

## PRESSEMITTEILUNG

**Ukraine: crisis threatens to push millions more children globally into hunger**

*Global, 3 March 2022* – Skyrocketing wheat prices due to the Russian military operation in Ukraine could put millions of children in the world's most fragile contexts, such as Yemen, Lebanon and Syria, at risk of illness or even death due to hunger, Save the Children said today.

The child rights organisation is calling for an immediate end to the violence, not only to protect children in Ukraine but also to prevent further escalation of what is already the worst global hunger crisis this century.

Russia and Ukraine account for a significant amount of the world's wheat supply, together exporting [more than a quarter of the world's wheat in 2019](#). The current violence is set to cause a sharp rise in global grain prices, with wheat predicted to [rise](#) up to 50% in some countries.

In Yemen, where [95%](#) of wheat is imported, including [more than 30%](#) from Russia and Ukraine, wheat and bread make up [over half of the calorie intake](#) for the average household. Food prices in the country have already [more than doubled](#) in the past couple of years, with families forced to reduce food portions or skip meals completely in order to cope. Over half the population is facing acute hunger, according to the [World Food Programme](#).

**Save the Children's Country Director in Yemen, Rama Hansraj, said:**

*"The crisis unfolding in Ukraine is having a ripple effect on children elsewhere in the world. Our hearts are breaking for the children in Ukraine, but I cannot stop thinking of the additional horrors that may unfold if this conflict does not stop immediately.*

*"In Yemen 8 million children are already on the brink of famine. Families are exhausted. They've faced horror after horror through seven years of war. We fear they will not be able to endure another shock, especially to the main ingredient keeping their children alive. No more children should die of starvation."*

In Lebanon, [up to 80%](#) of wheat imports come from Russia and Ukraine. Only about one month's worth of wheat can be stored at a time in existing mills as a result of the August 2020 blast in Beirut's port that destroyed the country's major grain silos and killed over 200 people.

With the country experiencing record high inflation and with more and more families struggling to put food on the table, shortages of staple foods or further hikes in food prices will exacerbate an already desperate situation, Save the Children warned.

**Jennifer Moorehead, Save the Children's Country Director for Lebanon, said:**

*"Just months ago, families we work with were telling us how they had been forced to cut their daily food intake by half as the price of basic foods had quadrupled in price since the previous year due to the country's economic crisis.*

*"It's not an exaggeration to say that in Lebanon, children's survival is hanging by a thread. The wheat imported from Ukraine is a vital lifeline – cutting this off will doubtlessly push families here to the brink."*

There are also concerns for Syria, where domestic wheat production has collapsed following almost 11 years of conflict, displacement and economic crisis. In 2021, the country's total wheat production was just a quarter of its pre-crisis average. Some [12 million people](#) in Syria - 56% of the country's population - are now food insecure.

Areas under the government of Syria's control could be particularly affected. The government sought to shore up wheat supplies through Russian imports in 2021, but any risk to this supply could fuel a new wave of hunger.

**Save the Children's Syria Response Director Sonia Khush said:**

*"As the world turns to a new crisis and all the horrors this violence unleashes on ordinary people, the needs of Syrian children are at a record high. A global food crisis brought on by the situation in Ukraine brings new threats that these children cannot afford to face."*

Save the Children is calling for an immediate end to violence in Ukraine, as this is only way to protect children. It will also prevent a deterioration of the situation for children and families beyond Europe who depend on exports for survival.

The conflict has come as the world faces its worst hunger crisis this century, with the number of people at risk of famine rising 60% since before the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, an [estimated 45 million people](#) across 43 countries are at risk of famine, up from 27 million in 2019.

Save the Children has been working in Yemen since 1963, implementing programmes in education, child protection, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, and emergency response across most of the country.

Save the Children has been working in Lebanon since 1953, supporting children and young people in education, child participation and protection, food security and livelihoods, and access to clean water and shelter.

Save the Children's programmes in Syria combine emergency and life-saving interventions with early recovery activities that support the restoration of basic services including child protection, education, emergency response, food security and livelihoods, water, sanitation and hygiene as well as health and nutrition.

Save the Children has been operating in Ukraine since 2014, delivering essential humanitarian aid to children and their families. This includes supporting their access to education, providing psychosocial support, distributing winter kits and hygiene kits, and providing cash grants to families so they can meet basic needs such as food, rent and medicines, or so they can invest in new businesses.

The [Children's Emergency Fund](#) allows Save the Children to respond to wherever the need is greatest to reach children quickly with the essentials they need to survive.

**Notes to the Editor:**

- According to the Yemen [Socio-Economic Update](#), domestic wheat production is limited and shrinking against the growing consumer needs. Thus, the sufficiency rate of wheat declined to less than 5%. To bridge the wheat food gap that is estimated at more than 3 million metric tons per annum, Yemen imports more than 95% of its wheat consumption needs from abroad.
- According to [FAO](#) estimates, wheat accounts for 51% of caloric intake of the Yemeni population. Yemen is a net-food-importing country. As such, Yemen's population would suffer considerably at any increase in global food prices.
- Besides the actual conflict in Yemen, a number of factors have impacted including: the rapid currency depreciation that undermined purchasing power, air and sea port closures, lack of import financing support, soaring and volatile fuel prices and now the escalation in Ukraine. All of this has caused half of the population to go hungry, and today, we are anticipating a catastrophe, beyond anything we ever thought possible, to devastate the country irreparably.

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[www.savethechildren.de/spenden/ukraine](http://www.savethechildren.de/spenden/ukraine)

Bei Interviewanfragen wenden Sie sich bitte an unsere Pressestelle. Für mehr aktuelle Informationen folgen Sie uns auf Twitter [@SaveChildrenDE](https://twitter.com/SaveChildrenDE).

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### Über Save the Children

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in rund 120 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.