have passed since the escalation of conflict in northern Mali. However, insecurity persists in northern and central parts of the country and progress towards an improvement of the humanitarian situation has stagnated. The resurgence of inter-communal violence and clashes between armed groups in 2017 triggered renewed displacements and disrupted the lives of thousands of people. Many crisis-affected communities solely depend on humanitarian assistance and still struggle to access food, water, healthcare, education and work. In regions where fighting occurred, women reported cases of physical, psychological and sexual violence.**

With limited progress in the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali (known as the Bamako Agreement) and weak government structures, the humanitarian needs are dire. People still lack access to basic social services, such as health clinics, and disease outbreaks pose a major risk. Despite some slow returns, over 52,000 Malians remain internally displaced and more than 140,000 refugees are in neighbouring countries where they try to survive in remote refugee camps in the desert.

Mali is also prone to recurring disasters such as droughts, floods and epidemics.

The UN is expecting over 4 million people, representing 22 per cent of the Malian population, to be food-insecure in 2018, including 800,000 people who will require urgent food assistance. Malnutrition remains a serious concern for 165,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition and 115,000 pregnant or lactating women requiring nutrition assistance. Furthermore, over 900,000 people lack clean drinking water, sanitation facilities and hygiene assistance. Non-functional schools will mean no education for 300,000 children, who are exposed to higher risks of recruitment by armed or criminal groups. Girls, in particular, are at higher risk of violence when out-of-school.<sup>12</sup>

CARE Mali has reached more than 500,000 people with aid since June 2012 in the regions of Mopti, Segou and Timbuktu. In coordination with the UN World Food Programme, CARE distributed nearly 30,000 tons of food to 300,000 people in these three regions, paying special attention to children under 5 years of age and lactating women. CARE also distributed cash assistance, blankets, tarps, cooking pots and utensils, and supported farmers and families with seeds and tools to grow food. At the same time, CARE offers cash-for-work programmes to help people generate an income while rehabilitating dams and roads and constructing water and sanitation facilities.



**CARE Mali has reached more than 500,000 people with aid since June 2012**

<sup>12</sup> UN OCHA, Mali Humanitarian Brief (December 2017): <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali-humanitarian-brief-december-2017>



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# Democratic Republic of Congo

## A silent humanitarian tsunami

**After more than two decades of violence, for many children in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), conflict and war is all they have known. A surge in violence and inter-communal tensions across the country forced more than 1.7 million people to flee their homes in 2017, an average of more than 5,500 people per day.**

More than 4 million Congolese are now displaced, with 620,000 of them seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Almost 2 million children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, making up 12 per cent of the world's acutely malnourished children. On top of this, few Congolese have access to clean water. Outbreaks of diseases, including cholera, measles and malaria, affect tens of thousands of people every year. The effect of escalating conflict has restricted DRC's economic growth and increased inflation means people can buy less with whatever money they have.<sup>13</sup>

The situation in the DRC is rapidly evolving. The number of people in need of assistance almost doubled to 8 million people in 2017 and is expected to grow further in 2018. The number of people going hungry has also escalated a shocking 30 per cent year over year,

with a staggering 7.7 million people not having enough to eat. Violence has been intensifying and the possibility of further escalation remains extremely high with dire consequences for the country and the broader Great Lakes Region. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable due to widespread sexual and gender-based violence and rape. Traditional beliefs and culture regarding gender roles and responsibilities also limit their freedom.<sup>14</sup>

"I no longer go to the market. I stay at home, mainly inside. My heart is ok but I don't like to leave home very often. I don't walk in the village, only when I need to come to the health centre," says Grace, a rape survivor. In the DRC, a woman who has been raped brings shame to her family and lives with the stigma – often in the form of isolation and social exclusion – for the rest of her life. Paying compensation to her husband's family, usually in the form of household items, is regarded as a way of 'cleansing' or 'redeeming honour'.

In response to this crisis, CARE provides assistance in sexual and reproductive health, including to survivors of gender-based violence. CARE works through local health centres and communities to also provide health services, nutrition, food security, and water and sanitation.



*"I no longer go to the market. I stay at home, mainly inside. My heart is ok but I don't like to leave home very often."*

<sup>13</sup> UN OCHA Regional Humanitarian Outlook for the Great Lakes and Beyond: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Oct-Dec\\_GLR\\_Outlook\\_13Nov2017.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Oct-Dec_GLR_Outlook_13Nov2017.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> UN OCHA Democratic Republic of the Congo Overview: <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/democratic-republic-congo-overview-november-2017>



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4

# Sudan

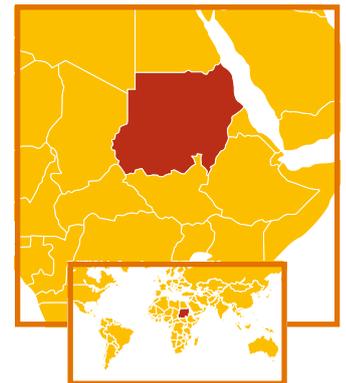
## 13 years of war and hunger

**Over a decade of conflict, chronic poverty and climatic shock have put almost 5 million people on the edge of survival in Sudan. For the past 13 years, dire humanitarian needs, particularly in the western province of Darfur, have persisted. Many families are facing extreme hunger. At the end of 2017, more than 2 million children were suffering. In addition, the country regularly suffers from floods and droughts.**

In addition, over 460,000 refugees from the Republic of South Sudan have put additional strain on Sudan's fragile economy. About 185,000 refugees fled from violence in South Sudan to seek aid and shelter in neighbouring Sudan in 2017 alone. A total of 88 per cent of the refugees are women and children. But while Sudan is sought as a safe haven by people from neighbouring South Sudan, the country itself equally suffers from violence, malnutrition, lack of food and access to basic services. As a result, 2.3 million Sudanese are displaced in their own country.<sup>15</sup>

Attoma Khawaja is one of the many South Sudanese refugees. "We had no choice but to flee and take refuge in Sudan to escape the violence and diseases spreading everywhere," Attoma says. Having lost her husband back home and with her house burned down by rebels, Attoma fled with her five children. She was brought to Khor Omer Camp, where the majority of South Sudanese refugees were settled. But her suffering did not end there. "Getting water in the camp was not an easy task. I did not have a container for fetching or storing water," Attoma says.

CARE Sudan seeks to meet the most urgent needs for refugees and those displaced, like Attoma. Water services range from giving out jerry cans to building sanitation facilities and establishing water systems. Given funding shortages, almost 50 health facilities in Sudan had to close down in 2017, affecting over 630,000 people.<sup>16</sup> CARE works hard to give people access to crucial health support. CARE also provides emergency nutrition assistance to malnourished children under 5 years old and to pregnant and lactating women so that their children do not suffer from life-long consequences of malnutrition. Women and girls are at the centre of CARE's emergency work and the use of village savings groups creates networks for many to generate income.



*"We had no choice but to flee and take refuge in Sudan to escape the violence and diseases spreading everywhere."*

<sup>15</sup> Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2017: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/sudan/document/sudan-2017-humanitarian-response-plan>

<sup>16</sup> Statement attributable to the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan: <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/statement-attributable-united-nations-resident-and-humanitarian-coordinator-sudan-ms-7>

3

# Burundi

## Persecution and violence fuelling a humanitarian crisis

**With political unrest and significant human rights concerns persisting, the crisis in Burundi enters its fourth year. Over 400,000 people, half of them children, have fled from the violence and dire humanitarian conditions to seek safety in neighbouring countries.**

Almost 200,000 people remain displaced inside Burundi. They face food shortages and a lack of basic services, such as health care, water, sanitation and food. Reports indicate that over 2.6 million people – 27 per cent of the country's population – do not know how to feed their families. The country is experiencing rising food prices resulting from economic and agricultural decline and disruption of markets and trade. Severe weather conditions, including drought and floods, also led to an exceptionally bad harvest in 2017.

In many parts of the country, child malnutrition is on the increase. Limited access to water and sanitation also aggravates the risk of communicable diseases. In 2017, a malaria epidemic was declared with over 6.6 million cases, including 2,875 deaths, reported in the first eight months of the year.

Multiple small outbreaks of cholera have so far been contained but require close monitoring.<sup>17</sup>

And here again, women and girls suffer the most. Not only do they bear additional financial and domestic responsibilities to look after their families, but they also endure daily violence and insecurity. Some are forced to engage in survival sex and other negative coping mechanisms to make it through the day.

CARE Burundi promotes opportunities for women's economic empowerment in rural Africa through the POWER Africa project that focuses on achieving financial inclusion for 75,000 adolescent girls and 25,000 women in the region. Twenty-year-old Vestine Clemence Ndayishimiye is one of many successful participants. Abandoned by her family, she turned her life around by establishing her own business. "CARE's POWER Africa project introduced me to the concepts of entrepreneurship and building assets," Vestine says. "I also learned that I need to recognise and respond to the demands around me," she adds. Today, Vestine makes baskets, sells bread and owns a few animals.



Reports indicate that over **2.6 million** people – 27 per cent of the country's population – do not know how to feed their families.

<sup>17</sup> Burundi Regional Refugee Response Plan 2018: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/61371>

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2

# Eritrea

## Fleeing drought and repression

**I**solated and off the media radar, Eritrea hardly ever makes the major news headlines. When it does, it is often related to border tensions, human rights abuses or Eritrean refugees drowning in the Mediterranean. Widely cut off from the outside world, media and aid organisations have very limited access to the East African country.

More than 700,000 people are suffering from the ongoing drought, lack of food and water shortages. This is compounding an already dire situation caused by the dry spells of the weather phenomenon El Niño, which started two years ago. About 80 per cent of the population, almost 3.6 million people, depends on subsistence agriculture with women and children particularly at risk of malnutrition and disease.<sup>18</sup> Children are likely to suffer long-term consequences. If babies and their

mothers do not receive the nutrients they need, their physical and cognitive development can be severely hampered. Half of all children in Eritrea are stunted and cannot achieve their full mental and physical potential, simply because they do not have enough food to develop and grow. In addition, sexual and gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation, remains a dangerous reality for many women and girls.<sup>19</sup>

The prolonged military service obligation and forced labour coupled with ongoing conflict and poor economic conditions continue to fuel migration of young Eritreans. Though legal migration routes are very limited, over 400,000 Eritrean migrants left their country in the past decade. They leave knowing that they are likely to face rape, torture, kidnapping and wreckage at sea. Eritreans constitute one of the largest groups of refugees in Europe and Africa.<sup>20</sup>



**More than 700,000** people are suffering from the ongoing drought, lack of food and water shortages.

<sup>18</sup> UNICEF Eritrea Mid-Year Humanitarian Situation Report: [https://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/UNICEF\\_Eritrea\\_Humanitarian\\_Situation\\_Report\\_30\\_June\\_2017.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/UNICEF_Eritrea_Humanitarian_Situation_Report_30_June_2017.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Eritrea Population and Health Survey 2010: [https://www.unicef.org/eritrea/ECO\\_resources\\_populationhealthsurvey2010.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eritrea/ECO_resources_populationhealthsurvey2010.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/eritrea>

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# Democratic People's Republic of Korea

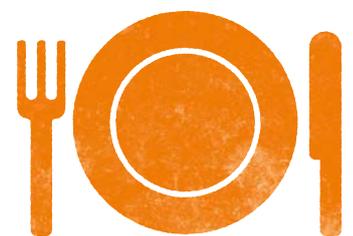
## Life under oppression and hunger

**Although North Korea (officially the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) has been in the news for nuclear and political tensions, little is known about the country's humanitarian situation.**

The UN estimates that 18 million people – 70 per cent of the population – are food-insecure and rely on government food aid. Furthermore, two in five North Koreans are undernourished. The impacts of the country's political regime together with global warming and frequent natural hazards, such as floods, rising temperatures or prolonged droughts, exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation. In July 2017, North Korea experienced the worst drought since 2001. Below-average rainfall in key areas for crop production severely disrupted planting activities

and damaged the 2017 main season crops.<sup>21</sup> As a result, people urgently require food – particularly nutritious food – medical and health services, water and sanitation facilities.

Among the most vulnerable are women and children. Almost a third of all pregnant and lactating mothers and more than 200,000 children are estimated to suffer from severe acute malnutrition. Furthermore, women are deprived of education and job opportunities while many are subjected to violence at home and sexual assault in the workplace, according to the UN. Very few aid organisations and almost no journalists are granted access to North Korea, adding to the lack of awareness, up-to-date data and services provided to those in need of assistance.<sup>22</sup>



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<sup>21</sup> FAO DPRK Special Alert No. 340: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7544e.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> UN DPR Korea Needs and Priorities March 2017: <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-peoples-republic-korea/dpr-korea-needs-and-priorities-march-2017>

# What can we do?

## Seven steps to help shine a light on forgotten crises

**With so many different types of disasters and conflicts that are hardly covered in the media and discussed in this report the question remains: What can or should be done about human suffering around the world? Some of the obstacles are well known. Aid agencies need safe access to crisis-affected areas, more funding, and the space to work together.**

The importance of media coverage and public awareness to help mobilise funds and increase pressure on decision-makers has been proven again and again. Still, the question on how to ensure better coverage of under-reported crises remains largely unaddressed. So what is needed? Seven equally important steps are crucial now:

23 Index of Censorship:  
<https://mappingmediafreedom.org>

### 1 Media access

While humanitarian access remains high on the agenda of most aid organisations to secure safe passage for staff and relief supplies, security and access also remain key challenges for journalists. Attacks on press freedom and violence against journalists and other media workers have increased in recent years. According to the latest numbers in the Index on Censorship<sup>23</sup>, the media is facing an unprecedented wave of hostility. The study found over 1,000 verified reports of violence, threats or violations throughout the EU and neighbouring countries alone. Press freedom is essential to shine a light on issues that would otherwise be forgotten. Just as it is important to respect the neutrality of aid workers, it is vital to allow reporters to cover stories with full access and safety. Humanitarian agencies are in a unique position to facilitate media access to hard-to-reach areas. The international community also needs to hold to account those who block press freedom and put the lives of journalists at risk.

### 2 Reporting outside the box

Raising awareness and drawing attention to crises and disasters is vital in order to secure the funding needed to help. But often increased coverage is not enough to trigger political action. Large-scale emergencies, such as in Syria or Yemen, belong to the *most-reported* crises in 2017. Still, the crisis in Syria is entering its eighth year and the conflict in Yemen has escalated. With numerous crises competing for space in the headline news all at the same time, often only those with the largest figures or most shocking facts make it. This is why it is important to look for angles that are outside the norm. Not only does this help differentiate the complexities and uniqueness of each crisis, it also prevents the formation of simplistic stereotypes that can quickly lead to donor and “compassion fatigue.” This also means that the media needs to communicate such differences and unique solutions, and continue to provide an accurate picture of the humanitarian needs on the ground.

### 3 Funding foreign reporting

Amid the increasing funding needs for people placed in the line of conflict or suffering from chronic crises, financial woes also pose a major threat to the news industry. With claims and counterclaims about “fake news” on the rise and sensationalism dictating news consumption, independent journalism is at great risk. Although dwindling news budgets lead to less investments in foreign coverage, particularly in the Global South, news outlets have a moral responsibility in telling stories that may be challenging to cover.

Declining revenue is often the culprit for the demise of humanitarian reporting in low-interest countries. To fight this trend, it is not only crucial for readers to support their favourite media outlet but also for aid agencies and donors to support crisis reporting. An example for this could be for aid agencies and other actors to increase offering press visits to emergency-affected areas, providing logistical support for freelance journalists, capturing raw footage for news coverage or supporting training for journalists.

## 4 Think local

Local actors, reporters and aid organisations have a wealth of knowledge and unique access to information in crises and emergencies. In recent times, an increasing number of non-profit news agencies have emerged, using creative partnerships to operate. At the same time, most commercial news actors are in search of alternative ways to sustain the quality and neutrality of their stories given massive budget cuts in the traditional media sector. According to a study published by the American Press Institute<sup>24</sup>, these forces are pushing many commercial news actors to be less concerned with competition and more open to collaboration. An increasing number of media outlets are embracing partnerships so they can access expertise from non-profit organisations and maintain their level of independent journalism. It could be useful for news outlets, local reporters and aid organisations to further explore how to better work together. This could amplify the political, humanitarian and fundraising calls supporting people in need and making the case for solutions that truly address the local needs of those suffering.

## 5 Raise the voices of women and children

In crises, it is often women and children who suffer the most. More women than men die in disasters and their livelihoods are often hit hardest. Sexual and gender-based violence is regularly used as a weapon of war and maternal deaths increase up to 60 per cent in conflicts, during displacement and natural disasters. Countries at war and those with under-developed economies face countless difficulties. However, the struggles of women and children suffering from deep economic, social and human inequality are often under-reported. Reporting on the misery and adversity women and children endure is of major importance in order to ensure that their voices are heard and concerns addressed. There is also an increased need for women in journalism, particularly as cultural barriers mean that it is often easier for female journalists to be able to address sensitive issues with women in crisis areas, such as survivors of sexual violence.

## 6 Invest in communications as a core function of humanitarian work

With tight budgets and difficult access to affected areas, aid organisations face the challenge of quickly and efficiently delivering aid, employing relevant experts to ensure the quality of aid programs, and reporting to donors and the public. But media stories are different from a donor report. News angles need to be found, research done, interviews organised and stories written. Without trained spokespeople on the ground, NGOs cannot play their part in reporting on neglected crises.

It is important for aid agencies to invest in trained communications and media specialists who can liaise with the public through media, especially in neglected crises. Not only do they help media outlets tell the stories, but they are also the ones calling for action and much-needed funds. All of this needs to be considered an integral part of emergency work. Without a focus on communications and media, a crisis risks to be ignored.

## 7 Look at the bigger picture

More often than not, media stories only get published when damage is already done. Very few news pieces on early warning signs, effective risk reduction examples or the underlying causes of disasters, such as man-made climate change, make it out to the public. Many of today's emergencies are avoidable but a lack of awareness and funding still hampers efforts in crisis prevention. Every single dollar (US\$) spent on preventing and mitigating disasters saves an average of seven dollars in disaster response and recovery.<sup>25</sup> Yet, efforts to address the long-term impacts of climate change, gender or economic inequality are consistently underfunded, partially because they rarely catch the media spotlight.<sup>26</sup> It is important to look not only at death tolls or the scale of destruction when covering crises; the media and international community have a role to report on the complexities behind an emergency. Shifting focus from damage to risks is also important to educate the public. Covering more nuanced stories, which include the often invisible causes of crises, can lead to greater public understanding of the dynamics behind human suffering.

As an international aid organisation, CARE International's fundamental belief is guided by the humanitarian imperative to provide relief to people regardless of race, ethnicity, religious or political affiliation. We deliver aid to some of the world's most vulnerable and poorest people, working with them to increase their resilience, and advocate for the most pressing humanitarian issues globally including the need for increased access and funding. All of the featured crises in this report will continue to need our attention in 2018 and beyond.

Although the wheels in the news cycles turn faster and faster at a time of multiple emergencies globally, we are hopeful that by shining a light on the world's most neglected crises, we can start to raise the voices of those affected, and those most affected: women and children.

<sup>24</sup> American Press Institute, How news partnerships work: <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/strategy-studies/commercial-nonprofit-partnerships>

<sup>25</sup> UNDP Issue Brief Disaster Preparedness: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/crisis-prevention-and-recovery/issue-brief--disaster-preparedness.html>

<sup>26</sup> The Humanitarian Response Index 2011: Addressing the Gender Challenge: <https://daraint.org/humanitarian-response-index/humanitarian-response-index-2011>



# About CARE International

Founded in 1945, CARE International works around the globe to save lives, defeat poverty and achieve social justice. We put women and girls in the centre because we know that we cannot overcome poverty until all people have equal rights and opportunities.

CARE International works in 93 countries around the world to assist more than 63 million people improve basic health and education, fight hunger, increase access to clean water and sanitation, expand economic opportunity, confront climate change, and recover from disasters.

**To learn more, visit: [www.care-international.org](http://www.care-international.org)  
and [www.care-international.org/suffering-in-silence](http://www.care-international.org/suffering-in-silence)**



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