



Thank you, Chair. It is my pleasure to be here before the committee.

Today and every day, Oxfam is on the ground meeting people's urgent needs in hunger hotspots around the world.

Extreme inequality, climate change and unprecedented food and energy price inflation – all accelerated by the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic – are creating the perfect storm for the world's poorest people.

Over a quarter of a billion more people could be pushed into extreme poverty this year due to this convergence of crises. This would reverse decades of progress in the fight against poverty and put many lives at risk.

Low-income countries do not have the resources to respond these multiple crises, or to put in place adequate safety nets to support the most vulnerable. Their foreign reserves have already been depleted by their efforts to respond to the pandemic, and also to service their debt. As inflation outstrips wage growth, and the cost of staples rises dramatically, millions of families are struggling to put food on the table. The places worst affected are countries that rely on food imports: low-income countries in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, as well as Yemen, Afghanistan, and Syria.

Three countries in the Horn of Africa for example (Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia), import 90% of their wheat from Russia and Ukraine. The spike in food prices caused by the war in Ukraine comes at the exact same time these countries are facing unprecedented drought and ongoing conflict. As a result, many people are living in famine-like conditions – with one person dying of hunger every 48 seconds. The UN predicts that 350,000 Somali children could die by the end of the summer if we fail to act immediately.

Hunger affects women and girls disproportionately. They are the last to eat when food is scarce, the first to be pulled from school when their families can no longer afford tuition, and their unpaid care work in the home always increases in times of crisis. We will never achieve the promise of gender equality as long as women and girls continue to suffer from hunger and malnutrition at a higher rate than men and boys.

In the face of this global hunger crisis, there is much that Canada can do.

In the short-term, donor governments like Canada must help avert catastrophe in the hardest hit countries by urgently increasing humanitarian assistance. While there has been an outpouring of solidarity for the people of Ukraine, the international community has grossly underfunded the humanitarian response to the hunger crisis. There remains a \$13 billion dollar funding gap for food security and nutrition responses globally. Canada should commit \$600 million dollars at the upcoming G7 to get back on equal footing with our peers as a leading humanitarian funder.



Charities like Oxfam and other members of the Humanitarian Coalition are doing all we can to raise funds from the Canadian public to be able to respond to the humanitarian emergency that is unfolding. The government could further encourage Canadians to donate generously by activating a matching fund, which we know is an effective way to increase donations.

In the medium term, Canada and other donors must start anticipating and responding to hunger crises earlier. The Ukraine crisis is not the only factor driving global hunger – it's merely the latest shock for countries that were already reeling from conflict, from the economic disruptions of the pandemic, and from an escalating climate emergency. Famine is not something that happens suddenly or unexpectedly – it comes after months of ignored warnings and procrastination on the part of those who have the resources and the power to prevent it. Starvation is a political failure. Early warning systems exist – and we can save money and, most importantly, lives, by acting earlier.

In the long-term, governments like Canada must support the development of sustainable, resilient and local food systems. The current crisis underscores how important this is. Over-dependence on food imports is dangerous for low-income countries and makes them highly vulnerable to market disruptions and price hikes. Canada must boost its budget for local small-scale family farming in low-income countries. These farmers need better access to land, funding, infrastructure, and markets. We need to support modes of production that are less dependent on imports of feed and fertilizer, and more resilient to climate change.

I would like to close by emphasizing that the real drivers of hunger are poverty and inequality, not food scarcity. Conflicts and climate change are fueling cyclical and predictable humanitarian shocks that only political will and global solidarity can prevent.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear here today, on behalf of Oxfam.