

ANNUAL REVIEW

2021

Handling volatility
Tackling complexity
Building partnerships



2021 IN NUMBERS

Provided lifesaving and life-changing support to **128.2M** people

Over **120** countries and territories with WFP operations

53% of beneficiaries were women and girls

US\$9.6BN in contributions

US\$2.3BN in cash-based transfers

4.4M metric tonnes of food distributed

Strengthened national social protection systems in **83** countries

20,992 WFP employees worldwide

W FORE R D

In 2021, a perfect storm of growing global conflict, increasing climate shocks and the continued ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic combined to send rates of acute hunger to record highs – 283 million by the end of the year. In the World Food Programme's 60th year of operation, our mission to save lives and change lives had never been more critical or urgent.

From the Sahel to South Sudan and Ethiopia, from Afghanistan to Yemen, millions of people around the world were poorer and hungrier than ever. But as always, the dedicated women and men of WFP stepped up and delivered on behalf of the people we serve.

The World Food Programme harnessed its unrivalled logistics expertise to keep the global humanitarian community moving during lockdowns, delivering for more than 100 partners in three dozen countries. Our partners relied on WFP's unparalleled field presence to reach the most remote and dangerous regions. In 2021 alone, we flew more than 325,000 passengers to reach 23 operations.

Thanks to tireless fundraising efforts, The World Food Programme received record contributions of USD 9.6 billion, including a surge in private sector funding. But the widening gap between

humanitarian needs and funding forced some country teams to make painful decisions about which hungry children would be prioritized for assistance.

Nonetheless, we reached a record 128.2 million people with life-saving food. In doing so, we also responded to the particular needs of millions of the world's most vulnerable women and girls, protecting their health and supporting them to access new educational and employment opportunities.

The World Food Programme's new strategic plan recognizes the complex connections that underpin the social, economic, and political forces shaping our work, now and in the future. In response, we will continue to invest in the wellbeing of our employees, build and strengthen new partnerships that enable us to adapt and innovate, and put increased resilience against food insecurity at the heart of all our programmes. In doing so, we will redouble our commitment to laying the foundations for more peaceful and prosperous societies.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David M. Beasley".

David M. Beasley
WFP Executive Director

A WORLD OF

The new Delta variant of COVID-19 detected in India in November 2020 spread rapidly throughout 2021, sickening and killing tens of millions of people globally. Almost at years' end, an exhausted world braced for a renewed wave as the Omicron strain, first identified in South Africa,

MUTUALLY COMPOUNDING

looked set to repeat through 2022 the ravages of Delta. The World Food Programme's own staff and families were equally affected. Vaccines were rolled out from mid-2021, yet of 10 billion doses distributed, less than one percent were administered in low-income countries.

DISASTERS



While COVID-19 trapped much of the world in lockdowns, sealed borders, and stalled travel and commerce, the trajectory of much of the rest of the world continued in parallel, not least of which was the World Food Programme's work in more than 120 countries and territories.

For the poorest without household savings or reserves of food things mostly worsened. From 811 million people chronically hungry in January, the number rose unremittingly throughout the

year. Conflicts broke out anew within nations; existing ones degenerated. Global food, transport, and fuel prices soared.

To face a world of interlocked and cascading disasters, driven by the “three Cs” of COVID-19, conflict, and the climate crisis – with each manifestation compounding the other – the World Food Programme fused new ways of working, using new tools, new strategies, and new partnerships to better save and change lives.

The global cost of conflict has risen to US\$15 trillion, and most people the World Food Programme assists are victims of conflicts that are new, renascent, or long-burning. WFP's renowned expertise as an organization working to prevent hunger and open humanitarian access, often across fighting lines, is increasingly backed by resource partners like the World Bank which trust our experience and reach in fragile settings.

Before the winter snows of 2021/2 cut access in mountainous Afghanistan, the World Food Programme delivered food, cash, and nutrition assistance to prevent the starvation of 15 million people. While Afghanistan settled into an uncertain future, Myanmar's long-standing political turbulence morphed into new more perilous fractures. In the midst of Ethiopia's latest conflict WFP delivered food and nutrition supplies across front lines to 6.1 million people.

In West and Central Africa, opportunistic armed groups continued to unsettle the Sahel, with implications for the security of Togo, Benin,



CONFLICT REMAINS MAJOR DRIVER OF HUNGER





and Côte d'Ivoire. To add fuel to the fire of uncertainty and insecurity, 2021 fielded coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea. Despite the turmoil, the World Food Programme's integrated resilience activities in the Sahel boosted the resilience of 1.7 million people with orchards, market gardens, land rehabilitation, composting, and fuel-efficient stoves.

In Yemen, where the World Food Programme prevented the starvation of 15 million people; in Syria, where life-saving food reached 5.8 million people every month; in South Sudan and Sudan where almost 6 and 8.9 million people were fed throughout the year respectively; in northern

Mozambique where WFP's help reached towards a million people by year's end; and in Haiti where post-earthquake gang violence threatened food supplies, WFP breached the blocked access and insecurity that war and disaster breeds to reach civilian populations trapped by ferment and disorder.

The challenge of negotiating access in these environments using our reputation and moral authority, often across active or unsettled frontlines between fighting groups, remains at the cutting edge of the World Food Programme's efforts to prevent starvation and the use of hunger as a weapon of war or mass punishment.



Perhaps above all, the findings of climate science revealed a trajectory of planetary warming that is eroding our capacity to tackle terrestrial crises. In 2021, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released new predictions that the world will reach or exceed 1.5°C (2.7°F) of warming within the next two decades. If global temperatures rise by 2°C hundreds of millions are forecast to become food insecure.

The risk of food supply shocks is likely to increase. Multiple concurrent harvest failures in major producers will add to the complexity of threats.

In 2021, universal bellwethers of the climate emergency were all around, converging the rich and poor worlds in a spate of climate disaster spot fires. Hurricanes Eta and Iota in the Caribbean in late 2020 had smashed records and their impact was felt throughout the year.

The 'dry corridors' of Central America cracked with heat, and farmers abandoned their lands to head north with their families in tow. The World Food Programme reached over 1.7 million people in drought-stricken and famished Madagascar. Even as flooding repeatedly saturated the agricultural lands of South Sudan beyond exhaustion, and swept valuable topsoil from Ethiopia, drought distressed the desertifying Sahel and the rest of the Horn of Africa.

The systemic dysfunction exacerbated by the pandemic revealed a greater chaos in nature which seemed more visible and the damage more palpable to those like the World Food

Programme with eyes on the ground. Seasonal rains are increasingly falling outside windows that once made the growing seasons predictable and familiar for farmers. While disasters made front page news in major nations, adaptation to climate shocks is already a fact of daily life for the farmers the World Food Programme supports.



At the November UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in Glasgow, WFP promoted four key integrated systemic solutions:

- **Restore** degraded ecosystems as natural buffers against climate change.
- **Protect** the most vulnerable with social safety nets.
- **Anticipate** climate hazards and act early to prevent climate emergencies.
- **Re-energize** food systems to avoid deforestation, carbon emissions and to increase resilience and sustainability.

FUTURE RISK: MULTIPLE CONCURRENT HARVEST FAILURES



Adaptation is critical globally. The way we plant, grow, produce and package, store, transport, retail, and consume food is unsustainable. We dispose of nutrient-rich waste while stripping our lands of biodiversity and exhausting the soil. Since the World Food Programme deals with complex interlinkages in our work every day, we were ideally placed to drive for better solutions at the UN's Food Systems Summit in late 2021.

Our leadership at the summit reflected five years re-thinking the supply chain that feeds the world's most vulnerable. No segment of the food system we manage – our purchasing power, our use of thousands of ships and planes and trucks, our influence on local and international markets – can be separated from the impact it has on the other systems. No longer a concept, our work must be holistic going forward.

What does this mean? The World Food Programme must concurrently shape the food systems within which we work, and the flow-on impact on communities. Beyond immediately saving lives, the World Food Programme is in the business of changing lives, which means recalibrating our own systems in the effort

SYSTEMIC DISASTERS SYSTEMS SOLUTIONS

to build the resilience of individuals, local communities and national economies.

For example, an analysis in Eastern Africa, where the World Food Programme spends around US\$600 million procuring food and warehousing every year, shows that our pipeline generated 650,000 regional jobs. So wherever viable, our trend is to purchase food as close to source as possible, amplifying our local effect with each neighbourhood purchase.

In this way the World Food Programme is leveraging its huge service capacity of almost 21,000 staff, its partnerships with international financial institutions and the private sector, and its massive logistical and purchasing power to refine and scale-up practices that support small farmers, local markets and traders. The same factors encourage eco-friendly farming practices, and build resilience to shock in communities so that people have improved agency over their lives, even in the face of disaster.

The climate emergency and the pandemic have underscored that today's global challenges are interconnected, networked systems that require complex all-of-system solutions. The problem metric is straightforward: food production contributes around a third of all greenhouse gases, while around a third of what is produced is wasted. Yet almost half a billion people are under-nourished, and almost two billion overweight. Food systems need to be recalibrated to tackle these wasteful contradictions, for the sake of global warming, planetary sustainability, and human health.



Yet in these communities the new “three Cs” convergence has injected such systemic fragility that it ensnares the most vulnerable first, and hits them hardest. As pandemic economic injury deepened through 2021, jobs were wiped out, remittances from foreign workers shrivelled, and US\$3.7 trillion in incomes was lost, with the poorest largely bearing the brunt. In Kenya, for example, unemployment doubled following pandemic onset.

The starker end of the economic distress spectrum is sheer hunger. Across 43 countries in 2021, 45 million people faced the very real prospect of famine, whilst the pandemic simultaneously drove 283 million people into acute food insecurity, almost double that of pre-pandemic levels. The World Food Programme increased specialised nutrition treatment by 40 percent from 2020 to 2021 to alleviate pandemic malnutrition. We delivered vital assistance to nearly 68 million women and girls and more than 60 million men and boys in greatest need.

The form of absolute poverty when the cupboards are empty, savings finished, borrowing capacity zeroed out, and domestic work opportunities no longer possible, isolates and leaves almost nowhere to

MIGRATION HUNGRY POVERTY

turn. The uncertainty and scale of the new poverty created by conflict, climate, and the economic shocks spurred by the pandemic is driving new patterns of migration in countries like Venezuela, where the World Food Programme began a school-feeding programme to mitigate childhood hunger, and economic pain.





To protect their families, however, people move when and if they can, if they must. By mid 2021, the global number of forcibly displaced people was close to 85 million, surpassing previous record levels. Children below 18 years of age made up 40 percent of that vast figure who were largely forced to flee conflict.

The peripheral rural poor are the first to lose their lands to climate change and conflict and to move to cities or refugee camps, or to emigrate altogether, eroding inter-generational and indigenous land-management knowledge. They become the peripheral urban poor who are the first and likeliest to succumb to a lack of nutritious and plentiful food. In city and country alike, the poor are also the first to lose their jobs, either as seasonal workers on land that relies on rainfall, or as workers in the swollen urban informal sector.





STRONGER SAFETY NETS IN FRAGILE SETTINGS



It has been worse for women. From 2019 to 2020, the pandemic pressed women deeper into hunger and threw an extra 47 million into extreme poverty. This was seeded by another trend as the economic crisis produced by the pandemic collapsed seminal commercial enterprises created by first generations of entrepreneurs in developing countries, returning them to the hard scrabble existences of their parents.

By mid-2021, for example, the World Bank was reporting that the pandemic had reduced 4.7 million Latin American/Caribbean middle-class aspirants to vulnerability or outright poverty. This reflected a cascading trend throughout the world – in Lebanon, perhaps most obviously – of a battered generation of young people who would ordinarily have raised the education standards and health of their children, created jobs for the poor, paid mortgages and loans, driven innovation, and boosted national economies.

Although the world's economy grew throughout 2021, the effect of pandemic disruption fell disproportionately on those countries least able to withstand downturn. In fragile and conflict-affected countries record levels of debt sapped national budgetary allocations available for welfare programmes. From Liberia to Lebanon, and in 81 other countries where we established or helped maximise government-led social protection schemes, the World Food Programme's household-level programmes assumed a new level of importance as a bulwark against poverty and hunger.

By December 2021 the cost of food had swollen to a decadal high, and rising fuel prices meant a consequent rise in procurement and transportation costs, with no indication that it would ebb. The World Food Programme competes to purchase food on an open market, so the budgetary squeeze led to sweeping ration cuts across a range of programmes.

THE INCREASING COST OF DAILY BREAD





It is feared that these increases presage further social and political unrest. More than 20 percent of the world's calories are obtained through cross-border trade. Past history shows that when the price of food rises in global markets, the effect is felt in streets and marketplaces, and in the loaves of subsidised bread which are one of the few buffers for the urban poor in impoverished and unstable countries like Egypt and Lebanon.

Given these global conditions, and the growing gap between available funding and need, the World Food Programme increasingly calibrates its work to the preservation of peace and the combating of hunger by building community resilience into our programmes and into local and national food systems.



In the conflict ridden and climate hit Sahel ration cuts caused people to sell off livestock and even their children to survive. Yet in Sahelian communities where the World Food Programme had rolled out resilience-based programmes, the very worst of these impacts were demonstrably prevented.

Resilience measures incorporate the principle of acting in anticipation of an impending disaster, instrumentalising food distributions in return for labour to build food systems assets and resilience across the value chain – roads to get food to markets, storage facilities, eco-friendly dams – and the use of forecast-based financing and creation of smart insurance, credit and finance instruments to absorb risk for small

holders and to build buffers that have a risk-spreading effect across communities. In 2021 we reached four million women through schemes like Rwanda's where free mobile day-care centres provided childcare and nutrition freeing-up mothers to work on asset creation projects.

RESILIENCE BUFFERS COMMUNITIES FROM SHOCKS

Over more than a decade, in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, the deployment of prescient asset-protection strategies before full-blown crises took hold has saved an estimated US\$2.1 billion. In 2021, the World Food Programme implemented these kinds of integrated climate risk management measures in 47 countries to reach more than 12 million people. Using a growing digital and technological early-warning tool chest of financial instruments, drones, satellite, and ground observation, we are helping farmers to adjust their husbandry and land management to account for climate changes.

Ironically perhaps, this kind of “systems thinking” mitigation draws from and leverages traditional and indigenous farming and risk-

management patterns. From South Africa to the Caribbean, methods have been radically updated to take advantage of modern financial and technological instruments, which are now key to any resolution of endemic hunger and continuing efforts to reach the development goals of Agenda 2030. Additionally, the increasing use of flexible cash puts power in the hands of families, and especially women, to make best decisions about their needs.

Far from just being notional, practice now proves that anticipatory action can reduce the average cost of an emergency response by two-thirds, while evidence from countries such as Syria shows that it is far more cost-effective to feed hungry people at home, before they are forced to migrate and rely on assistance as refugees.



While the World Food Programme's unequalled field presence means that we have the credibility, expertise, and capacity to partner with governments and communities to build meaningful resilience, it is the power of partnership at the top end of international affairs from where we are also drawing fresh energy. Leveraging effective major partnerships that accelerate and multiply impact is our 'new normal.'

For example, WFP has been feeding children from its inception 60 years ago. We reached 15.5 million children in 2021, across 57 countries, mostly with meals at school or for home, often through cash-based transfers. Schools are a



A COALITION TO FEED THE FUTURE



conduit to ensure that children get the nutrition they need for bodily and brain development, and that girls will pass educational attainment on to their children in the form of better health and education decisions, as well as a sense of agency over their own lives. Working with the government, WFP reached more than a million children in Benin in pursuit of universal national coverage by 2025.

But faced with the loss of access for hundreds of millions of school children due to pandemic school closures, the estimated 39 billion in-school meals missed by children in 2020, and the first downturn in beneficiary numbers in a decade, a response came in the form of the 2021 launch of the School Meals Coalition. This ground-breaking partnership orchestrated by the World Food Programme between 66 governments and 65 other organizations will serve 73 million more vulnerable school children hitherto not being reached.

The world we live in today is far more complex and volatile than even five years ago. The increasingly obvious fallout from the convergence of the climate, conflict and COVID-19 crises has driven hunger sharply upwards. In 2021, hunger stood at a record high, and 2022 is set to be even worse.

A RENEWED FOCUS

Yet 2021 also brought a new sense of the proportion of the challenges, and a new clarity around the complex interlocking factors that combine and compound to worsen disasters as they feed into one another, pushing countries to exhaustion. Complex disasters have complex causes and, like the multiple factors that drive the climate crisis, must be tackled as systems rather than as single discrete manifestations. The Food Systems Summit was an explicit recognition of this fact.

Similarly, the World Food Programme's new strategic plan for 2022-25 recognises that no single organization, no matter how large, can be going it alone if we are to tackle global challenges systematically. The new strategy defines the tools, the programmes, the array of technical and programmatic innovations, and the sheer weight of experience that WFP will bring to play its part, using its established

strengths such as its sprawling field-based network, its logistics heft, and its reputation as a reliable partner.

Core to this strategy is the increased role that cooperative partnerships will play across every aspect of our work, from the international to local levels. Recognising the World Food Programme's role in preventing hunger, and the resilience of our field presence during the onset of the pandemic, international financial institutions provided unprecedented levels of funds during 2021. At the same time, national governments like those of Benin and Liberia and

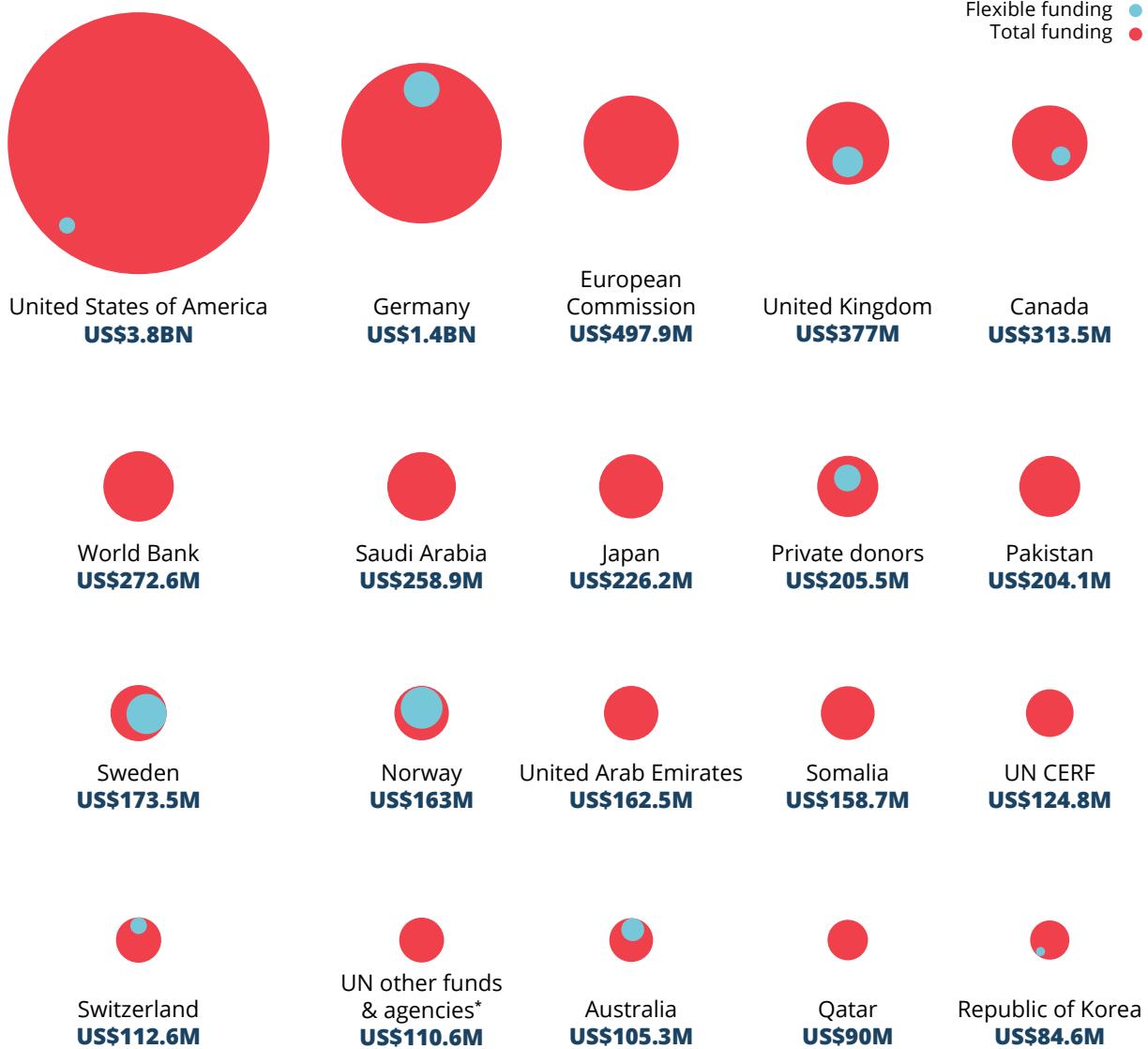
Ethiopia turned to us in greater numbers for an array of tasks, from the bulk purchasing and shipping of food during volatile commodity markets, to quickly ramping up school feeding and social protection programmes to stave off malnutrition.

The Food Systems Summit and COP26 showed that improving food systems – the way we produce, consume, and dispose of food – is a key investment that flows through to overall human and planetary wellbeing. Conflict, however, remains the greatest force behind hunger, migration, the destruction of development gains, the ruination of agricultural systems, and the incapacity of human beings to adapt their environments in the face of the climate crisis. For this reason, preventing conflict and sustaining peace remains key to the World Food Programme's work because without peace, there can be no lasting development.



OUR DONORS

We are hugely grateful to all of the donors and partners who put their confidence in us and supported our work in what was an extraordinary year. **Thank you.**



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Photo credits

Page 1: Executive Director David Beasley. WFP/Fulgence Dai

Page 3: Nasima Begum (25) and her children, a WFP livelihoods beneficiary, crossing the Brahmaputra river after collecting fresh grass from the chars (island). WFP/Sayed Asif Mahmud

Page 4: A WFP food convoy traverses rugged terrain in Ghor province, central Afghanistan in October 2021. WFP/Photolibrary

Page 5: Children pictured in Mokha's, Yemen, which was badly damaged by airstrikes. WFP/Annabel Symington

Page 6: Damage caused by Typhoon Rai, which hit Siargao Island, Philippines on 16 December 2021. WFP provided crucial emergency logistic and telecommunications support to the government. WFP/Ryan Matias

Page 7: Community members in Rafa, Niger, have rehabilitated more than

2,252 hectares of agro-pastoral land, using agricultural techniques such as half-moon and Zai. WFP/Evelyn Fey

Page 8: Simon Lokitaung, 41, an irrigation scheme farmer, harvests bananas on his farm in Kangalita, Turkana, Kenya. WFP/Fredrik Lerneryd

Page 9: Labourers carry yellow split peas to trucks at a WFP warehouse, in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, on 16 December 2021. WFP/Arete/Saiyna Bashir

Page 10: Migrant families walk to Guatemalan border, starting a month long journey on foot to the United States. WFP/Julian Frank

Page 11: Retoboha, 4 years, is measured for malnutrition by WFP staff in Ambovombe, Madagascar. WFP/Tsiory Andriantsoarana

Page 12: Mulumbwa (25) receives cash assistance from WFP which allows her to buy her family food and invest in her own market stall. WFP/Andy Higgins

Page 14: In Syria, Tara eagerly eats lunch with her parents and brother at their home in Latakia.

WFP/ Lina Alqassab

Page 16: Community members help with construction of a drainage system in South Sudan. WFP/Hugh Rutherford

Page 17: A woman waters plants at a WFP-funded market garden in Niger. WFP/Mariama Ali Souley

Page 18: 9-year-old Elisa plays with his siblings at home after school in Nyamagabe district, Rwanda. WFP/Arete/Fredrik Lerneryd

Page 19: A child eats lunch at a WFP supported school in Nicaragua. WFP/Cassandra Prena

Page 21: Jeanine and her son Julien walk home from Bevala's local market through sisal fields.

WFP/Sitraka Naina Raharinaivo

Notes

'Annual Performance Review' (May 2022), World Food Programme

'World Investment Report 2021 – Investing in Sustainable Recovery' (2021), UNCTAD

'The Gradual Rise and Rapid Decline of the Middle Class in Latin America and the Caribbean' (Jun 2021), World Bank

'Overconfident: How Economic and Health Fault Lines Left the Middle East'

and North Africa ill-prepared to face COVID-19' (Oct 2021), World Bank Group

'UNHCR Mid-year trends report' (Dec 2021), UNHCR

'WHO Results report 2020-2021' (2021), World Health Organization

'FAO Food Price Index' (Mar 2022), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

'Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021' (2021), Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

'World Economic Outlook 2021' (Oct 2021), International Monetary Fund

'IPCC Fifth Assessment Report', The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

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World Food Programme

Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70,
00148 Rome, Italy - T +39 06 65131
wfp.org