

CALL FOR INPUT | SPECIAL PROCEDURES

Call for input - Human Rights and Starvation, with an emphasis on the
Palestinian People's Food Sovereignty

ISSUED BY

Special Rapporteur on the right to food

Inputs submitted by CARE International



Key questions and types of input/comments sought

General

1. How can human rights provide a way of generating an “early warning” to prevent starvation?

Human rights play a determining role in shaping people’s ability to consistently access, afford and utilize nutritious and safe food. Rights-based approaches/methodologies to understand food insecurity can be an important tool to **evidence that intra-household food insecurity is widely variable** and suggest corrective actions to mitigate food insecurity. By **highlighting marginalization of specific communities or population groups**, they can also be a powerful means to reconstitute agency and empower communities for more effective responses.

Early warning systems such as the IPC rely on data collected at the household level – a methodology that assumes similar food insecurity experiences within households. CARE’s research piloting gender-disaggregated methods of IPC acute food insecurity assessment shows that there are stark differences in men and women’s food security outcomes, a discrepancy that can be driven by women’s unequal access to safe and decent work, justice, property rights, reproductive rights, specific nutritional needs and social capital¹. **An early warning system which is calibrated to measure the inequalities women face to enjoy their right to food could be a potential signal of food security vulnerability, and one that could be addressed before weather events or economic shocks cause further damage.**

In order **for human rights analysis to be effectively included in any early warning systems, local organizations (including women-led organizations) and communities must be able to participate, contribute to and lead in all aspects of the process.** These organizations are best placed to know the food security and human rights’ situations in their areas, and collaborate with communities for context-specific strategies to confront challenges as they emerge. Rights-based analysis can thus facilitate targeted and gender-transformative assistance to reach women more quickly.

2. If starvation is caused by political failures, what international institutional changes are necessary to avoid such failures?

Existing early warning systems allow to sound the alarm long before communities reach starvation (IPC 5), but this is not met by a reliable, accountable, or effective early action system by the international community. Without **comprehensive changes that reform the incentive structure to respond to early warnings**, we will continue to see a pattern of unheeded warnings and deteriorating crises.

One critical action is to invest more in disaster risk reduction, warning early and anticipatory action to help reduce needs. It is also essential to ensure EWEAR is linked to humanitarian response by ensuring the response to hunger is adequately resourced, through fully funding Humanitarian Response Plans and appeals. In so doing, it is paramount to invest in mechanisms such as Country Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs)

¹ For example, in the Dry Corridor of Honduras, amidst the 2023-24 drought, the prevalence of women experiencing crisis-levels of food insecurity was on average 50% higher than compared to men.

designed to be easily accessible to local responders, including to Women Led Organisations, who are usually first to respond and last to leave bringing the **funding closest to community-level decision-making**. This approach not only empowers communities to take early action, it is also more likely to build longer-term durable solutions.

The need for early action also calls for **dedicated funding** and **deploying novel financial mechanisms**. Under-leveraged actors such as private sector entities, non-traditional donors, and IFIs should be engaged to develop new ways to front-load funding for countries that are showing warning signs of mounting hunger or rights-based infringements to food security.

3. The last two famines, as measured by the IPC were Somalia in 2011 and South Sudan in 2017. What were the root causes of famine in each case and who was responsible? What lessons were learned about preventing famine from those two situations?

The climate and conflict (or state fragility) nexus and its impact on food security is well researched. While climate, independently, played a major role in triggering food insecurity in both Somalia and South-Sudan, the difficulty for food assistance to access populations as a result of insecurity or conflict led to famine determination. Aside from Somalia in 2011 and South Sudan in 2017, it is worth noting that famine may have taken place in other locations but was not formally assessed by the IPC due to the lack of available data (often because of the difficulties to collect data during active conflicts).

An important lesson learned by CARE from its past engagement is that discriminations at large, and gender inequality in particular, are another root cause, as women's rights play a fundamental role in mitigating collective food insecurity. When women's access to food improves, not only their own food security, but that across their households and their communities also improve. More broadly, women's critical in times of conflict and their remarkable leadership in community responses is documented in the report "[Women in War: Leaders, Responders, and Potential](#)" covering 15 conflict-affected countries since 2020. On the other hand, women are also disproportionately affected by both climate change (see Gender Equality - CARE Climate Change or FAO report "The unjust Climate") and conflict (in particular, Gender-Based Violence).

4. What are the root causes of food insecurity in places where this is currently a high risk of famine like Burkina Faso, Mali, South Sudan and Sudan or places of emergency conditions of acute food security such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Pakistan, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen?

Food insecurity and worsening into situations of starvation, and/or declaration of famine, is always rooted in inequality and exclusion, with gender inequality an influential factor. Countries that display high levels of gender inequality are more likely to be associated with both intrastate and interstate armed conflict, and peace established under more gender equal conditions is more likely to hold². Human Rights (at large: peace, health, food, women's rights, women's economic justice, climate justice) safeguard societies from experiencing worst forms of destitution such as food insecurity. Without respect for

² (Caprioli 2000, 2005; Caprioli and Boyer 2001; Hudson and den Boer 2002; Melander 2005a; Hudson et al. 2008/2009; Gizelis 2009; Bjarnegård and Melander 2011; Demeritt, Nichols, and Kelly 2014). Also refer to Examining Gender Inequality and Armed Conflict at the Subnational Level | Journal of Global Security Studies | Oxford Academic (oup.com)

human rights and Rule of Law, or in absence of social protection measures to support the most marginalised groups, societies are more vulnerable to political instability and conflict - and this trend is visible in each of the countries in this list.

Palestine and the Palestinian People

5. What actions of solidarity and care are you providing the Palestinian people? Please explain why this work is an act of solidarity.

CARE initiatives focus on the resilience and self-sufficiency of Palestinian communities, aligning Palestinian people's right to adequate food with their right to adequate and dignified living conditions and economic opportunities. The following activities and programs demonstrate solidarity to the Palestinian people by directly addressing the immediate needs and ensuring survival with dignity:

Emergency Assistance: In Gaza, CARE is providing emergency response support in the form of life-saving emergency assistance in WASH, Shelter, Health, Protection and Food Security, almost all through local partners. These include but are not limited to: First Line Health Assistance through our mobile medical clinics, SRH Services, and support to hospitals and clinics in the form of medical equipment and pharmaceuticals; the provision of hygiene kits and clean and safe drinking water to combat the spread of communicable diseases; psycho-social support; baby kits and mama kits for women and young girls, as well as pregnant and new mothers.

Locally-coordinated food distributions: CARE alongside the other INGOs and UN agencies (WFP and UNRWA) runs food programs in the West Bank and Gaza. Food parcels to families in need ensure they have access to essential nutrients. CARE's local partners and community leaders also play a crucial role in distributing food and basic necessities. These efforts and those of various agencies are coordinated by the Palestinian Food Security Sector (FSS).

Livelihood Support Initiatives: CARE enhances the livelihoods of vulnerable groups in the West Bank (and in the past, Gaza) through different gender-transformative initiatives such as supporting small businesses and agricultural support programs for farmers. These initiatives provide Palestinian farmers with seeds, tools, and training to increase local food production and resilience, through stable income, against economic shocks.

Advocacy: CARE works in solidarity with our Palestinian partners and INGO peers to advocate for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and a dramatic scale up in unhindered humanitarian access to alleviate suffering and save lives. These messages are delivered directly to the UN Security Council and other multilateral fora, national governments, the donor community and through a wide range of international, regional and national media channels.

6. What should be done to enhance the Palestinian People's food sovereignty and how can Palestinian peasants, small-scale fishers, pastoralists and small food producers be supported?

Strengthening Rights of Farmers and Food Producers: through advocating for land rights and protection against land confiscation and settler violence, ensuring farmers have secure and lasting access to their land and resources (water etc), and providing

legal and financial support to small-scale farmers so they can sustain their livelihoods and invest in their land. Gender equality is at the center of our programmes.

Promoting Local Food Production: through supporting agricultural projects that focus on traditional farming methods and local crops and livestock, enhancing food production and marketing and reducing dependency on imported food. CARE's farmers field and business school (FFBS) approach (see: [Farmer Field and Business School \(FFBS\) - CARE](#)) helps strengthen skills in sustainable agricultural practices, efficient water usage, and modern farming techniques while integrating gender, nutrition and climate considerations.

Supporting market access and sustainable livelihoods, including through community and policy support: Create infrastructure and logistics support for small-scale producers to access local and international markets, ensuring fair trade conditions; develop microfinance programs tailored to the needs of small-scale farmers and fishers, enabling them to invest in their operations and expand their production capabilities; Foster community-based initiatives that support local food systems, such as farmers' markets and direct-to-consumer sales.

Encouraging urban agriculture initiatives, such as hydroponics, rooftop gardens and community farms, particularly in densely populated areas like Gaza, and other innovative techniques.

In solidarity with Palestinian partners, **leveraging INGOs' profile and access to key decision makers and stakeholders to elevate the voices of local farmers,** and advocate for policies that ensure fair pricing and market conditions for Palestinian agricultural and food products.

Promoting adherence by parties to the conflict to their obligations under international laws to protect civilians and objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including food and food items and food-producing land and areas, crops, livestock, drinking water supplies and irrigation works.