

## **War economies and food insecurity: understanding the dynamics to tackle the root causes – the role of the WFP/International Crisis Group strategic partnership**

### **Briefing for the WFP Executive Board**

**6 October 2021**

### **Outline of event**

#### **Background**

Armed conflict is a leading cause of hunger, affecting food insecurity in any number of ways; among the most common are damage to farming and livestock, diversion of food; hindrance or denial of aid access and forced displacement. Yet no less destructive is the economic warfare that often accompanies armed conflict. The breakdown of already weak government institutions, competition for revenue, markets and state resources and contests over international and regional networks – the same issues that can make armed conflict so difficult to resolve – can make food security elusive.

With two thirds of WFP's work in conflict-affected settings, this is not something that it can afford to ignore. WFP has made a commitment to strengthening its understanding of the complex dynamics of conflict, the risks they pose to populations in conflict settings and their impact on its operations. This commitment is embodied in WFP's 2013 policy on its role in Peacebuilding in Transition settings, its 2020 policy on Protection and Accountability and its adherence to the recommendation of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development on the humanitarian-development-peace Nexus in 2020.

In March 2021, WFP and the International Crisis Group entered into a strategic partnership that enables WFP to leverage the analytical and specialized expertise of the Crisis Group to make good on these commitments and to support the critical mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity across the organisation.

#### **Crisis Group/WFP partnership**

The Crisis Group is widely recognized as one of the world's leading organizations providing independent analysis and advice to policymakers, including governments and intergovernmental bodies, on how to prevent, resolve and better manage deadly conflict. The Crisis Group operates across the globe and combines expert field research, analysis and engagement with conflict participants and external actors to effect change in crisis situations.

This is particularly critical given WFP's staff rotation policy and the need for country and regional level staff to understand the risks that populations and WFP's operations face as a result of conflicts evolving over many years. The partnership also helps WFP to ensure that its operations do not inadvertently fuel conflict and by the same token contributes to improving the prospects for peace.

## Objectives

This informal briefing for the Executive Board provides an important first opportunity for WFP and the Crisis Group to familiarize the Board with the strategic partnership, including the growing interest in it at the country and regional levels, while also gleaning Board member views on moving the partnership forward.

Given that conflict was the primary driver of food insecurity around the world in 2020, with 99 million people (out of 155 million) in 23 countries experiencing acute food insecurity due to conflict and insecurity, this is an issue of great weight and urgency. The WFP/Crisis Group strategic partnership is an important step in WFP's efforts to achieve its vision of a conflict-sensitive, people-centred and principled programmatic approach rooted in a thorough understanding of conflict and the risks it poses to populations. It is recognized that to achieve this vision a multi-pronged approach is required across evidence building, operational planning and humanitarian diplomacy. Moreover, the partnership reflects an approach whereby WFP seeks to fill gaps in knowledge and expertise through partnerships rather than by building its own parallel expertise, which is both costly and inefficient.

The briefing has been structured to first give an overview of the purpose, work and expectations of the partnership from the perspective of WFP, the Crisis Group and the Ambassador of Norway. This overview will be complemented by three sessions that centre on various regions and operational settings, enabling both WFP leadership and Crisis Group experts to discuss challenges and respond to questions from Board members. The event will be as interactive as possible.

Through this event it is hoped that Board members will deepen their understanding of the relationship between conflict and food insecurity in various contexts, the challenges that WFP faces and the need for new collaboration in key areas of work to enhance efforts in conflict settings.

### *Specific objectives:*

1. To heighten the Board's awareness of the WFP/Crisis Group partnership, especially through accounts by WFP staff and Crisis Group analysts.
2. To provide the Board with policy-oriented information from WFP and Crisis Group leadership reflecting on the role of evidence-based advocacy in the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 2417 on hunger and conflict.
3. To examine how conjoined economic and armed conflict leads to food insecurity and how the severity of the latter might be diminished.

**The briefing, co-organized by WFP and the Crisis Group and sponsored by the Government of Norway, will take place from 11:00 to -12:30 CET on, 6 October 2021**