



Suffering In Silence

The 10 most under-reported humanitarian crises of 2018



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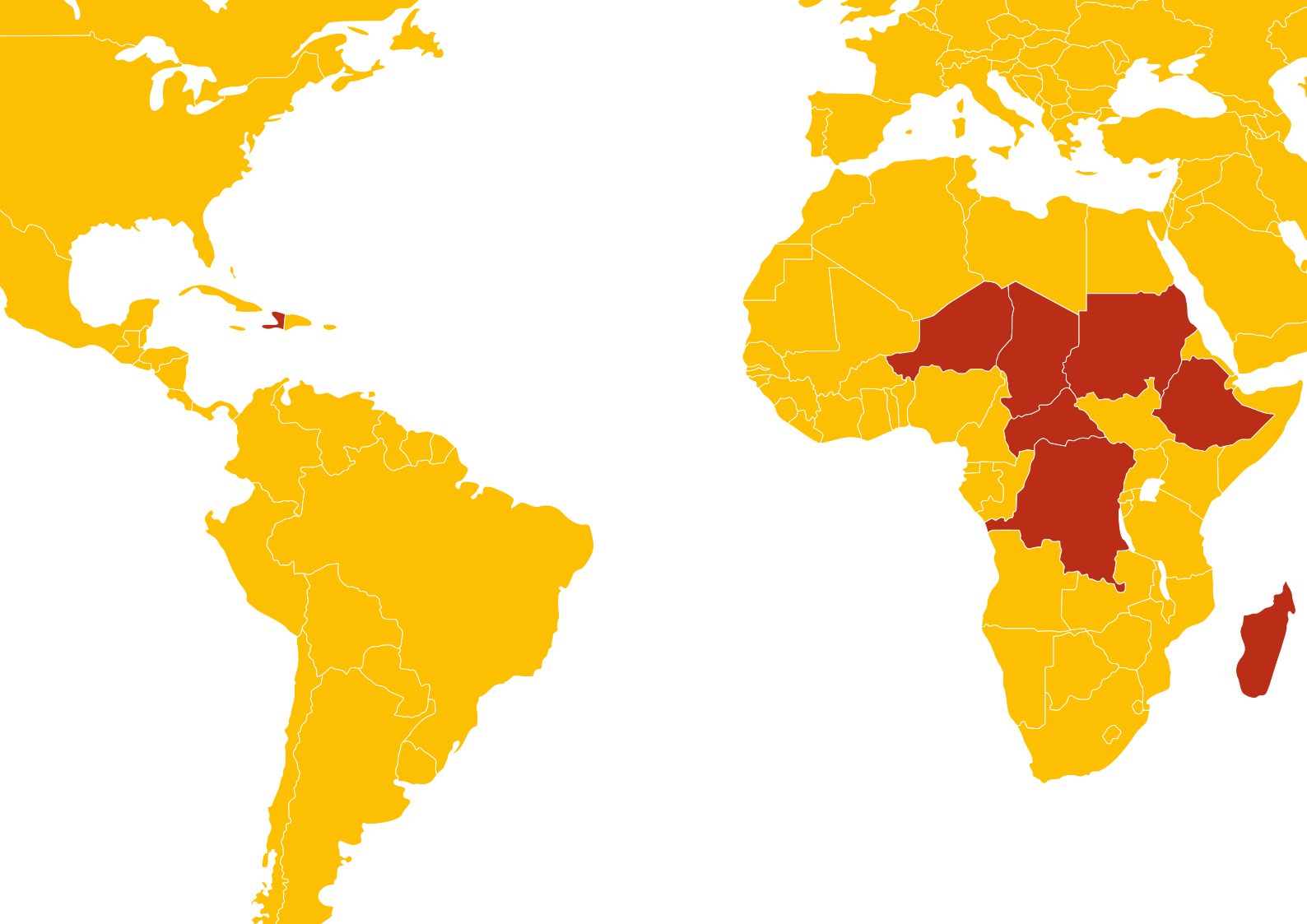
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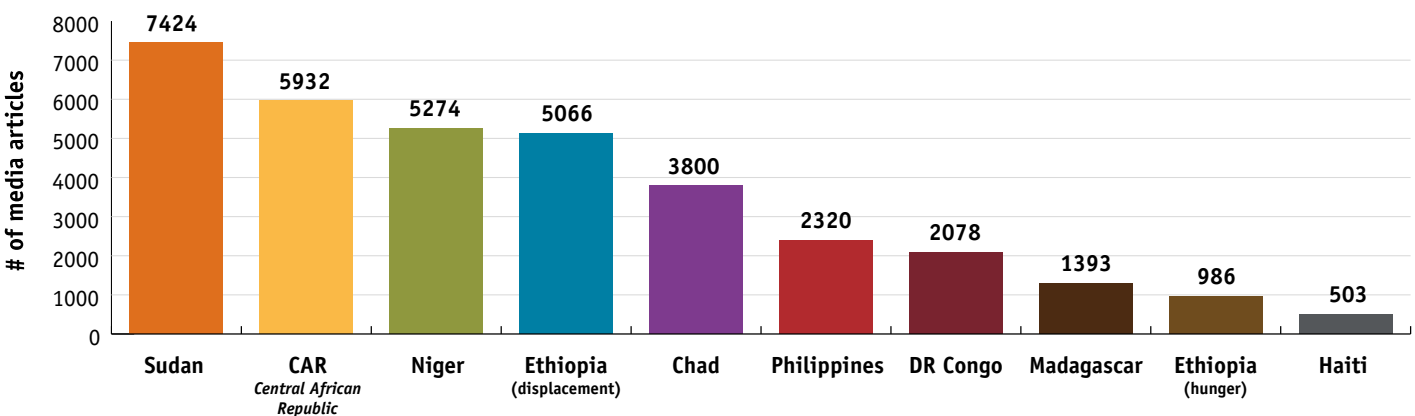


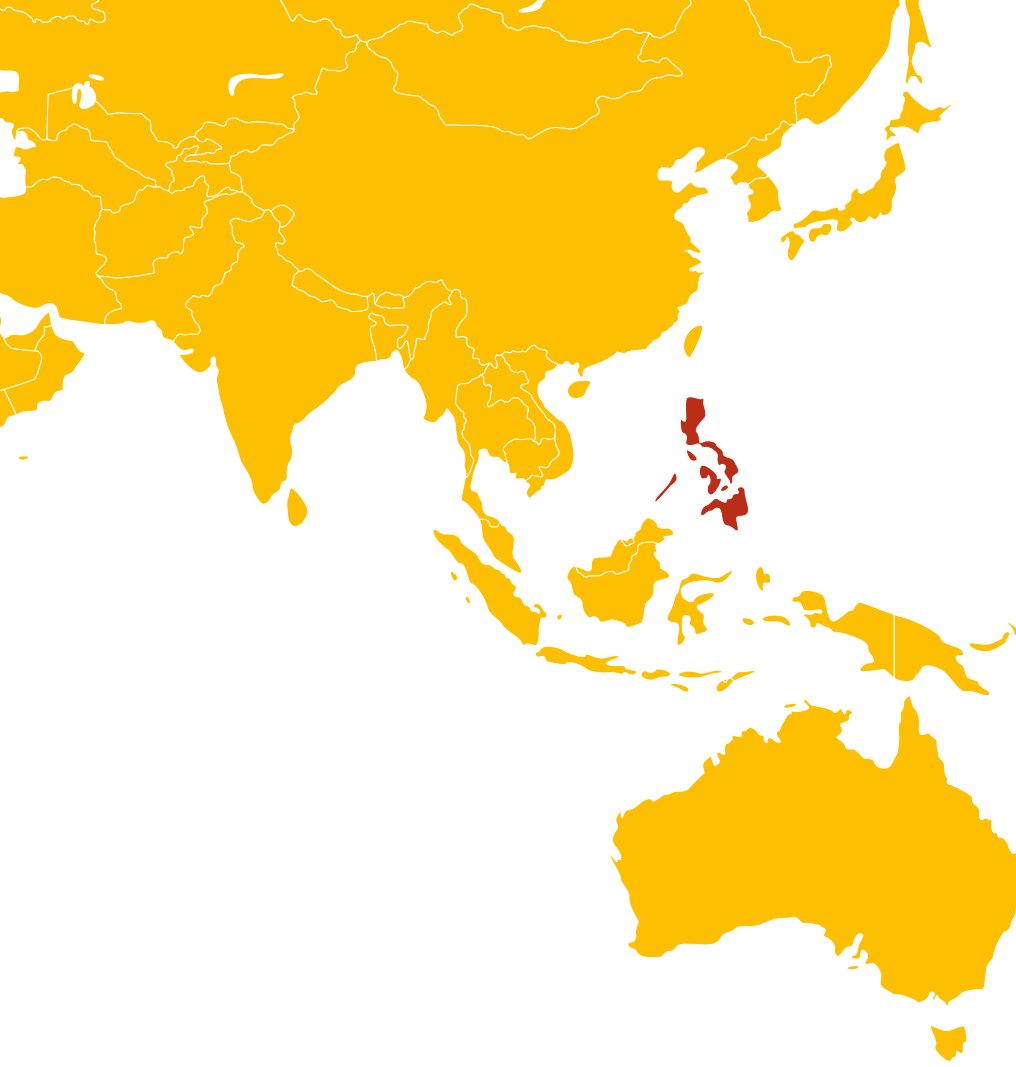
Introduction

If you don't post it, did it really happen? In the age of social media and 24-hour news cycles, this question has become a mantra for many. What we read, see or hear manifests in reality. What we do not catch on screen or online does not seem to exist. The sad truth is that disasters and crises made reality look grim for over 132 million people¹ worldwide in 2018, whether we heard about it or not. More than a quarter of them listed in this report suffered in silence, away from the spotlight.

The globe is scarred by violence and disasters. Climate change caused by fossil fuel emissions is hitting harder with every passing day. Yet, some crises receive less media coverage than others. Displacement in the Democratic Republic of Congo rivals that of Syria but has received far less attention. In the Central African Republic widespread starvation has set in, which has gone largely unnoticed. And while the catastrophic 2010 earthquake in Haiti hit the headlines, the food crisis in 2018 barely made international news.

Most-underreported crises of 2018





Methodology

Using the media monitoring services of Meltwater Group, CARE International analysed those humanitarian crises that received the least media attention in 2018. More than 1.1 million online articles were monitored from 1 January to 28 November 2018. To filter according to scale, we chose those countries in which at least one million people were affected by natural or manmade disasters. The result was a list of 34 crises that were analysed and ranked by the number of online news articles mentioning each. This report gives a countdown of the 10 most under-reported crises.

Why is this? Crisis overload, lack of media access, funding woes – there are many reasons the world chose to look away in 2018. The media plays a crucial role in how the public, aid workers and international organisations respond to emergencies and human suffering. However, dwindling news budgets pose a major threat to foreign correspondence.

In a recent survey conducted by the Aurora Humanitarian Index², 61% of respondents from 12 countries said that there were too many humanitarian crises to keep up with in the world today. More than half felt that they always heard the same stories and that coverage focused on the same countries all the time. People also continued to get it wrong when it comes to the countries most affected by humanitarian crises and assumed that developed countries host the most refugees: in fact over 80% of the world's refugees live in developing countries.

This is the third consecutive year that CARE publishes its report “Suffering In Silence”. It serves as a call for the global community to speak up for people in crises who are otherwise forgotten and to help them overcome hardship. The aim of this report is to highlight those crises that, though large, have received little public attention. In the final section, it also addresses the question of how to ensure better coverage, outlining eight steps to help shine a light on forgotten crises.

As a humanitarian organisation, CARE works tirelessly to deliver aid to places that are difficult to reach. Getting support to the people who need it most is harder still when the world pays them little attention. Those with a voice in public, from media representatives to politicians, have a political and moral responsibility to respond to crises that are mostly off the radar. Each one of them is one too many.

The overall number of people affected by each emergency is derived from ACAPS, Reliefweb and CARE's own data. Where there was more than one emergency affecting over a million people in a single country, such as the case in Ethiopia, each crisis was individually analysed and ranked. The analysis that underpins the report is drawn from online media coverage in English, German and French outlets given their broad reach. With additional resources, CARE hopes to widen the scope and look at media coverage in other languages, such as Chinese, Arabic and Spanish. Though not universal in scope, the report represents a snapshot of global media attention. It seeks to contribute to a broader, global discussion whose ultimate aim remains promoting awareness and delivering humanitarian aid to those in need.



10

Sudan

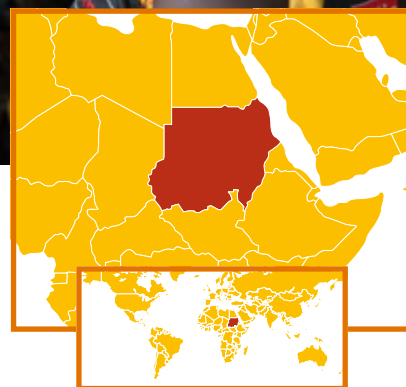
Over a decade of hunger and conflict

For the past 15 years, conflict, chronic poverty and climatic shock have put 5.5 million people on the edge of survival in Sudan. Dire humanitarian needs, particularly in the western province of Darfur, have persisted while conflict also affected the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Many families are facing extreme hunger. One in six children is malnourished and one in 20 suffers from the most severe, life-threatening form of malnutrition.³ Frequent drought threatens about 19 million hectares of farmland and the livelihoods of many pastoral and nomadic groups. Temperature increases in the last decades driven by manmade climate change are well above the global average.⁴ In addition, the country regularly suffers from floods and droughts. In 2018, heavy rains and flash floods affected over 200,000 people between June and early November.⁵

With over 923,000 refugees in total, Sudan hosts one of the highest numbers of refugees in Africa, putting additional strain on Sudan's fragile economy. More than 764,000 are from the war-torn Republic of South Sudan.⁶ But while their southern neighbours seek Sudan as a safe haven, the country itself also suffers from violence, malnutrition, lack of food and access to basic services. As a result, almost 2 million Sudanese are displaced in their own country.⁷

Sudan is also facing serious economic challenges. The annual inflation rate reached nearly 70% by the end of September 2018, leading to a continued rise in the cost of living, a decrease in purchasing power and shortages in basic commodities, such as fuel. This further aggravated the situation and caused major disruption in the delivery of basic services, including electricity, education, health, water and sanitation.⁸

CARE Sudan seeks to meet the most urgent needs for refugees and those displaced, like Aowk. CARE's services range from giving out sanitary items and jerry cans to building sanitation facilities and establishing water systems. CARE also provides crucial health support, including emergency nutrition assistance to malnourished children under 5 years old and to pregnant and lactating women so that their children do not suffer from lifelong consequences of malnutrition. Women and girls are at the centre of CARE's emergency work and the use of village savings groups creates networks for many to generate income.



"I joined with others and fled from Gog Mashar in South Sudan with my seven children in order to save my family," says Aowk Wal Adam. "My husband stayed behind because we could not afford the bus tickets for all of us to leave together. Aowk lives in Kario camp in East Darfur, Sudan. She is one of the many South Sudanese who sought refuge there. Because the assistance she received in the camp was not sufficient, Aowk decided to sell tea to provide for her family. Instead of going to school, her three boys work at nearby farms while her four girls help her run the teashop. "When you are responsible for your family, you never give up, even in the most difficult conditions," she says.

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Central African Republic

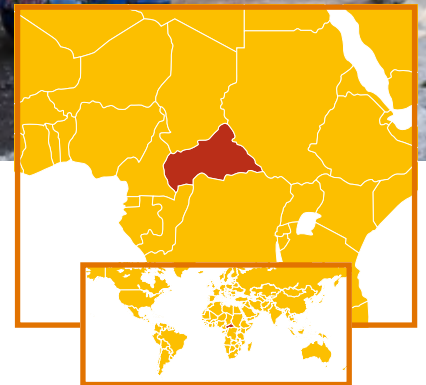
In the heart of Africa but off the radar

Despite a wealth of natural resources, the Central African Republic (CAR) remains largely under-developed and continues to struggle for stability and progress. Armed groups and political turmoil continue to fuel inter-communal tensions. About 2.9 million people, more than 60% of the population, are in need of aid and desperate for food. The 16% increase in the number of people affected compared to last year is mainly due to intense conflict taking place in several regions of the country and increased difficulties accessing assistance. Most areas are hard to reach due to regular attacks by various armed groups who roam the streets in even the smallest villages. An increasing number of security incidents across the country has further hampered the ability of aid organizations to deliver much-needed aid. CAR saw a threefold rise in attacks on aid workers following the upsurge in fighting in May 2017, placing it among the most violent countries for the first time since the early days of the conflict in 2014.⁹ In several regions, aid agencies were forced to reduce or suspend their operations due to insecurity or funding shortfalls.

Attacks against women and children have also risen drastically. About one in five Central Africans has been forcibly displaced and one in eight has been forced to flee to a neighbouring country such as Cameroon, Chad or the Democratic Republic of Congo.¹⁰

Widespread violence has destroyed health, water and sanitation systems and jeopardises the survival of 2 million people without regular access to food. The number of malnourished children is currently among the highest in the world. Around 40% of children under 5 are malnourished.¹¹ Amid the resurgence in violence and with no means to afford basics like food, some girls in CAR have turned to “survival sex” as a way to make it out of the crisis alive. Some are even pushed into the practice by desperate parents. Girls as young as 13 reportedly sell their bodies for as little as USD 50 cents.

CARE has supported Central African refugees and host communities in neighbouring countries such as Chad and Cameroon, ensuring access to water and sanitation, distributing plastic sheeting and sanitary items, and working to prevent sexual and gender-based violence.



Roboussin is one of the women who was able to escape from violence in her hometown, Silanbie, in CAR. One morning, at 4am, she heard gunshots and knew she had to flee to save her four daughters and five boys. She left for neighbouring Chad and now lives in Nanabaria, a refugee camp in the south of the country. “There is peace here and war is on the other side of the border,” she says. But safety came at a high price for Roboussin. “Before we lived well because we had everything and we ate as much as we wanted to,” says her husband, Valentin. “Here we have nothing. Our children are asleep at my feet, exhausted from crying of hunger.”

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Niger

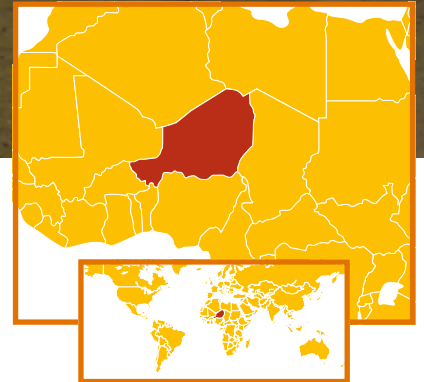
Where the poor share their meals with the poorer

Niger is a land-locked country in the Sahel and has long been suffering from desertification, chronic food insecurity and most recently mass displacement and an influx of refugees. In 2018, it ranked last in the Human Development Index.¹³ Along with the burden of hosting displaced people, Niger has seen a stark increase in the number of people struggling to meet their food needs. This has risen by 500,000 to a total of 1.4 million in 2018 because of a longer than usual lean season and the ongoing insecurity. According to UN OCHA, around 16,000 children under five are at risk of dying from severe acute malnutrition.¹⁴

In the past nine years, violent conflict in neighbouring Nigeria saw over 2.5 million people displaced or fleeing to neighbouring countries, including Niger.

The south-eastern Diffa region currently hosts 119,000 refugees and 104,000 internally displaced people.¹⁵ Border regions suffer from frequent attacks and insecurity. The insecurity interrupts markets and makes humanitarian operations more dangerous and more difficult. Host communities share the little they have with refugees, relying on humanitarian aid to make ends meet. Those displaced by conflict carry severe traumata with them. Many women and girls have been subject to sexual violence at home or during their journey. Young boys are in danger of being recruited by armed groups.

To date, CARE has reached almost 300,000 people – both host communities and people seeking refuge in Diffa with much-needed water, food and sanitation support as well as psychosocial and reproductive health services.¹⁶



Baana, 30, is a mother of five and has witnessed her home in Nigeria being burned down to the ground in a few hours: “Everything was turned into ash. The only way we could distinguish a human body from an animal cadaver were the intestines and stomachs,” she recalls with horror. Baana managed to flee with her family but was pregnant on the journey. They found shelter in Diffa, Niger, and were first hosted by the chief of a neighborhood. CARE assisted them with shelter, hygiene items and cash to rebuild their lives in exile. Today, Baana volunteers in a child-friendly space and plays games with the children, many of them traumatized from what they have lived through back home. “I teach them games to reconcile and forget about the fighting,” she says. Her family is afraid to go back to Nigeria but they struggle to build a new existence in Niger with the limited resources they have.



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Ethiopia

The silent displacement of 1 million people

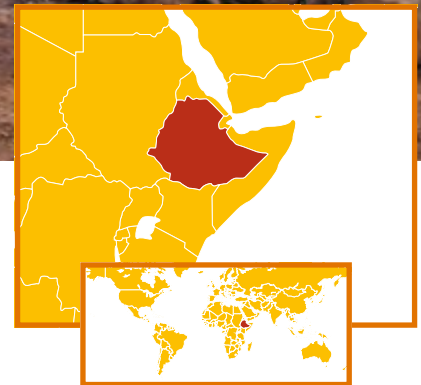
No country saw more people internally displaced because of conflict in 2018 than Ethiopia.¹⁷ Nonetheless, inter-communal violence and displacement along the borders of Gedeo and West Guji regions went largely unnoticed in the shadows of multiple emergencies battering Ethiopia. Following waves of violent attacks between April and July 2018, about 1 million people were forced to flee their homes. People were killed, houses were burnt down, damaged and looted and livelihoods were destroyed.

Most of the displaced had to flee within minutes and sought initial refuge in public buildings, such as schools and churches. Even before the crisis, the affected area was one of the most densely populated parts of the country. The capacity of the host communities is stretched to the limit. Many moved to camps for internally displaced in the following months, where living conditions remain dire. Food deliveries are still not adequate, women and girls are at risk of exploitation, hygiene and sanitation issues are rife, and health outbreak risks remain high. Humanitarian services are stretched beyond capacity. While some have returned to their home areas, many

displaced people still live in camps, unable to go back to their destroyed villages. In a region that was already affected by drought and food insecurity before the escalation of the conflict, the need for food, clean water and health services persists.

The threat of secondary displacement remains, until peace and reconciliation efforts lead to durable solutions and an easing of tensions over resources, ideologies and other unresolved issues between the communities. If people return home, they will still need substantive assistance, as many of the returnees are faced with destroyed homes, fallow fields, loss of livelihoods and ongoing safety concerns.¹⁸

CARE currently focuses on preventing the outbreak of diseases by improving access to drinking water in both camp and host communities. CARE reached over 60,000 people by rehabilitating water supplies and distributing hygiene and household kits, which include items such as soap, buckets, blankets and cooking pots. If funding can be secured, CARE also plans to create safe spaces for women and children where the most vulnerable can receive psychosocial counselling.



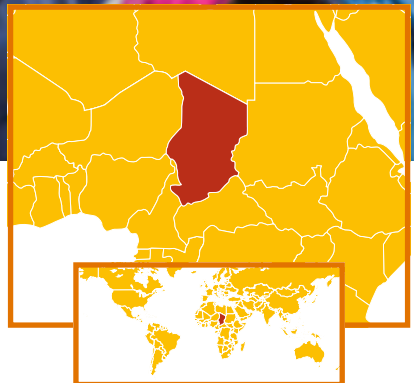
“It was evening when all of a sudden we heard gunshots and people screaming,” says Amreh, one of the many people who bore the brunt of the crisis. “Me and my family were at home. We didn’t know what was going on in the village. We looked outside and saw people fleeing when we realised something was wrong. My husband went outside to look. This was the last time I saw him.” A few days later, one of Amreh’s sons committed suicide, unable to cope with the death of his father. Although she eventually returned back home, her life is nothing like it used to be. “I would give everything to go back to the days when things were normal. I am weak and I depend on help from aid organisations now. I see no future for us,” she says.



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6

Chad



An island of stability in the Sahel, struggling to meet all needs

Chronic poverty, hunger, and mass displacement in the Lake Chad region have left millions of people in Chad struggling to survive. In 2018, more than four million people had only limited access to food, which made Chad the second hungriest country in the world, as stated by the World Hunger Index.¹⁹ Over the past decade, the devastating impacts of climate change have led to reduced crop production, resulting into food shortages and malnutrition. Nearly half of the population suffers from chronic malnutrition and more than 159,000 people are severely food insecure.²⁰

Although regional military forces made gains against the insurgency in certain regions, in some areas, violence and insecurity still limit humanitarian and media access. Furthermore, in high-risk areas the population continues to face major difficulties to access support and basic services, such as health care. The underlying causes of the crisis include poverty, economic fragility,

rapid population growth, lack of social services and climate change. In the past 55 years, the lake has shrunk to nearly a twentieth of its original size, both due to shifting climatic patterns and high demands for agricultural water.²¹

These ongoing conflicts in the Lake Chad region continue to disrupt livelihoods and markets, forcing thousands of people to flee their homes and seek safety in Chad. Despite being one of the poorest countries in the world, Chad is hosting more than 450,000 refugees from neighbouring countries, including the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Sudan.²²

In the Lake region of Chad, CARE has reached more than 235,000 people with the rehabilitation of water systems, nutrition programs and income generating activities. In the South of Chad, more than 25,000 people benefited from reproductive health services, food supplies as well as cash-for-work programs.

Fatime, 70, fled conflict in the Central African Republic. Together with her daughter's family she walked for days under the scorching sun to seek safety in a settlement in Southern Chad. During the day, when her daughter is at work, she is responsible for her grandchildren who suffer from severe malnutrition. "We can eat only once a day – usually rice or millet. During the last rainy season, we tried to grow some vegetables, but it's never enough for all of us," says Fatime. Although the children enrolled in a CARE nutrition program and receive supplementary food, their health continues to be a constant concern: "I know that our food shortage will have long-lasting effects on the children's development. But what should we do?," she asks.



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5

Philippines

A destructive typhoon in the shadows of many

Although considered the strongest tropical cyclone the world faced in 2018, little is known about Typhoon Mangkhut, locally known as Ompong. The storm made landfall on the north-eastern tip of Luzon island in the Philippines with top-of-the-scale Category 5 winds of over 200 km/h, pushed up by abnormally high sea-surface temperatures as a result of manmade climate change. Its ferocious winds and blinding rain ripped off tin roof sheets, knocked out power and ploughed through agricultural regions as it moved westward across northern and central Luzon. Over a million people were displaced, infrastructure and agricultural crops sustained damages and thousands of houses were destroyed. In total, over 3.8 million people were affected, 82 people were killed and over 130 injured. Most of the casualties were due to massive landslides and flash floods in mountainous communities, especially in the Benguet region where at least 40 miners were buried in a small-scale mining community.

Typhoon Mangkhut had its greatest impact on farmers and fisherfolk whose livelihoods are the most vulnerable to natural hazards. Prior to the typhoon, an impact analysis conducted by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that 3.4 million people were living in areas the storm would potentially affect.

A number of pre-existing factors, such as high levels of poverty, low sanitation standards, higher-than-average rates of malnutrition among children under 5 and low vaccination rates, left people particularly vulnerable to the impact of the typhoon.²³ Just one month after Typhoon Mangkhut, Typhoon Yutu made landfall as a Category 1 storm and passed through northern Luzon in a similar path to Typhoon Mangkhut. Affected communities that had started to recover from Typhoon Mangkhut were again evacuated and disrupted.

The Philippines is one of the most hazard-prone countries in Asia and the Pacific. Annually, some 20 tropical cyclones cross the country. According to the World Bank, more than 1,000 lives are lost every year on average, with typhoons accounting for 74% of the fatalities, 62% of the total damages and 70% of agricultural damages. The country is also highly exposed to climate change and geologic hazards including earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.²⁴ The combined impacts of natural disasters in the Philippines hinder development and engender high rates of poverty.

CARE has worked in the Philippines since 1949, providing emergency relief when disaster strikes and helping communities prepare for disasters. In the aftermath of Typhoon Mangkhut, CARE distributed cash, food and shelter repair items.



Deria's home in Kalinga province was severely damaged by Typhoon Mangkhut. As a single mother of seven children, she now faces a big challenge to meet her family's daily needs. "We already experienced a strong typhoon in 2016 that damaged our house," Deria says. "And now Mangkhut left even more devastation behind. We almost gave up but when CARE arrived in our community, we got much-needed support to rebuild." Deria and others in her community received cash assistance from CARE to purchase shelter repair items. "Having this kind of support is a big help to us. Instead of using our savings to repair our homes, we get to spend it for food and school expenses of our children."

4

Democratic Republic of Congo

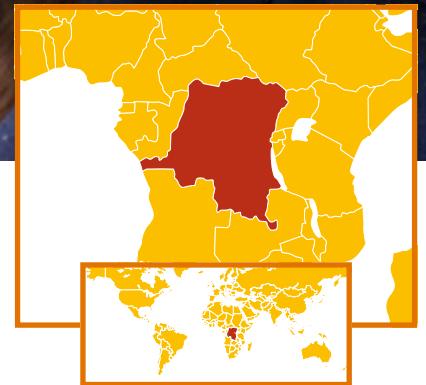
A vicious cycle of violence, disease and malnutrition

After more than two decades of violence, for more than half of the population in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), conflict and war is all they have known. Declining agricultural activity means that some 12.8 million people face the threat of hunger. This includes 4.3 million malnourished children, of whom at least 1.3 million are suffering from severe malnutrition. At least 8.5 million people are at risk of epidemics due to the persistence of cholera and a renewed outbreak of the Ebola virus in the eastern part of the country.²⁵ By the end of 2018, about 500 people had contracted the virus, of whom over 280 died.²⁶

Ongoing violence and inter-communal tensions, particularly in eastern and central provinces, continue to cause significant displacement, human rights violations, a high prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence, and loss of human life and property. Apart from threats coming from armed conflicts, criminality is on the rise both in cities and in rural areas, exacerbated by

the proliferation of small arms, high unemployment, poverty and widespread impunity. Political uncertainties and an unstable security and socio-economic situation increase the risk of further displacement in the coming months. DRC's refugee population is among the 10 largest in the world. In addition to large numbers of internally displaced people, DRC hosts more than 530,000 refugees from neighbouring countries. At the same time, during 2018, close to 765,000 Congolese fled to neighbouring countries, such as Burundi, Uganda and Zambia.²⁷

In response to this crisis, CARE provides assistance in sexual and reproductive health and to survivors of gender-based violence. CARE also works through local health centres and communities to provide health services, nutrition, food security, as well as water and sanitation. In response to the Ebola crisis, CARE fills critical gaps in water, sanitation and health, and supports social mobilisation and community engagement in the fight against the outbreak.



©CARE/Jake Lyell

Women and children make up the majority of refugees and more than half are under 18, crossing borders alone, separated from their family members. Thousands of them have specific needs as survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, people living with HIV and AIDS and people with disabilities. Pema is one of them. Raped and impregnated at 14, she was forced to marry her rapist. Her husband repeatedly raped her, and the forced pregnancies multiplied. "During my last pregnancy, I almost died," she says. "After I gave birth to my twins, I remained unconscious for two days. Doctors told me that I would not survive any following pregnancies and, thankfully, convinced my husband to sign the papers for my sterilisation." After suffering from displacement and violence in DRC, she is now trying to rebuild her life together with her 10 children in Uganda's Kyangwali refugee settlement.



3

Madagascar

On the frontline of climate change

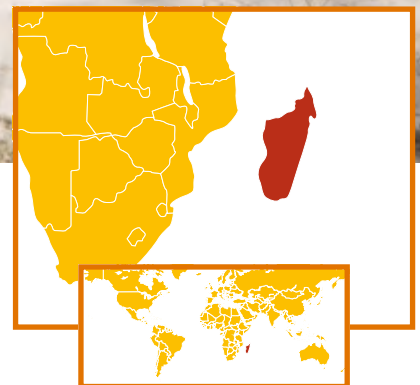
A vicious combination of consecutive years of drought and the effects of the El Niño climatic cycle has withered corn, cassava and rice fields in Madagascar. The number of people at risk of hunger increased to 1.3 million in southern regions, due to unfavourable weather conditions that kept cereal production below average in 2018, while record high prices earlier in the year restricted access to food.²⁸ Over 257,000 people are likely to face severe hunger as the Grand Sud area has not been able to recover from the drought effect of the El Niño in 2016, an extreme weather event aggravated by human-caused climate change.²⁹ Unlike the rest of the country, it received low levels of rainfall during the 2017-2018 agricultural season. The Fall Armyworm epidemic since 2016/17 has also contributed significantly to the underproduction of maize, which is the main staple in Madagascar. As a result, many households are dependent on emergency aid and are desperate to sell livestock in higher numbers and at lower prices than usual, affecting their ability to pay for and access basic services including school fees and potable water.³⁰

Almost half of all children in Madagascar are stunted.³¹ This severely impacts their cognitive and mental growth for the rest of their lives. Families are also forced to sell their assets, reduce their number of meals per day and travel long distances to search for alternative incomes. This particularly affects women and children, as rising levels of food insecurity

increase the risk of gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation. Crop damages and income losses often lead to heightened family tensions, increasing the likelihood of child marriage and domestic violence.

In addition to the drought crisis, the island was also affected by two cyclones in 2018 – Ava and Eliakim – which collectively affected 212,200 people, displacing 74,200 of them.³² Moreover, major plague and measles outbreaks continue to impact the country. In September and October, 103 suspected plague cases (bubonic and pulmonary) were reported, including 38 confirmed cases and seven deaths. A measles outbreak was also confirmed in Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo, with more than 6,500 confirmed cases by the end of December.³³ The outbreak is attributed to low immunity rates with only 58% of people vaccinated against measles.³⁴

CARE supported over 14,000 people in Madagascar affected by drought and disaster in 2018 by increasing productivity and profitability of crops, and working with farmers on using modern farming techniques. CARE also repaired broken water systems and established new ones, while supporting village savings groups to help people set up alternative sources of income and become more resilient to climate change and recurring natural disasters.



©CARE/Rijaso

"I never thought it was possible to have enough food for my family at all times, but that's how it is now," says Pela. The mother of seven children lives in Tsarapioke, one of the areas most affected by Madagascar's dry spells. Her husband's salary was too low to provide for the whole family. "It was impossible to cover our children's schooling costs and four of them had to leave school," Pela recalls. She tried to help her husband by working on the farm but the lack of rain caused major crop failures. However, things changed for the better when Pela joined a village savings and loan association supported by CARE. With her savings, she was able to buy a motorised pump to help irrigate her field. She can now grow corn, beans and peas there twice a year.



©CARE/Josh Estey

2

Ethiopia

Hungry and forgotten

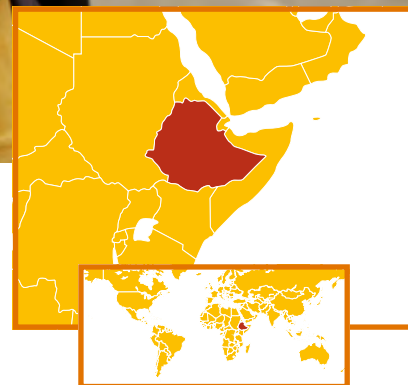
With multiple emergencies in the shadows, Ethiopia continues to face a complex food crisis, with ongoing food insecurity sometimes tipping over into acute hunger. Despite favourable rains in 2018, pastoral and agricultural communities face massive challenges in recovering after two consecutive years of drought. In many regions rainfall was below normal and erratic, but in the low plains of Afar and Somali regions heavy rain resulted in flooding and damage to irrigation infrastructure and cropland. Consequently, some 8 million people urgently require food assistance, mostly in the southern part of the country. Additionally, close to 9.5 million people are in need of other types of assistance, such as education or shelter.³⁵

The country faces recurrent drought and severe land degradation in many areas, increasingly as a consequence of global climate change. This undermines communities' capacity to recover from significant loss of assets resulting in poverty, high food insecurity and high malnutrition, especially among young children and women. One out of 10 children under the age of five suffers from wasting. Data from past droughts in pastoral areas shows that on average it can take affected families well over four years to recover lost livelihoods, during which time they will likely depend on aid.³⁶

About 84% of all Ethiopian households are located in rural areas and depend on farming to feed their families. Many have been forced to sell their remaining livestock and migrate to urban areas in search of new income opportunities. Coping with the loss of livelihood also leads to increases in children dropping out of school, child marriage and child labour activities.³⁷

The anticipated El Niño phenomenon may exacerbate the needs in 2019. The humanitarian situation in the first half of 2019 will depend on the duration and intensity of the rains and subsequent harvest on which most of the country relies. Even if there are no new climatic shocks in 2019, the number of people needing humanitarian assistance because of drought will decrease only slightly and will be offset by an increase in the number of people displaced by conflict.³⁸

CARE has been providing humanitarian aid in Ethiopia since 1984. In the current crisis, CARE has reached over 570,000 people by providing food, support for malnourished children, sanitation and health kits, and constructing and rehabilitating facilities to provide clean water.



Tanugt got married when she was 18 and quickly became a victim of domestic abuse. Her husband used to beat her and with little food on their plates, she was forced to send her three children to work. "We used to stand behind men, our place was in the kitchen," Tanugt says. "We had no opportunities and received no information about what was happening in our own communities. But now we depend on no one and earn our own money." Tanugt benefited from CARE's food sufficiency for farmers project and was able to start cultivating her own land in Ebinat, a small town in one of the most food-insecure and drought prone areas in the Amhara region of northern Ethiopia.



©CARE/Stéphanie Misset

1

Haiti

On the edge of survival

While the catastrophic 2010 earthquake in Haiti made global headlines, the food crisis in 2018 barely received international coverage. Haiti has one of the highest levels of chronic food insecurity in the world, with more than half of its total population continually facing the threat of hunger and 22% of children chronically malnourished.³⁹ Underlying causes of this situation include frequent natural disasters and extreme poverty. In addition, the country's long history of political turmoil, under-investment in social services and lack of urban planning has resulted in high urban migration and densely populated slums. In the 2019 Climate Risk Index, Haiti ranks fourth among the countries most affected by extreme weather events.⁴⁰

Drought conditions in northern Haiti earlier in 2018 resulted in delays in crop production, and some families have had to resort to eating less food and other desperate measures to cope. In total, some 2.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance.⁴¹

Despite recent rains and the resumption of agricultural activities, people are struggling to recover from the impact of the drought. The food security situation is closely related to shocks from natural disasters, increased fuel prices and an unstable exchange rate. Three-quarters of Haitians live on less than US\$2 per day, while half of the population earns

less than US\$1 per day. Many people do not have ready access to electricity, water, sanitation or healthcare.⁴²

Their needs have been further exacerbated by a series of natural disasters over the past two decades. Hurricane Matthew devastated western Haiti in October 2016 during the island's third consecutive year of El Niño-related drought, Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017 caused significant flooding in the north of the country and a 5.9 magnitude earthquake struck north-western Haiti in October 2018. Cholera remains a problem with over 3,000 suspected cases reported between January and October 2018, including 37 deaths.⁴³

CARE has supported almost 400,000 Haitians in 2018, helping to improve food security and nutrition, support education and economic development, and empower young rural women and vulnerable children. Through its joint social safety net programme, nearly 86,000 food-insecure people were able to improve their access to locally produced, nutritious food in 2018. CARE also supported long-term recovery following disasters so communities were able to participate in reconstruction and to tackle social exclusion, lack of economic opportunities and lack of access to quality education. To about 150,000 disaster-affected people in immediate need, CARE offered meals, clean water, shelter and supplies.



Marie-Melia Joseph, a mother of eight children, used to walk over an hour from her house to the market to purchase her weekly groceries. "We ate what we could harvest from our small family plot and bought what we could with whatever money we made from selling fruits we gathered on the road," she says. "Some days were better than others but I can't recall the last decent meal we had." This quickly changed when she found out that she was eligible to receive monthly food vouchers provided by CARE to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as staple food such as maize, beans and rice. "This voucher really changed my life ... it meant that I could finally rest a little easier and not worry so much about where the next meal would come from," she says.

What can we do?

Eight steps to help shine a light on forgotten crises

It has been a testing year for aid agencies. With so many different types of disasters and conflicts barely covered in the media the question remains: What can or should be done? The importance of media coverage and public awareness to help mobilise funds and increase pressure on decision-makers has been proven again and again. Still, the question on how to ensure better coverage of under-reported crises remains largely unaddressed. Some of the obstacles are well known. The media needs safe access to disaster-affected areas, requires funding for foreign reporting and needs to localise news coverage. But there is more to it. Here are eight important steps that are crucial now.

For Governments and Policy-Makers

1 No news is bad news:

When human suffering is met with silence, the consequences are grave. Crises that are neglected are also often the most underfunded and protracted. Given that a number of crises in this report derive from food insecurity and the underlying risks of climate change, affected countries must push for media coverage to enable them to better meet the needs of the population. This not only means allowing reporters to cover stories with full access and safety, but also to proactively provide them with information on needs, achievements and gaps. In a digital landscape built on attention and visibility, this enables countries to demonstrate their commitment and helps media outlets tell the stories and call for much-needed action.

3 Chasing needs, not headlines:

We know that crises that receive more attention also get more funding – but those in greatest need of humanitarian support are not necessarily those who make the news. With close links between media coverage, public awareness and funding, it needs to be acknowledged that generating attention is a form of aid. With dwindling news budgets leading to less investment in foreign coverage, humanitarian funding should include budget lines to raise public awareness, particularly in low-profile countries, so we can raise more funds to help. This could be used for aid agencies and other actors to offer press visits to emergency-affected areas, provide logistical support for freelance journalists, capture raw footage for news coverage or support training for journalists.

2 Media access as a condition of aid:

Media access, visa issues and attacks on journalists continue to be one of the biggest obstacles for crisis reporting. According to the latest numbers of Reporters Without Borders, the media is facing an unprecedented wave of hostility, with 80 journalists killed in connection with their work, a further 348 imprisoned and 60 held hostage in 2018.⁴⁴ Press freedom is essential to shine a light on issues that would otherwise be forgotten. UN member states, donors and aid agencies must insist on media access as a condition of political support and aid to affected countries. This not only applies to international media but is of vital importance to local journalists. Much like local civil society organisations, they are on the frontline and need to be empowered to act when a crisis hits. The local media is instrumental as a credible source that understands the local context better than anyone else and continues reporting on emergencies long after international spotlights are gone. Only if countries continue to call out the denial of access and attacks on journalists will emergencies stay on, rather than off, the radar.

4 Speaking up on what matters:

Politicians must use their voices too. Individual politicians can play a key role in driving media attention to crises that matter to their constituents, including diaspora groups, church groups and other civil society organisations working in trouble spots around the world. In some countries, parliamentary associations pride themselves on speaking up about issues that do not get adequate coverage. When they do, they can be a powerful force - not only to focus the government, but also to capture domestic media attention. Politicians can also work with civil society organisations to provide evidence and help formulate questions, speeches and motions to direct wider public attention towards the world's forgotten crises.

For journalists

5 Putting women and children first:

All people suffering from disasters and crises are uniquely vulnerable. But women and girls are doubly so. When extreme violence, hunger or climate affect them, they are the first to be trafficked for sex or child labour, the first to be exploited as tools of war and the first to lose their childhoods. Meanwhile, they are the last to eat, the last to be enrolled in school and, too often, the last to be valued.⁴⁵

Securing funding for the protection of women and children is difficult when other pressing needs, such as food or water, are often prioritised. Much-needed support for trauma counselling, reproductive health and addressing gender-based violence often remains underfunded. Reporting on the misery and adversity women and children endure is of major importance in order to ensure that their voices are heard and concerns addressed. When reporting on sensitive issues such as gender-based violence and abuse, media outlets must ensure proper consent practice and interview training for their reporters.

6 More space for aid:

The emphasis on online outlets means that previous arguments of limited space in a newspaper or broadcast no longer apply. Journalism in the age of the open web has unlocked doors for reporting that transcends time and space, and offers limitless possibilities. News editors also need to challenge the assumption that audiences are uninterested in humanitarian news. According to a survey conducted by the University of East Anglia,⁴⁶ about 60% of people claimed to follow news about humanitarian disasters more than any other type of international news. While financial pressures can place strain on the ability of media outlets to send reporters abroad, it is important to approach the meaning behind conflict of interest guidelines and to critically question whether not telling an important story is the better alternative to accepting logistical support from donors or aid agencies to cover a crisis. Certainly, aid actors should not expect favourable coverage in return for assisting reporters to reach affected populations. Like the humanitarian principles that underpin aid work, journalism ethics need to be held up to the highest standards. In order to ensure the stories of those who suffer in silence are told, journalists and aid actors need to work together while respecting each other's areas of responsibility.

For aid agencies

7 Telling a story together:

Raising awareness and drawing attention to crises and disasters in the public is not only the job of the media. With citizen journalism on the rise and direct access to audiences, humanitarian organisations need to join forces to fill gaps. Aid agencies can and should play their part in reporting on neglected crises and highlighting the voices of people affected. Not only is it important to invest in trained communications and media specialists on the ground who can liaise with the public, but to also think about innovative ways of reaching people, particularly given limited humanitarian funding. Hiring freelance communication experts shared between agencies or offering joint trainings to local journalists are some options.

For news consumers

8 Invest to grow:

Interested in foreign aid and humanitarian news? Then support it. From subscribing to news outlets that best reflect personal interest, complimenting journalists on good reporting or letting reporters and editors know of the importance of humanitarian issues, there are plenty of ways for readers to support the media outlets that continue to report on humanitarian crises. Donors can also support journalism fellowship programmes, some of which encourage foreign reporting and independent journalism in developing or crisis countries.

About CARE International

Founded in 1945, CARE International works around the globe to save lives, defeat poverty and achieve social justice. We put women and girls in the centre because we know that we cannot overcome poverty until all people have equal rights and opportunities.

CARE International works in 95 countries to assist more than 56 million people to improve basic health and education, fight hunger, increase access to clean water and sanitation, expand economic opportunity, confront climate change and recover from disasters.

To learn more, visit www.care-international.org

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Text and editing: **Jennifer Bose**
Project coordination: **Katharina Katzer and Ninja Taprogge**
Idea and concept: **Sandra Bulling**
Design and Layout: **Aspel Creative**

CARE Australia
www.care.org.au

CARE Canada
www.care.ca

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www.care.dk

CARE Germany
www.care.de

CARE India
www.careindia.org

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www.care.at

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www.care.org.pe

Raks Thai Foundation (CARE Thailand)
www.raksthai.org

CARE International UK
www.careinternational.org.uk

CARE USA
www.care.org