

Breaking the Silence

**The 10 most
under-reported
humanitarian crises
of 2023**



Introduction

This will be the eighth year in a row that CARE has produced this report – almost a decade of highlighting forgotten humanitarian crises. These crises all represent millions of men, women and children struggling to survive in the face of hunger, climate change, conflict and insecurity.

For the second year in a row, all ten of the most under-reported crises are in Africa. From conflict in Angola to climate change in Zimbabwe, every entry in this report represents countless human tragedies taking place in the shadows of the world's gaze.

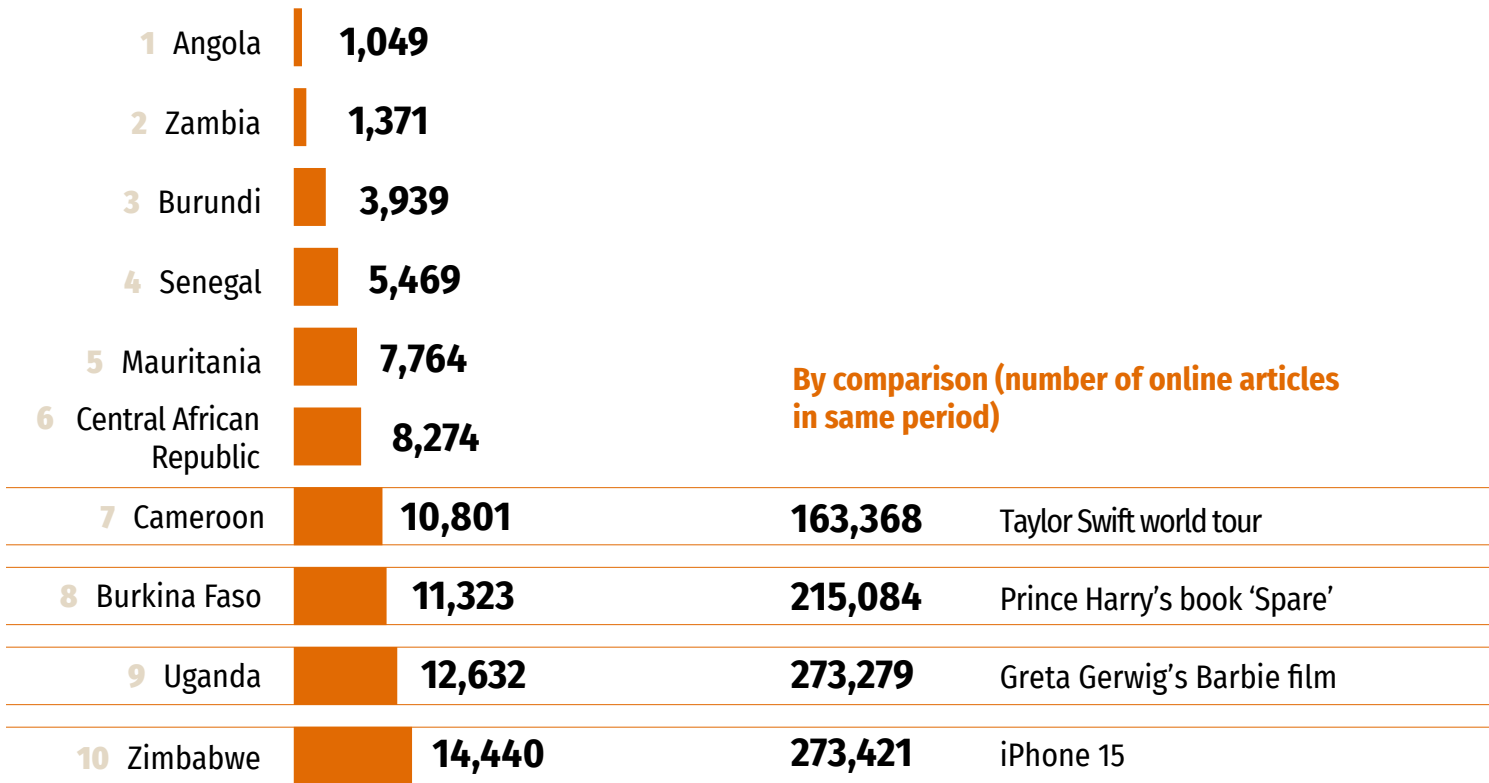
Our second most under-reported crisis country, Burundi, briefly hit the headlines in the summer of 2023, when ten Burundian handball players ran away from the Under-19 World Cup in Croatia. They later turned up in Belgium seeking asylum, after which the media spotlight turned away again – the individual stories behind Burundi's shocking poverty statistics once again unheard.

Meanwhile, women's rights and empowerment were lauded in over 273,000 online articles about the new Barbie film, while the abuse of those same rights in every country in our report received next to no coverage. The crisis in Angola, for the second year in a row, received the least media attention in 2023. Despite 7.3 million people in the country in desperate need of humanitarian aid, it received just 1,049 media mentions this year. By comparison, 273,421 articles were written about the new iPhone 15.

In a world where news cycles are becoming more short-lived, it is more important than ever that we collectively remember that every crisis, whether forgotten or not, brings with it a human toll. Our obligation to tell these stories and take action is more urgent now than ever. CARE remains determined to reach out to those who need help the most, while drawing attention to neglected crises in the hope that others will step up too.

Ten humanitarian crises that didn't make the headlines in 2023

Number of online articles (1.1.23 - 30.9.23)

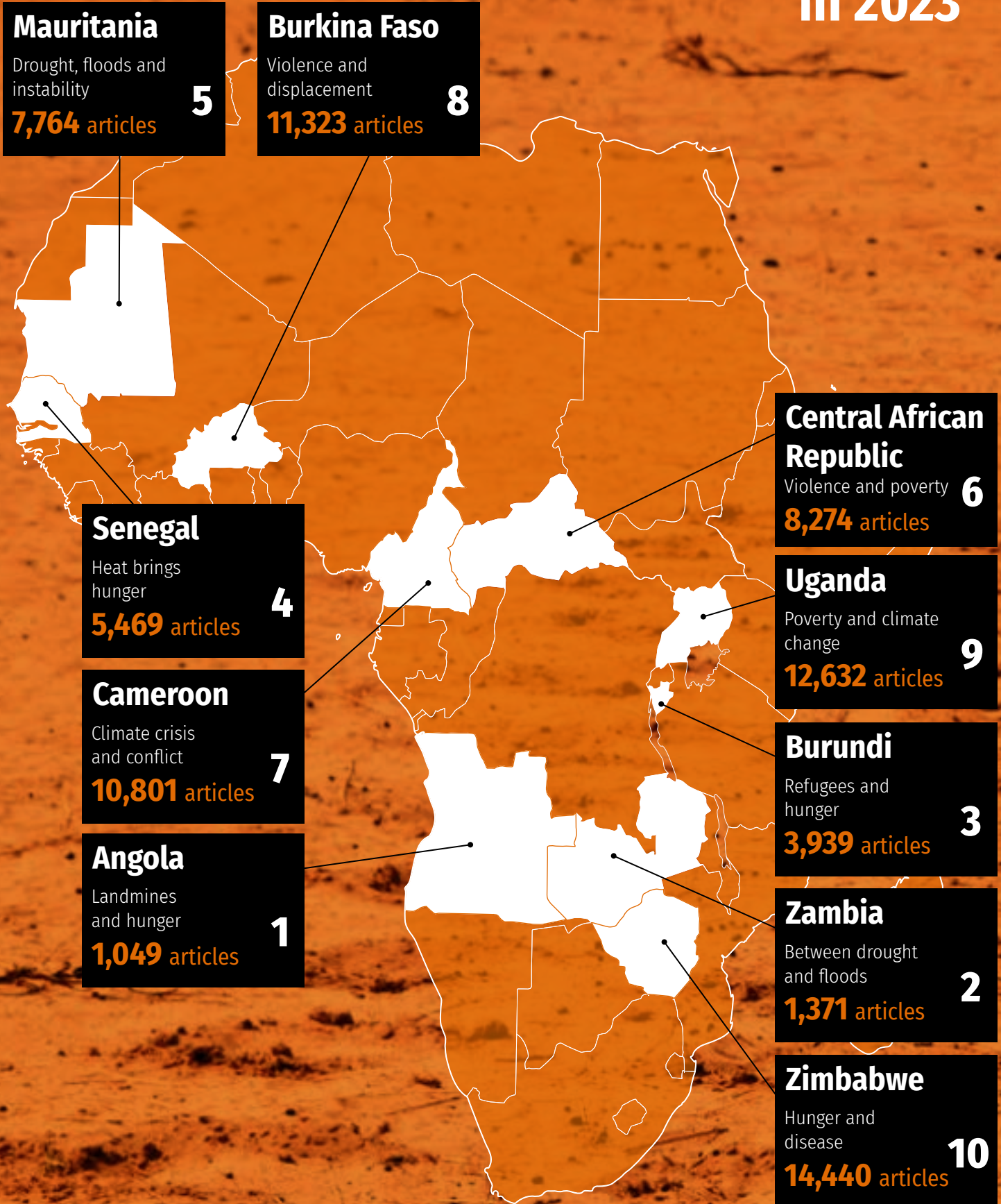


Methodology

In collaboration with media monitoring service Meltwater, CARE analysed those humanitarian crises that received the least media attention in 2023. In the period from 1 January to 30 September 2023 more than five million online articles were analysed. We identified those countries in which at least one million people are affected by conflict, wars or natural disasters. The total number of people affected by each crisis is derived from data from ACAPS, Reliefweb and CARE. The resulting list of 48 crises was analysed and ranked according to the number of published online articles. This report summarises the ten crises that have received the least attention.

The media analysis is based on online articles in Arabic, English, French, German and Spanish. We are aware that the report can only show a trend in reporting. Nevertheless, it provides an insight into the global attention given to the crises in online editions of the media. It is intended to help aid organisations, the media, political decision-makers and the affected communities to discuss how the perception of people in need can be increased. This is not a purpose in itself – ultimately it is about getting more support for people in need.

10 humanitarian crises that didn't make the headlines in 2023





HDI: 148
Population: 36.7 million
Area: 1,246,700 km²
Literacy rate: 72.3%
Life expectancy: 61.5 years
Infant mortality up to 5 years: 6.9%

Around

7.3 million

people in need of humanitarian aid

Only

28%

of the rural population have access to clean water

1 Angola:

Landmines and hunger

The first thing that comes to mind when you think of Angola, a large coastal country in south-west Africa, is usually civil war. It lasted for decades and killed more than 500,000 people. Around one million landmines left over from the war still pose a threat. Angola is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world – more than 85,000 people have been injured and many thousands killed by exploding landmines.¹ Mine contamination has forced people to flee to cities. The capital, Luanda, now has more than nine million inhabitants.

Natural disasters

Natural disasters including flash floods, forest fires and prolonged droughts have also repeatedly set back Angola's economic development. Extreme weather events are expected to become more frequent in the future as a result of the climate crisis. Rising sea levels are also a major threat to the population, about half of whom live on the coast.

Around 85% of Angolans work in agriculture. Most cultivate small plots of land that barely produce enough to survive on. The lack of rainfall in the south and centre of the country has led to a significant decline in agricultural production, which is the main source of food for rural households. As a result of the prolonged drought, more than two million children are in need of humanitarian assistance.²

Malnourished children

Food insecurity and malnutrition affect the health of the population. This is exacerbated by poverty, inadequate sanitation and hygiene, and gender inequality. In rural areas, only 28% of people have access to safe drinking water.³

In addition, most jobs are poorly paid. Many people, especially young people, are unemployed, especially in the cities. Despite the country being rich in natural resources including oil, diamonds and minerals, economic development is lagging behind.

In the coming years, Angola will face the challenge of adapting to climate change and protecting its people, especially women and girls, from its effects. This will be a matter of survival, especially for people in rural areas, who depend on the harvest from their fields. As with many sub-Saharan African countries, women small holder farmers play a critical role in feeding entire communities. Until their lack of access to information, training and tools is addressed, progress will remain weak.

CARE in Angola

CARE does not currently deliver any programmes in Angola. However, we hope that this report will draw attention to the crisis in the country and encourage actors to respond. CARE does provide targeted support to women and girls in several other countries in southern Africa.

**In Angola,
many children
show signs of
malnutrition.**



**The arm circumference of a child is
measured during an examination.**



In Zambia, CARE supports women like Febbie (also on the cover of this report) in savings groups and shows them new farming methods that help them adapt to the consequences of the climate crisis.

Women and girls are particularly hard hit by crises.



In Zambia, more than 60% of the population live below the poverty line. To feed her family, Bridget runs a small business at the local market.

2 Zambia:

Between drought and floods



Of the ten crises that don't make headlines, Zambia has always been near the top of the list in recent years. 2023 is no exception. The country faces the challenge of fighting hunger, implementing climate change policies, and expanding its education and health systems.

Climate crisis and insecurity

The climate crisis is likely to continue to cause stress and uncertainty. Zambia is currently experiencing erratic weather patterns, with floods followed by extreme temperatures and months of drought. These catastrophic events are increasing in intensity. Dried-out soils make it impossible to grow new crops. In a country where more than 60% of people live below the poverty line of €1.90 a day, this has serious consequences. Around 1.35 million people in Zambia are food insecure.⁴

High food prices are forcing many families to make difficult choices. They have to cut down the few remaining trees to make charcoal or sell their livestock. The Zambezi River, which cascades over the famous Victoria Falls on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe, is carrying less and less water. The Kariba Dam was built to bring hydroelectric power to millions of people. But now there are long blackouts because too little water is flowing through the dam's turbines. The effects of the climate crisis are already deeply felt.

CARE in Zambia

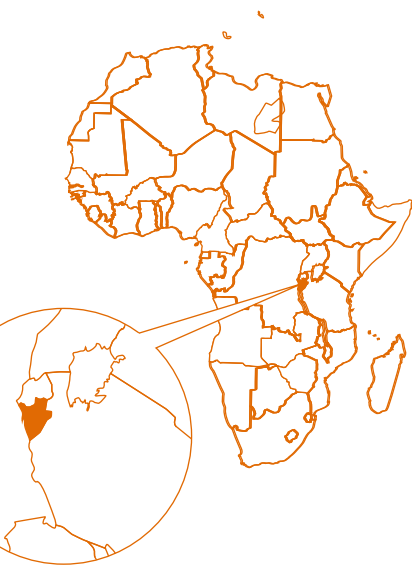
CARE supports the most vulnerable people in Zambia with the aim of increasing their resilience to crises in the long term, helping families to fight poverty. As a result, families have better financial security, and are better prepared and protected against disasters. CARE and our partners achieve this through projects such as Scaling Up Nutrition (SUNI), promoting new climate-smart farming and grazing techniques to help smallholder farmers – the majority of whom are women – adapt. This also has a positive impact on malnutrition and undernourishment. As always, gender equality and women and girls are at the centre of CARE's work.

Chikwe Mbweeda, CARE Country Director in Zambia, says: "We at CARE are concerned about the impact of floods and other frequent climate disasters on rural communities, and especially on women and girls. We see how disproportionately affected they are given the critical roles they play in agriculture and in feeding families. We therefore make sure to involve them in the design and at all stages of our programmes."

HDI: 154
Population: 20 million
Area: 752,614 km²
Literacy rate: 87.5%
Life expectancy: 64.2 years
Infant mortality up to 5 years: 5.2%

More than
60%
live below the
poverty line

Around
1.35 million
people do not have
enough to eat



3 Burundi:

Refugees and hunger

The last time this small East African country hit the headlines in Europe was in the summer of 2023, when 10 Burundian handball players ran away from the Under-19s World Cup in Croatia, trying to escape their home country. They later turned up in Belgium, where they applied for asylum.

Burundi has a long history of political upheaval and ethnic conflict. It has the lowest estimated GDP per capita in the world, and is ranked 187 out of 191 on the UN's Human Development Index.⁵ Around 80% of the population works in agriculture.⁶ Women play critical roles in farming and feeding their families.

HDI: 187
Population: 13.2million
Area: 27,834 km²
Literacy rate: 74.7%
Life expectancy: 62.5 years
Infant mortality up to 5 years: 5.2%

Natural disasters

Burundi is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Natural disasters frequently affect communities and reduce their living space. For example, when the water level of Lake Tanganyika rose due to the climate crisis, thousands of people lost their homes. Still, reasons for displacement are manifold. Many displaced people remain in the country, while others seek a new start in neighbouring countries. By early 2023, there were nearly 250,000 Burundian refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.⁷

High malnutrition rates

Burundi has one of the highest rates of malnutrition in the world. Between June and September 2023, an estimated 2.3 million people, almost 17% of the population, were reported to be suffering from severe food insecurity. This includes 70,000 people displaced by natural disasters, and over 85,000 refugees, mostly from the Democratic Republic of Congo. They have limited means of earning a living and are dependent on dwindling humanitarian aid. According to the World Food Programme, 52% of children under five suffer from chronic malnutrition. That is approximately 5.6 million children.

High inflation rates are making the situation even more difficult. In mid-2023, inflation had climbed to more than 26%. Prices for basic food commodities had risen by over 40%. One positive has been significant progress in access to education, with the introduction of free primary education in 2005.

CARE in Burundi

CARE founded an office in Burundi in 1994 to respond to the humanitarian situation that unfolded following the assassination of Burundi's first democratically elected president. Today, CARE Burundi supports civil society organisations, women-led organisations in particular, to take a more active role in the country's development towards peace and security, and to respond to humanitarian needs. CARE and our partners' work focuses on economically empowering women and young people through participation in savings and loans groups, where they can invest in livelihood and income-generating activities and community-driven initiatives.

Given economic activities are often agriculture-based, CARE also supports women to access knowledge and the necessary tools to adopt more sustainable farming practices. Our programmes integrate access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including family planning. To accelerate the scale of our impact, we continuously innovate towards more effective partnerships with state institutions and civil society actors, especially women and youth-led organisations and social enterprises.

5.6 million
children suffer from
chronic malnutrition

High inflation has
caused prices for basic
foodstuffs to rise above
40%



CARE projects support women and girls across the globe.

In Burundi, half of children under the age of five are chronically malnourished. 5.6 million children live in poverty and suffer from hunger.



Savings groups for women, which offer their participants small loans, are a first step towards economic independence.



4 Senegal:

Heat brings hunger

HDI: 170
Population: 17.8 million
Area: 196,722 km²
Literacy rate: 56.3%
Life expectancy: 69 years
Infant mortality up to 5 years: 2.7%

Senegal has not been spared from the global food and price crises. Currently, approximately 1.4 million women, men and children do not have enough to eat. This is a dramatic increase of more than 60% compared to last year.⁸ During the dry season in particular, the number of people suffering from hunger, malnutrition and undernourishment rises sharply.

There are several reasons for this. Like many countries in west Africa, Senegal is increasingly feeling the effects of the climate crisis. The country's rainy and dry seasons have become more intense and less predictable. The usual rains turn to floods, and the usual dry season is longer and longer. This pollutes or destroys arable land, affecting the agricultural calendar and forcing farmers to adapt in order to grow enough to eat. Livestock often cannot survive the prolonged periods of heat and associated water shortages.

Rising food prices

Food prices in Senegal have risen sharply, by up to 17%. The price of cereals, a key staple, has risen even more dramatically, increasing by 60% last year.⁹ Around 8% of the population have become dependent on humanitarian aid to access enough food. Climate change means this is likely to rise in the coming years unless appropriate measures are taken to support poor smallholder farmers, especially women, to adapt to extreme weather conditions.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by crises and disasters compared to men and boys. Because of the prevailing gender inequality in Senegal, women have limited access to financial resources and less voice, making it harder for them to build resilience to emergencies and adapt to climate change. Women and girls on the move are also at greater risk of violence and assault. This is the case for many women who have fled from Mauritania to Senegal to escape conflict in their home country.

CARE in Senegal

CARE supports women and girls across the globe to give them the chance to lead self-determined lives. Getting the support right is essential. This means identifying and analysing needs and potential before starting women's empowerment programmes. CARE Senegal is participating for the first time in a comprehensive study on women's voice and leadership, without being otherwise active in the country. The focus is on savings groups that empower women to make independent financial and economic decisions. Social security for women is being improved in cooperation with the government. In the next crisis, women and girls will be better equipped to deal with the consequences of climate change, drought or hunger.

1.4 million
affected by food
insecurity

60%
increase in
cereal prices

5 Mauritania:

Drought, floods and instability



HDI: 158
Population: 4.7 million
Area: 1,030,700 km²
Literacy rate: 67%
Life expectancy: 65.5 years
Infant mortality up to 5 years: 5.9%

Crop losses and child labour

In 2023, around 1.1 million people were dependent on humanitarian aid. More than 500,000 people do not have enough to eat,¹⁰ and around 22% – almost one in four – live in poverty.¹¹ Poverty is particularly widespread in rural regions, where people are dependent on income from agriculture. Smallholder farmers and seasonal workers without their own land find it particularly difficult to make a living. Many are women who are disadvantaged due to gender discrimination and unpaid labour. Around 12.5% of children between the ages of five and 14 are forced to work, leaving them exposed to the worst forms of child labour in agriculture.¹²

Prolonged drought and instability

90% of agricultural production in Mauritania is for subsistence. This makes people vulnerable to droughts, floods and plagues of locusts. Soil erosion and desertification caused by climate change make the situation worse. Prolonged drought weakens people, as they are forced to eat less and sell their livestock at a loss.

Mauritania is also feeling the effects of instability in the region. Many people are fleeing the violence in Mali, and the Mbera refugee camp has grown to around 65,000 people. Refugees accommodated in villages face a lack of shelter to support them and their host communities.

Many child marriages

Mauritania has made some progress on equality for women and girls, but the country still has a long way to go. Girls are often forced to leave school early. In 39% of cases, child marriage is the cause, and for 18%, early pregnancy.¹³ Some 37% of girls are married before the age of 18.¹⁴ They have few opportunities to work, start a business, own land, or get a loan. Many women die because they become pregnant too young, have children too close together, are subjected to female genital mutilation, or receive inadequate care during pregnancy.

CARE in Mauritania

CARE does not currently deliver any programmes in Mauritania. However, we hope that this report will draw attention to the crisis in the country and encourage actors to respond. CARE does provide targeted support to women and girls in several other countries in north-west Africa.

Nearly
1 in 4
live in poverty

12.5%
of children between 5
and 14 forced to work

Displacement and hunger affect many families – like here in Burkina Faso.



Where to go when fighting reaches your village?
Often the only option is to flee.



The Central African Republic is one of the poorest countries in the world. Children – girls in particular – have little access to education.

6 Central African Republic: Violence and poverty



HDI: 188
Population: 5.5 million
Area: 622,984 km²
Literacy rate: 37.5%
Life expectancy: 55.5 years
Infant mortality up to 5 years: 9.3%

For 10 years, armed conflict has dominated people's lives in Central African Republic. When the fighting reaches a village, often the only place to hide is in the tall grass or the forest. Countless families have lost loved ones and everything they owned. Violence and insecurity persist in 2023. Displacement, food and fuel shortages, limited access to education and violence against women plague the country, one of the poorest in the world. The humanitarian situation has worsened recently. In 2023, 3.4 million people were in need of assistance and protection.¹⁵

Escape and return

One in five people in Central African Republic¹⁶ has been internally displaced or fled to neighbouring countries. Crises in Sudan and Chad have brought new suffering. Many refugees have again fled from Sudan, and asylum seekers have also arrived from the region. But Central African Republic lacks the resources to feed its people. Rising food prices are causing even more poverty. People are suffering acute food shortages, while high fuel prices are making mobility and access to vital services more difficult.

Only 3.8 years of school for girls

With an average of six births per woman, Central African Republic has one of the highest birth rates in the world. The mortality rate for children under five is the sixth highest in the world (116 per 1,000 children). Only 55% of children complete primary school.¹⁷ The limited access to education for girls is particularly worrying. In most cases, boys spend 5.3 years at school and girls only 3.8 years.¹⁸

Central African Republic lags far behind in terms of gender equality, ranking 188th out of 191 countries.¹⁹ Widespread violence against women prevents their full participation in social and economic life. In the first quarter of 2023 alone, almost 5,000 cases of violence against women and girls were reported.²⁰ This means that one woman or girl experiences violence every 30 minutes.

CARE in Central African Republic

The situation in Central African Republic remains extremely worrying. While CARE does not have a presence in Central African Republic, we are helping in neighbouring countries where many refugees arrive. Working with local partners, CARE is providing food, cash, shelter, clean water, and hygiene items. Special attention is given to the medical and psychological care of women who have experienced violence and sexual assault.

Infant mortality is the sixth highest worldwide at

9%

Ranked

188th

out of 191 for gender equality



7 Cameroon:

Climate crisis and conflict

HDI: 151
Population: 28.6 million
Area: 475,442 km²
Literacy rate: 78%
Life expectancy: 61.9 years
Infant mortality up to 5 years: 6.3%

Cameroon is facing three concurrent crises: the conflict-created north-west and south-west crisis, the Lake Chad basin conflict, and the Central African Republic refugee crisis. In 2023, 4.7 million people were in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. That is one in six people in Cameroon.

“Everything burned behind us”

Cameroon has been increasingly destabilised by armed conflict and non-state armed groups in the far north, north-west and south-west. More than two million people are displaced within their own country,²¹ mainly within the region in conflict, but also in neighbouring regions where little humanitarian aid is provided. Moreover, Cameroon hosts 639,000 refugees, amongst whom 350,000 are from Central African Republic and 134,000 from Nigeria.

“When we fled, we had nothing. We slept under the open sky and the inhabitants of the village here helped us by giving us pots and blankets. Behind us, everything was on fire. We ran to the river and jumped into canoes to save ourselves.” Linda, 45, who fled with her five children to neighbouring Chad.

Displacement means people have to leave behind their land and are unable to grow food for their families or to sell, leading to a reliance on humanitarian aid. Those who are internally displaced, or refugees, eat less food on average than the rest of the population.

Increasing hunger and natural disasters

In Cameroon, 11% of the population is facing acute food insecurity. This represents three million people, mainly in the three regions affected by the conflicts, while the north is also increasingly affected by climate change. Among the total projected figure of people in acute food insecurity in the coming period, worryingly the number of people in the emergency phase is expected to be 45% higher than the same period last year.²²

Climatic hazards exacerbate food insecurity and are responsible for major natural disasters in the north of the country. Indeed, seasonal changes characterised by shorter and more violent rains and severe droughts are having a negative impact on agricultural production and food security. Heavy rainfall has increased in frequency and intensity in recent years, triggering disasters such as dam bursts and severe flooding, especially in the far north. The consequences are both immediate and long-term: the 2022 rainy season was the wettest since 1991, resulting in the flooding of 428,782 hectares and the displacement of 43,000 people.

CARE in Cameroon

CARE has been present in Cameroon since 1978, addressing the fundamental causes of poverty and the violation of rights. We place particular emphasis on working alongside women and girls, who are the first survivors of poverty. CARE works closely with local institutions and organisations to help localise and sustain assistance. CARE Cameroon works across three main areas: economic and climate justice, gender justice and health.

1 in 6
need humanitarian
aid

3 million
people affected by
food insecurity

When people are displaced, they often have nothing left. CARE helps with everyday necessities and hygiene products.



When families go hungry, women are often the last to eat, and eat the least.



In Cameroon, 11% of the population do not have enough to eat. Women often give up food in favour of their children.

Idrissa had to flee his village with his family because it was attacked and burned down. Attacks like this are common in Burkina Faso; violence and hunger are widespread.

In a crisis, CARE provides people with water, food, hygiene items and shelter.

The majority of displaced people are women and children – leaving them in danger of experiencing violence again.

8 Burkina Faso:

Violence and displacement



Armed conflict, military coup, mass displacement: Burkina Faso has been in deep crisis for years. Since 2015, the landlocked country has been rocked by attacks, including on its borders with Mali and Niger. The violence has led more and more people to flee their homes. At the beginning of 2019, there were fewer than 50,000 internally displaced people in the country, but by March 2023, that number had risen to more than two million.²³

The political situation is fragile. There have been several military coups and political unrest since 2014. The current government only controls parts of the country. Attacks, violence and hunger are part of everyday life for many people. Maimounata Sawadogo fled her village. “We had nothing to eat and no water. And even if we managed to find water, how would we get it? We had no containers or canisters to transport it,” says the mother of two. The family had to leave everything behind when they fled.

Food and water are scarce

Burkina Faso is one of the world’s poorest countries, with more than 40% of its 22 million people living below the poverty line. The country is currently experiencing the worst humanitarian crisis in its history: 4.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, and food and water are in short supply.²⁴ More than 800,000 people live in areas controlled by armed groups, cut off from the rest of the country. They have limited access to their fields and pastures. With little ability to grow food, many are going hungry. But aid is slow to reach them.

The effects of climate change are making the situation worse. Droughts, heavy rains and floods destroy crops and lead to hunger. More than 80% of people in Burkina Faso depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.²⁵ When the harvest fails, people go hungry.

Women and girls at risk

Many of those displaced within their own country are women and children. When they flee, they not only face the huge challenge of meeting their basic food needs, they are also at risk of gender-based violence.

Their already limited access to education is getting worse, as thousands of schools have been forced to close due to the insecurity in the country. More than a million children are denied their right to education.²⁶ Women and girls are particularly affected, as they are most likely to be forgotten in times of crisis.

CARE in Burkina Faso

CARE has been working in Burkina Faso since 2017, supporting communities with water, hygiene kits, sanitation, and food. We are also helping communities, especially women, to adapt to changing climatic conditions, to help improve household food and nutrition security. CARE and our partners’ focus is on empowering women and girls.

Since its inception, CARE in Burkina Faso has been working with local partners. Over time, CARE has built a network of local organisations, supporting them with capacity-building so that they can integrate emergency preparedness and response into their work in the face of a multi-faceted and protracted crisis.

HDI: 184
Population: 23 million
Area: 267,950 km²
Literacy rate: 46%
Life expectancy: 63 years
Infant mortality up to 5 years: 7.7%

8.8 million
live below the poverty
line

2 million
displaced by violence



HDI: 166
Population: 48.6 million
Area: 267,950 km²
Literacy rate: 81%
Life expectancy: 63.8 years
Infant mortality up to 5 years: 4%

9 Uganda:

Poverty and climate change

Incredible wildlife, national parks, tropical forests, Africa's third highest peak: Uganda is a country of unique biodiverse superlatives. At the same time, Uganda hosts more refugees than any other country on the African continent. The country is known for its welcoming policy: more than 1.5 million refugees live in Uganda, mainly from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Burundi. More than 90% of them live in refugee settlements in northern and western regions.

Due to the large number of refugees who have arrived in Uganda since 2017, the pressure on local communities is increasing. As a result, refugees and host communities alike are increasingly struggling to access basic services including shelter, health, education, and economic opportunities.

Challenging access to health care

Uganda is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a gross domestic product of €880 per capita per year (2022). It is clear that the combination of the refugee influx, climate crisis and a rapidly growing population brings major challenges, ranging from food insecurity and lack of employment to limited access to basic services, especially health services.

Limited access to health care is due to a number of factors. In particular, people have to walk long distances to health services in some areas, particularly in the north and west where there are many refugee settlements, and in rural areas in general. Consequently, maternal mortality is very high, at 284 per 100,000 live births. Women and girls often lack sexual and reproductive health information and contraceptives, particularly adolescents. Many adolescent girls become pregnant and face a high risk of complications during childbirth.

Impact of climate change

Climate change is hitting Uganda hard, with the country frequently affected by extreme weather events. As the majority of people depend on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods, they are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In 2023, floods, droughts, landslides, forest fires, strong winds and hailstorms were recorded in more than ten districts. The storms destroyed homes, health facilities and crops, and contaminated water systems. Prolonged periods of drought and flooding led to significant increases in the price of basic foodstuffs. In the north-east of the country, 45% of the population – more than half a million people – are going hungry due to climate-related crop failures.

CARE in Uganda


CARE has been working in Uganda since 1969, and we have always ensured gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is at the centre of our programmes. A large part of CARE and our partners' work focuses on assisting refugees and host communities with comprehensive services and economic opportunities, with special attention to women and girls. Our programmes also include gender-based violence prevention and response, and improving access for women and girls to sexual, reproductive and maternal health services.

Hosts more than

1.5 million
refugees

Maternal mortality is

284
per 100,000 live births

A woman wearing a pink headscarf and a blue and white patterned dress sits at a wooden table with a sewing machine. She is looking towards the camera. In the background, other women are seated at similar tables, and colorful fabrics are hanging on the wall. A sign on the table reads "UNIX".

Vocational training through a CARE project supports women like Esther (left) and Lilian on a path to economic independence.

The majority of internally displaced people are women and children.



In Uganda, many adolescent girls become pregnant. The risk of complications during childbirth is high.

Diseases spread quickly when there is a lack of clean water. Investing in a safe water supply saves lives.



10 Zimbabwe:

Hunger and disease



Zimbabwe is known for its breathtaking scenery and diverse wildlife. But the country's beauty is overshadowed by problems including low incomes, food shortages, high inflation, and the effects of climate change. The humanitarian situation is fragile. Over 16 million people live in the country, almost half of whom are affected by extreme poverty.

No rain, no harvest

Zimbabwe's climate is often unpredictable. There are long periods of drought, followed by heavy rains that cause severe flooding. Drought is the biggest climate-related threat. People with small areas of arable land are particularly affected and regularly fear for their livelihoods. Agriculture is the country's main source of income. 70% of the population depends on rain-fed agriculture, which means that rain is the only form of irrigation. When it fails, crops are damaged or destroyed.

It is estimated that 19% of people in rural areas already have too little to eat. In urban areas the figures is 29% – and rising.²⁷ As a result of the food insecurity, nearly 27% of children have stunted growth.²⁸ The situation is predicted to worsen. Climate phenomena such as El Niño have a major impact on the rainy season in Zimbabwe. The less it rains, the less food there is in the country.

Cholera and typhoid outbreaks

Poor hygiene and poor water quality have led to recurrent outbreaks of diseases including typhoid and cholera in Zimbabwe. Several hundred confirmed cases of cholera and several thousand suspected cases were recorded in 2023. Lack of access to safe drinking water means the disease can spread quickly, particularly in fast-growing cities where people often settle in new neighbourhoods where the only available water supply comes from contaminated wells and rivers. To resolve this problem in a permanent way, a medium- to long-term solution will be needed. This will involve investment in water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, as well as behaviour change.

CARE in Zimbabwe

CARE works in Zimbabwe with its own teams and partner organisations. This allows us to respond quickly to acute crises. For example, CARE responded immediately to the cholera outbreak, training health workers to recognise and treat cholera at an early stage. To reduce the number of infections, residents were informed about how the disease is transmitted. Women and girls were encouraged to take an active role in decisions and strategies to prevent the disease.

One of CARE's goals in Zimbabwe, as it is globally, is to promote gender equality and women and girls' rights. CARE and our partners support women and girls to have their voices heard through multiple approaches and programmes in Zimbabwe, with a key focus on education.

HDI: 146
Population: 16.7 million
Area: 390,757 km²
Literacy rate: 89.7%
Life expectancy: 59.4 years
Infant mortality up to 5 years: 5%

Nearly

27%

of children have stunted growth

8 million

people affected by extreme poverty

Our recommendations

Ukraine, Syria, and Gaza: there is no shortage of topics for international reporting. However, the spotlight is usually only focused on a few countries; much of what happens in the rest of the world remains hidden. At the same time, rapidly changing conditions in the media world mean that foreign journalism has also changed considerably. In editorial offices or for freelance reporters, there is usually no longer sufficient time and financial resources to travel to crisis regions abroad.

In light of this, CARE has put together a set of recommendations for what can be done to draw more attention to the situations faced by people in humanitarian crises. We conclude the report with two perspectives from Africa – interviews with David Mutua: CARE East, Central and Southern Africa, Regional Communications Advisor, and Zelipha Kirobi: Freelance Journalist for the Associated Press (AP) in Kenya.

Recommendations

1 Grant free access to information

Reliable information is crucial for democracies. Governments should improve the quality of their data and grant the media free access to information.

2 Donors must fully fund humanitarian aid

The need for humanitarian aid is growing. We urge institutional donors to maintain and, where possible, increase their commitment to humanitarian aid.

3 Invest in media work

Aid organisations and donor agencies should continue to work with media professionals and provide high quality background information to bring lesser known issues and crises into focus.

4 Prioritise local partners

International organisations should specifically support their local partners in their media and public relations work, for example, through communication materials, the use of social media or the provision of contacts to media houses outside their countries.

5 Invest in citizen journalism

Aid organisations should encourage people in crisis areas, especially women and girls, to report from their perspective. Today, digital technologies enable them to inform the media about their situation, even if direct access is difficult.

6 Protect civil society and free media

Governments of crises affected people should uphold their obligations under international law to respect and protect human rights such as freedom of expression and assembly.



7 Break through familiar narratives

We can learn a lot from communities that face conflict, poverty and disease with resilience and strength. The media should focus on those who are rarely heard – especially women, girls, and groups that are often marginalised.

8 Focus on quality journalism

Despite the increasing prevalence of hate and “fake news”, there are excellent journalistic formats with critical reporting and an eye for humanitarian topics that rarely make the headlines. These services can be supported with subscriptions, donations and sharing contributions via social media.

9 Use social media sensibly

More attention, visibility, and reach: social media can be used by private individuals, journalists, influencers and institutions to disseminate information from crisis regions, make marginalised groups heard and facilitate contact.

10 Give women more space

The empowerment of women and girls and their situation should be more prominent in humanitarian aid and communications from aid organisations. Women must be fairly represented both in reporting and in editorial offices.

An interview with ...

David Mutua:

CARE East, Central and Southern Africa,
Regional Communications Advisor



Why do you think it is that chronic crises in Africa are under-reported?

There are a number of systemic factors at play here, including access, geopolitical interests, international politics and global power structures that drive media coverage. The media report what their audiences are most interested in. Media houses have undergone drastic changes that have impacted the size of their staffing and therefore the scale of resources that can be deployed for crisis reporting. It is important to find ways to get the audience interested in crises and thus drive more media interest.

You have been working for many years to report for CARE on the situation in African countries. Is it difficult to get global attention for crises in African countries?

There are many factors that make it challenging to get global attention. One of them is media bias. This is reflected in the fact that crises in other regions receive more airtime and coverage than those in Africa. This media bias can also give the false impression that some of the crises are hopeless with no end in sight. This leads to donor and public opinion fatigue. Lack of access is a major challenge for journalists who want to report on a crisis but are unable to do so.

What would it take for crises on the African continent to receive more media attention?

Bringing crises to the fore is a joint effort. In order to achieve this, the clichéd and stereotypical narrative and packaging of stories must change. This can be achieved through balanced and nuanced reporting. Diversity of understanding in newsrooms is also crucial. Stories from Africa are best told by those who understand the context and situation, as they are better placed to report more accurately and objectively on crises in the region. Media representatives need to be trained in how to report sensitively and accurately about Africa. This should include topics such as the history and politics of African countries, but also how to report on crises in a way that is respectful of those affected.

What can CARE do to raise awareness?

CARE encourages journalists to cover broader issues, including those that are often overlooked. We facilitate access to places where we work that are difficult to reach. We try to raise public awareness of the importance of diversity in the media and the need for more balanced reporting. Through our social media channels and other platforms, we amplify the voices of those affected by under-reported crises with an emphasis on women, girls and those most vulnerable and/or at risk.

“Bringing crises to the fore is a joint effort.”

Zelipha Kirobi:

Freelance Journalist for the Associated Press (AP) in Kenya



In your opinion, which countries receive too little attention in the media?

The Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. This is due to ongoing wars, which make the regions high risk and leads to 'fatigue'. Fatigue in the sense that the issues do not receive the media attention they deserve.

Why is the situation in many African countries overshadowed by major crises such as in Ukraine or the Middle East?

For African crises to receive the necessary attention, the media must report on African crises objectively and deliberately. The African media do not push certain issues that affect the continent. For example, Ukraine was reported on constantly during prime time, almost taking over our screens completely. This influenced public opinion and Ukraine received massive support. The African media were drawn into this and overlooked their own crises. They should be objective and promote narratives that shed light on the continent's crises.

The costs and risks of crisis reporting are also an obstacle. As a rule, these are high-risk areas, for which the media train their employees specifically in war and conflict reporting. The work of freelance journalists is also expensive in such areas. For cost reasons media tend to avoid these regions and focus on less risky areas. The floods in East Africa have caused critical damage to the road network. Reporting here requires the use of helicopters, drones and other specialised equipment, massively increasing the cost.

And finally, the international community has interfered in Africa's problems, created conflicts, fueled conflicts and plundered enormous resources. To avoid criticism and scrutiny, it tactically and systematically keeps the media out of conflicts.

In your opinion, what would be necessary for chronic crises in Africa to receive more attention?

The African media should objectively and consciously report on issues that affect the continent. More funding for the media is crucial so they can navigate financial constraints and deliver their work. Reporting on wars and conflicts, public health and climate change should be the focus. Capacity building and training are equally important so that such crises can be reported on.

We know from our analysis that the new Barbie movie was reported online almost 300,000 times, while the humanitarian situation in Zambia only 1,371 times. What do you say to that?

As far as the movie is concerned, we have to be clear, that we are dealing with different target groups. The reception of art and film is different from that of news. For films, there is a log of digital marketing and promotion. Nevertheless it speaks volumes that you have to consciously bring content to the audience.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Africa is barely visible in the international media. The international media should treat African issues with the same vigour as they do with Ukraine and the Middle East.

"Africa is barely visible in the international media."



Endnotes

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- ² <https://reliefweb.int/report/angola/unicef-angola-humanitarian-situation-report-no-1-mid-year-2023>
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- ⁶ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burundi>
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About CARE

Founded in 1945, CARE International is a leading humanitarian organisation working around the globe to save lives, defeat poverty and achieve social justice. CARE has more than seven decades of experience helping people prepare for disasters, providing lifesaving assistance when a crisis hits, and helping communities recover after the emergency has passed. CARE places special focus on women and girls, who are often disproportionately affected by disasters.

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