

Conflict remains a leading cause of hunger: Minister Chapman speech at launch of 2026 Global Report on Food Crises

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Minister for Development Jenny Chapman gave a speech at the high-level ceremony to launch the 2026 Global Report on Food Crises in London.

Thank you to everybody here for all that you do to put evidence at the heart of how we confront global hunger.

We are here to launch the 10th Global Report on Food Crises.

But we're also here because the problems that the report describes – and we all know this – are getting worse.

More people are facing severe hunger and food insecurity.

To break this cycle, we need to work together and do things differently. And that's why the UK joined the Global Network Against Food Crises.

Your insights, evidence and coordination will shape our response.

From the Middle East, to Sudan, to Ukraine – the world is more fragile than it has been in decades.

And conflict remains a leading cause of hunger and malnutrition.

It disrupts production, trade and livelihoods. Its impacts cascade. And climate change and economic shocks are only adding to this pressure.

As the report makes clear, more than 80 per cent of people suffering severe hunger live in places affected by protracted conflict, fragility and crises.

All of this is testing our capacity to respond, even when needs grow.

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz is just the latest inflection point. Driving up fuel and fertiliser prices and always – it always happens – hitting the poorest the hardest.

And while the UN is clear that a global food price crisis is not inevitable, the longer pressures persist, the greater the risk of that becomes.

Countries that depend on Gulf fertiliser imports are highly exposed, including in Asia.

Meanwhile, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa face the highest risk, as rising fuel and transport costs will push prices up even further.

At the World Bank Spring meetings last week, there was a collective drive to ensure finance and support is ready to surge – and that's great.

And we must now follow through. The toolkit is fantastic but only if it's used.

These challenges - many of which are set out in the Report - demand that we do things differently.

Firstly, we must act earlier and invest more in resilience.

I've been in so many rooms like this where everybody has said this and everybody agrees - I've yet to see the big step change that's really going to be needed. That's on us. It's not that somebody else has to do things differently, we all do.

That means strengthening systems to tackle risks before they escalate, protecting livelihoods, and helping communities adapt to climate change so that shocks don't automatically lead to humanitarian emergencies.

The Food Crisis Preparedness Plans are a good example of how we can approach this.

I recently co-chaired, with the Somali Deputy Prime Minister, the first global roundtable to trigger a plan.

It was really good - it showed how a country led early warning approach, which is grounded in evidence, can bring partners together to spot risks earlier and strengthen long-term resilience.

It doesn't answer all of the challenges, or solve all problems, or instantly magic-up resources. But it is a lot better, and things are better coordinated and more lives saved as a result.

Secondly though, we must prioritise and target resources more effectively.

That means using forecasts better, targeting funding where it has the most impact, reducing human suffering now and preventing future need, rather than responding only after the crisis escalates.

I know everyone here agrees with everything I'm saying, but we really need to force that behaviour change amongst ourselves as a consequence.

If we choose to coordinate now and join forces, rather than working in silos at the cost of people's lives and livelihoods, then we will be doing our jobs much more effectively.

We also need stronger engagement from climate funds and international financial institutions to achieve the scale needed in fragile countries, and to drive the shift towards equitable investment partnerships.

This brings me to my next point which is all about join up.

Humanitarian assistance will always be essential to save lives - we know this. But long-term problems need long-term solutions and investments that reduce risk, address root causes, and support recovery.

This was told to me in no uncertain terms - he could not have been more blunt about it - by the Ugandan Finance Minister last week. We were talking about displaced people and food security - all the issues we talk about all the time.

He said the thing is, there's a long-term problem, and we show up with our short-term funding and our project, and then wonder why we're having the same conversations on repeat.

I think we need to listen and internalise that message and do things differently.

We've got to work politically as well, and sometimes that's the most difficult thing to do but it is

essential.

We have to deploy expertise across diplomacy, science, peacekeeping, trade - every lever, every relationship that exists.

And that's how we solve the food challenges of today and the future. I think that is something the report is going to be essential in helping us to do.

Finally, we've got to recognise that none of us alone can close the gap between need and resource.

But strong partnerships - across governments, multilateral institutions, civil society, the private sector, and communities themselves - are critical. And local leadership is everything.

Our Global Partnerships Conference next month will put these principles centre stage. We are doing this jointly with BII and CIFF, but most importantly with South Africa, and they are setting the agenda for this conference as much as we are. I think that's the right way to go about these discussions from now on.

For all the reasons I've talked about today, the Global Report on Food Crises really matters.

It shows how we can combine evidence with a collective drive for more effective action to break the food crises cycle.

In a more fragile world, this is even more important. Because food and nutrition underpin development, stability, and critically, it underpins peace as well.

As Minister for Development, I am absolutely committed to working with the Global Network to turn your analysis, which is essential, into real action. Thank you.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/conflict-remains-a-leading-cause-of-hunger-minister-chapman-speech-at-launch-of-2026-global-report-on-food-crises>