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US-Israeli-Iran Conflict Spillover on GCC & Global Poverty - A Systemic Analysis

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Abstract*—The 2026 US-Israel-Iran war and the resulting disruption of the Strait of Hormuz represent a critical juncture in global poverty dynamics, triggering cascading spillover effects that extend far beyond the immediate conflict zone. This paper examines a variety of mechanisms through which regional conflict impacted the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The author explore how this transmits into a spillover into global poverty situation, arguing that the crisis operates through six interconnected pathways: direct fertilizer supply chain disruptions that undermine agricultural productivity across Asia and Africa; energy price inflation that cascades through food systems and electricity generation; behavioral amplification through protectionist trade policies; disruption of remittance flows from Gulf-based migrant workers who constitute a majority of the population in several GCC states; collapse of global connectivity through Gulf aviation hubs; and the erosion of Gulf charitable capacity that has historically provided more than $15 billion annually in poverty alleviation assistance. Drawing on data from international organizations and recent scholarly analysis, this paper projects that the conflict could push an additional 45 million people into acute food insecurity by mid-2026, bringing the global total to 363 million—surpassing the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war-induced peak. The analysis reveals that poverty during this conflict is not merely increasing but being fundamentally restructured through secondary and vicarious trauma spillovers that erode the very capabilities—entrepreneurial confidence, social trust, and future orientation—upon which sustainable poverty elimination depends. The paper introduces the Wealth Discovery Framework as an alternative to alleviation-dependent approaches, arguing that sustainable poverty elimination requires shifting from deficit management to latent asset mobilization within affected communities. The paper concludes by proposing a multi-level framework for mitigating poverty impacts and building systemic resilience against future geopolitical shocks to global food systems, emphasizing the protection of migrant workers, the continuity of charitable capacity, and the restoration of hope and collective efficacy as foundational conditions for poverty elimination in the region and the world.*

***Keywords*—** *Global Poverty, Food Security, Fertilizer Supply Chains, Strait of Hormuz, US-Israel-Iran Conflict, GCC, Systemic Vulnerability, Humanitarian Crisis, Gulf Philanthropy, Migrant Workers, Remittances, Wealth Discovery Framework, Spillover Effects, Trauma Geography, Anti-Fragility.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem Statement

The onset of the US-Israel-Iran war in March 2026 has precipitated a cascade of economic disruptions that threaten to reverse decades of progress in global poverty reduction. While the immediate humanitarian toll of the conflict is concentrated in the Gulf region, the indirect effects on global food systems, energy markets, and supply chains are projected to generate waves of impoverishment across continents. Unlike previous conflicts that disrupted grain exports directly (such as the Russia-Ukraine war), the current crisis targets the foundational inputs of modern agriculture—fertilizers and energy—creating a systemic shock that undermines food production capacity worldwide.

This paper addresses a critical gap in the existing literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the transmission mechanisms through which the GCC conflict generates global poverty. While considerable attention has focused on energy market volatility (Donmez, 2026; Cakirtekin, 2026), the strategic importance of the Gulf region as a global hub for fertilizer production—accounting for nearly one-third of key agricultural inputs—creates a transmission mechanism that has been insufficiently examined. This paper argues that understanding poverty outcomes during this conflict requires analyzing the convergence of physical supply disruptions, economic cost inflation, and behavioral responses that together create a poverty trap for vulnerable populations. Buheji (2022)

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This analysis is grounded in three intersecting theoretical domains. *First, systemic vulnerability theory* (Folke et al., 2010) helps explain how geographically concentrated production of critical inputs creates "single points of failure" in global systems. The Gulf's dominance in fertilizer production represents such a vulnerability, where disruption to a single chokepoint (the Strait of Hormuz) can propagate instability across the entire global food system.

Second, *global value chain (GVC)* governance literature (Gereffi et al., 2005) provides insight into how input supply concentration in politically volatile regions creates distinct governance challenges. The captive structure of fertilizer value chains leaves importing countries with little bargaining power despite critical dependence.

Third, *behavioral economics* perspectives on crisis response (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Buheji, 2026b) explain how threat perception amplifies supply chain disruptions through panic purchasing, hoarding, and defensive trade policies—mechanisms that transform localized shortages into global price spirals.

Fourth concept is *anti-fragility*, which is a framework for understanding how systems can strengthen through shocks, especially when contrast it with potential vulnerability. Buheji (2025a)

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1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

This paper addresses three primary research questions:
1. Through what mechanisms does the GCC conflict transmit poverty impacts globally?
2. Which regions and populations are most vulnerable to these impacts, and why?
3. What policy interventions can mitigate poverty outcomes and build systemic resilience against future shocks?

The objectives are: (a) to map the transmission pathways from Gulf disruption to global poverty; (b) to quantify projected poverty impacts across regions; (c) to analyze the structural vulnerabilities exposed by the crisis; (d) to assess the role of GCC charitable organizations in poverty alleviation and how the conflict impacts this support; and (e) to propose a governance framework for enhancing food system resilience. Buheji et al. (2021)

1.4 Paper Structure

Following this introduction, Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on food system resilience and geopolitical disruption. Section 3 outlines the methodology. Section 4 maps the transmission mechanisms from Gulf disruption to global poverty. Section 5 provides regional vulnerability assessments. Section 6 analyzes cascading effects. Section 7 quantifies projected poverty impacts. Section 8 assesses adaptation capacities. Section 9 examines the critical role of GCC charitable organizations in poverty alleviation and the impact of the conflict on this support. Section 10 discusses long-term implications. Section 11 concludes with policy recommendations.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Geopolitical Disruption and Food System Resilience

The relationship between geopolitical conflict and food security has been extensively studied, particularly following the 2007-2008 food price crisis and the 2022 Ukraine war. According to Tendall et al. (2015), food system resilience is "the ability of a food system and its units at several levels to provide sufficient, appropriate, and accessible food to all over time in the face of various and even unforeseen disturbances." However, much of this literature focuses on climate shocks or market volatility, with less attention to geopolitical disruption of input supply chains.

The 2022 Russia-Ukraine war provided critical lessons about the vulnerability of grain-exporting regions. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2024), the war contributed to a 23% increase in global food prices and pushed an additional 71 million people into undernourishment. However, the current Gulf conflict differs fundamentally: it threatens not grain exports but the fertilizer and energy inputs that underpin agricultural productivity globally (Cakirtekin, 2026).

2.2 The Strategic Importance of the Gulf Region

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, together with Iran, constitute one of the world's most concentrated centers of fertilizer production. According to International Fertilizer Association data, GCC states accounted for 23% of global ammonia trade (up from 19% in 2019) and 34% of global urea trade (Shan, 2026; Jain & Mante, 2026). The wider Middle East region contributes nearly 30% of global export supplies for major fertilizers, including nitrogen, phosphate, and potash.

This concentration reflects the region's comparative advantage in natural gas, which serves as the primary feedstock for nitrogen-based fertilizers. As Joseph Glauber of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) notes, the Gulf's importance extends beyond direct fertilizer exports to encompass the LNG that underpins global fertilizer production capacity (cited in Cakirtekin, 2026).

The Strait of Hormuz serves as the critical chokepoint for this trade. Pre-conflict traffic averaged approximately 100 vessels daily, carrying not only fertilizers but also 20% of the world's oil and significant volumes of natural gas (El Safty & El Dahan, 2026). The International Fertilizer Association estimates that a prolonged closure could tighten global fertilizer supply chains by 33%, with urea supplies falling by 30% and sulfur—a key input for phosphate fertilizers—by 44% (Shan, 2026).

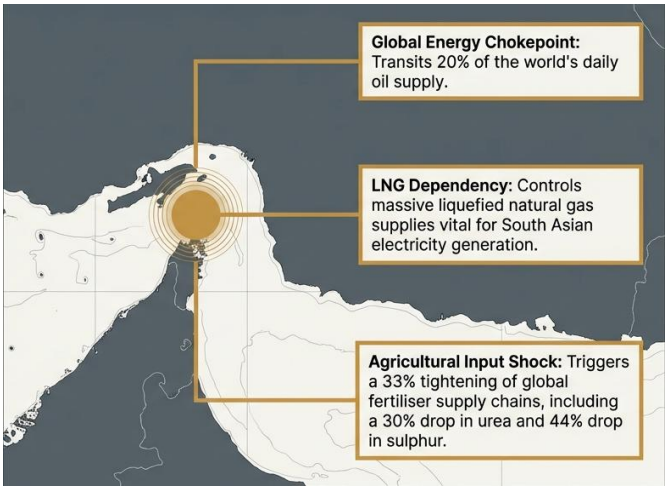

Figure (1) Strait of Hormuz as Single Point of Failure for Global Food System
Generated by the author using NotebookLM

2.3 Gulf Charity Organizations and Global Poverty Alleviation

The Gulf region has emerged as one of the world's most significant sources of charitable and humanitarian assistance. GCC-based charitable organizations have historically played a crucial role in poverty alleviation across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. According to the Alwaleed Philanthropies (2025), Gulf charitable organizations collectively disbursed approximately $15-20 billion annually in humanitarian and development assistance prior to the 2026 conflict.

The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), headquartered in Jeddah, has been a major conduit for development finance, with its poverty alleviation programs reaching millions across its 57 member countries (IsDB, 2025). Similarly, organizations such as Qatar Charity, the UAE's Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation, Kuwait's Direct Aid Society, and Saudi Arabia's King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief) have maintained extensive networks of

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food security programs, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and emergency response operations across the developing world. Buheji (2022)

These organizations have been particularly active in countries vulnerable to food insecurity, including Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, where they have provided food assistance, agricultural support, and livelihood programs that complement official development assistance (Buheji, 2021). Their operational model has emphasized direct implementation, local partnership, and cultural sensitivity, enabling them to reach populations that formal aid mechanisms often miss.

2.4 Poverty-Food Security Nexus

The relationship between food insecurity and poverty is well-established in development economics. According to the World Bank (2024), food price increases disproportionately affect the poor, who spend 50-70% of their income on food in low-income countries compared to 10-15% in high-income countries. This asymmetric impact means that food price shocks are inherently regressive, generating poverty even as aggregate economic indicators may appear stable.

The WFP (2026) estimates that for every 1% increase in global food prices, approximately 1.2 million additional people fall into poverty in low-income countries. This multiplier effect means that the fertilizer and energy price increases triggered by the Gulf conflict will generate poverty impacts far beyond the direct cost of the disruptions themselves.

2.5 Theoretical Gaps

Despite extensive literature on food security and poverty, several gaps remain. First, the specific mechanisms of fertilizer supply disruption as a driver of global poverty are under-theorized. Second, the interaction between physical supply disruptions, economic cost inflation, and behavioral responses has not been adequately modeled. Third, the differential vulnerability of regions based on import dependence and adaptive capacity requires further analysis. Fourth, the role of Gulf charitable organizations in poverty alleviation and the impact of conflict on this critical support system have been largely overlooked in the literature. This paper addresses these gaps by developing an integrated framework for understanding poverty transmission during the GCC conflict. Bioumy et al. (2025), Buheji (2022)

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative policy synthesis. The research design is structured around three analytical levels: (1) global supply chain mapping; (2) regional vulnerability assessment; (3) household-level poverty impact estimation; and (4) analysis of charitable sector impacts.

3.2 Data Sources

Primary quantitative data were drawn from:
- International Fertilizer Association trade statistics (2022-2026)
- World Food Programme food security projections (March 2026)
- Food and Agriculture Organization price monitoring systems
- International Monetary Fund commodity price data
- World Bank poverty indicators
- Islamic Development Bank annual reports
- Annual reports from major GCC charitable organizations (Qatar Charity, KSRelief, Khalifa Foundation, Kuwait Direct Aid Society, etc.)
- OECD Development Assistance Committee data on philanthropic flows

Qualitative data were drawn from:
- Policy reports from Carnegie Endowment, International Crisis Group, and Gulf International Forum
- Official statements from GCC ministries and the GCC Secretariat
- UN Security Council briefings and resolutions
- Regional and international media coverage
- Expert analysis from agricultural economics and food security researchers
- Interviews and statements from Gulf charity organization leadership
- Yale Insights interview with development economist Mushfiq Mobarak (2026)

3.3 Analytical Framework

Analysis follows a four-stage framework:
Stage 1: Supply Chain Mapping — Identifying critical nodes in global fertilizer and food supply chains that transit the Strait of Hormuz, quantifying the concentration of production and trade flows.
Stage 2: Impact Transmission Analysis — Tracing the mechanisms through which disruption at the Strait propagates through fertilizer markets to agricultural production to food prices to household poverty.
Stage 3: Vulnerability Assessment — Differentiating impacts across importing regions based on exposure (dependence on Gulf fertilizers), sensitivity (share of food in household budgets), and adaptive capacity (fiscal space for subsidies, social protection coverage).
Stage 4: Charitable Sector Impact Assessment — Mapping the funding sources, operational structures, and beneficiary populations of Gulf charitable organizations, and analyzing how the conflict affects their capacity to support poverty alleviation.

3.4 Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations. The conflict is ongoing, with rapidly evolving conditions that may alter projected trajectories. Complete trade data for 2026 are unavailable at the time of writing, necessitating reliance on projections and preliminary estimates. Data on charitable organization funding and operations are often not publicly available in real time, requiring reliance on annual reports and public statements. Secondary impacts on planting decisions will only become observable in subsequent harvest seasons.

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IV. Transmission Mechanisms: From Gulf Disruption to Global Poverty

4.1 The Fertilizer Pathway

The most immediate agricultural impact of the Strait of Hormuz disruption is reduced availability of fertilizers in importing countries. This effect is already visible in price movements: urea prices have risen from approximately $487 per ton before the conflict to $700 per ton in mid-March 2026 (Shan, 2026). For phosphate fertilizers, which rely on sulfur that is also concentrated in Gulf exports, price increases have been even steeper.

The agricultural consequences of fertilizer shortages are severe and well-documented. As the CEO of Yara International, one of the world's largest fertilizer companies, has warned, certain crops can experience yield reductions of up to 50% without adequate fertilizer application (Cakirtekin, 2026). This relationship between input availability and agricultural output creates a direct transmission mechanism from Hormuz disruption to global food supply.

The timing of the disruption is critical. The conflict escalated during the preparation period for key planting seasons across multiple regions: sub-Saharan Africa's planting season for major cereal crops; South Asia's period for rice and wheat cultivation; and North America's pre-planting fertilizer procurement for corn and soybeans (WFP, 2026). Farmers who had already purchased inputs before the escalation have a temporary buffer, but those preparing for late-season planting face acute shortages.

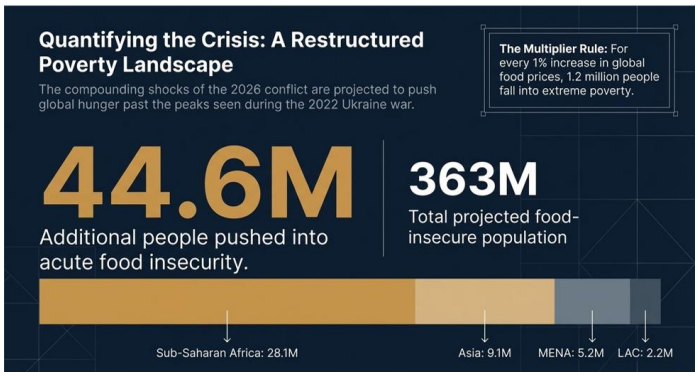

Figure (2) Illustrate how the War is Creating a Multiplier Effect on Global Poverty Landscape
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4.2 The Energy Price Pathway

Beyond direct fertilizer effects, the conflict has driven significant increases in energy prices, with oil trading above $100 per barrel (Donmez, 2026). Energy costs permeate food systems through multiple channels:

Farm Production Costs: Fuel for irrigation pumps, farm machinery, and transport accounts for 10-20% of production costs in mechanized agriculture. In smallholder systems, while mechanization is less prevalent, transport costs for inputs and outputs remain significant. Mobarak (2026)

Fertilizer Production Costs: Natural gas typically constitutes 70-80% of nitrogen fertilizer production costs. The bombing of the Ras Laffan gas facilities in Qatar has exacerbated price pressures. Mobarak (2026)

Logistics and Distribution: Fuel costs for shipping, trucking, and distribution impact the entire supply chain. As Richard Volpe, agricultural economics expert at California Polytechnic State University, explains: "As we go down the food supply chain, go downstream towards consumers, those higher energy costs are going to be compounded" Cakirtekin (2026).

This "multiplier effect" means that energy price increases disproportionately impact final food prices, with estimates suggesting that a 10% increase in oil prices translates to a 2-3% increase in global food prices after 12 months (IMF, 2024). For example, Bangladesh 25% Qatari gas dependence led to university closures, and Pakistan's 20% energy price increase, and summer load-shedding risks, Mobarak (2026).

Electricity Generation Impacts: As development economist Mushfiq Mobarak of Yale University notes, the Middle East is not only a source of oil but also an important source of natural gas for electricity generation. Bangladesh, for example, imports 25% of the gas that fuels its power plants from Qatar—imports now blocked due to the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz (Mobarak, 2026). The Bangladesh government has already closed all universities to conserve electricity, anticipating a power crisis. As summer approaches and energy demands rise, such electricity shortages will worsen across South Asia. Pakistan has already raised state-controlled energy prices by 20% (Mobarak, 2026). Governments will be forced into massive load-shedding (outages) during the summer heat if the war continues, imposing risks on human health and forcing businesses to run expensive diesel-powered generators, which contribute to worsening air quality in some of the world's most polluted cities.

4.3 The Behavioral Pathway

The crisis has triggered defensive trade policies reminiscent of the 2007-2008 and 2022 food price crises. When prices spike, exporting countries often restrict shipments to protect domestic consumers, while importers engage in panic purchasing. Such behavior amplifies price increases and can create cascading export restrictions.

Buheji (2026b) describes this as the "behavioral amplifier" — a psychological and political vector that acts as a catalyst for non-linear escalation. Once a threat is perceived, markets enter a destructive feedback loop: threat perception generates uncertainty, which triggers panic buying and protectionist restrictions, which amplify price effects, which in turn validate and intensify the initial threat perception.

The FAO has proposed a Food Import Financing Facility (FIFF) to provide balance-of-payment support for eligible food-import-dependent countries, allowing them to continue importing through normal commercial channels during crises (Donmez, 2026). However, this facility has not yet been fully operationalized, leaving vulnerable countries exposed to market volatility.

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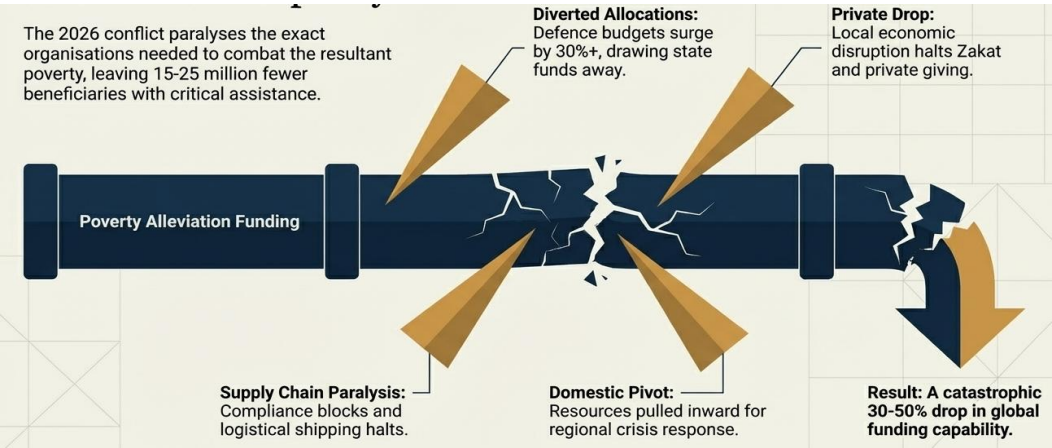

Figure (3) Explains how the Spillover that is leading to Systemic Failure due to the US-Israeli-Iran conflict has a Negative Impact on the Global GCC Charity Capacity

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4.4 The Remittance Pathway

An often-overlooked transmission channel operates through remittance flows. The Gulf hosts millions of migrant workers from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, Yemen, and Sudan—countries where remittances constitute a critical source of household income and foreign exchange. As Professor Mushfiq Mobarak emphasizes, "arguably the most consequential connection of the Middle East to South and Southeast Asia and Africa is not as a source of energy and fertilizer, but as a destination for migrant workers" (Mobarak, 2026).

Remittance Dependence: Many Asian and African economies are profoundly dependent on remittances sent home by their nationals working in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and other Gulf states. The remittance-to-GDP ratio exceeds 25% in both Nepal and the Philippines, with Qatar and other Gulf countries being the most popular destinations for Nepali migrant workers (Mobarak, 2026). For these countries, a disruption in Gulf employment directly translates to a macroeconomic shock with severe poverty implications.

Migrant Vulnerability: The conflict has exposed the acute vulnerability of this population. More than three-quarters of the population in Qatar and the UAE are expatriates from large developing countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Egypt. Tragically, as Mobarak observes, the majority of collateral civilian casualties in the Gulf during the war have been migrant workers—a fact that underscores their physical risk and the secondary poverty shock their families face when a primary earner is killed or injured (Mobarak, 2026).

Economic Contagion: If the GCC economies continue to suffer from the blockade and conflict, the resulting economic contraction will have large spillover effects on South and Southeast Asian economies through the remittance channel. Reduced employment, wage cuts, or forced repatriation of workers would immediately reduce household consumption, savings, and investment in sending countries, directly increasing poverty rates. This mechanism operates in parallel to the food price and fertilizer channels, creating a compounded burden for the most vulnerable nations.

According to the World Bank (2025), remittances to low- and middle-income countries reached $669 billion in 2025, with the Gulf states accounting for approximately 15% of outflows. A 20% reduction in Gulf remittances—a plausible scenario given the economic disruption—would translate to a loss of $20 billion in household income for some of the world's poorest populations. Arguably, the most consequential connection can be seen in the destination for migrant workers. The remittance-to-GDP ratios (Nepal and Philippines exceeding 25%); the fact that over three-quarters of Qatar and UAE populations are expatriates; and the tragic observation that the majority of collateral civilian casualties are migrant workers, Mobarak (2026).

4.5 The Global Connectivity Disruption

The conflict has severely disrupted global travel and connectivity, with disproportionate consequences for developing economies that rely on the Gulf as a transit hub. As Mobarak highlights, the highest-rated airlines with the most extensive global networks—Emirates, Qatar Airways, and Etihad—are all based in the Middle East, alongside Turkish Airlines, which serves as a critical connector between Europe, Asia, and Africa (Mobarak, 2026).

The war-induced disruption to air travel and logistics affects multiple sectors essential for development. Supply chains and corporate operations that depend on Gulf hubs for regional coordination face delays and increased costs. The flow of migrant workers to and from South Asia and Africa, which is essential for employment and remittances, is severely constrained.

Patients from developing countries who rely on Gulf hubs for medical travel or the transport of essential medicines face treatment delays. Even university partnerships, conference participation, and research supply chains that transit through Gulf hubs are disrupted, affecting capacity building in developing countries. Mobarak (2026) report that more and more the U.S. is demonstrating it is "less interested" in maintaining global stability, this makes the perceptions shift toward China and Russia, as an implication for global hegemony.

4.6 The Virtual Water Pathway

The conflict also threatens food production through its impact on water security, both directly and indirectly. GCC states rely on desalination for up to 90% of their freshwater needs, and recent attacks on desalination facilities in Bahrain and Iran highlight the vulnerability of this critical infrastructure (Hadchity, 2026).

Beyond direct water infrastructure, the region depends on "virtual water" imports—water-intensive products like meat and cereals from water-abundant nations (Allan, 1998). Hoekstra and Mekonnen (2012) estimated that the Middle East region imports approximately 200 billion cubic meters of virtual water annually through food and agricultural products—equivalent to the flow of two Nile rivers.

If conflict disrupts these imports, the Gulf effectively loses a substantial portion of its water budget. This affects both food and water self-sufficiency, creating compounded scarcity that cascades into poverty impacts. Buheji et al. (2021)

4.7 The Geopolitical Realignment Risk

Professor Mobarak identifies a longer-term, broader consequence that could reshape the development landscape: the potential for a rapid geopolitical realignment as developing countries reassess their partners. "If the U.S. demonstrates through its conduct in the Middle East that it is less interested in that task [maintaining global stability for business], perceptions of the global roles played by the United States and China will shift more rapidly" (Mobarak, 2026).

Development Implications: For developing countries, a shift toward greater reliance on China and Russia would have profound implications for poverty alleviation. China's development model emphasizes infrastructure investment and state-directed finance, while the U.S. model has historically focused on governance reform, private sector development, and multilateral institutions. A rapid realignment could create uncertainty in development finance, as countries navigate between competing systems with different conditionalities and priorities.

The Reliability Factor: The core issue, as Mobarak frames it, is reliability. Businesses and governments in developing countries require stability to plan investments, manage supply chains, and implement long-term poverty reduction strategies. If the U.S. is perceived as an unreliable guarantor of that stability—and China positions itself as a more dependable partner—the resulting shift in economic and diplomatic alignment could have lasting consequences for global poverty dynamics that extend far beyond the immediate conflict.

4.8 The Wealth Discovery Framework: Reimagining Poverty Responses

While the preceding sections have documented the multiple pathways through which the GCC conflict transmits poverty globally, an analytical framework developed by Buheji (2019a) offers a complementary lens for understanding both the limitations of conventional poverty alleviation approaches and the potential for transformative responses. The "Wealth Discovery Framework" reframes the poverty question from one of deficit management to one of latent asset mobilization.

Traditional poverty responses, whether from governments, international organizations, or charitable institutions, have focused primarily on alleviation—providing food aid, cash transfers, and basic services to meet immediate needs. While essential, this approach treats poverty as a condition to be managed rather than a problem to be solved. The Wealth Discovery Framework argues that sustainable poverty elimination requires identifying and activating the productive capacities, social networks, and entrepreneurial potential that exist within poor communities but remain unrecognized or underutilized (Buheji, 2019a).

The current crisis exposes the fragility of alleviation-dependent approaches. As documented in Section 9, Gulf charitable organizations—which have historically provided essential poverty alleviation services—face funding reductions of 30-50% and operational disruptions that will leave 15-25 million fewer beneficiaries receiving assistance. When the institutions of alleviation are themselves disrupted, communities with no internal wealth-generation capacity face catastrophic outcomes. Bioumy et al. (2025)

The framework emphasizes four interconnected dimensions:

1. Asset Mapping: Identifying existing but unrecognized resources within poor communities—skills, local knowledge, social networks, underutilized infrastructure—that can be mobilized for income generation (Buheji, 2019a).

2. Opportunity Recognition: Connecting community assets to market opportunities, supply chains, and value chains that exist even during crises. For example, while fertilizer supply chains are disrupted, opportunities may exist in organic farming, local seed networks, or alternative input production.

3. Capability Building: Developing the skills, organization, and market linkages that enable communities to transform latent assets into sustainable livelihoods. This shifts the locus of action from external provision to internal development.

4. Ecosystem Enabling: Creating the policy, regulatory, and financial conditions that support wealth discovery—including access to microfinance, business development services, and market linkages (Buheji, 2019a).

For the countries most affected by the Gulf conflict's poverty impacts—Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, and the Sahel region—the Wealth Discovery Framework suggests that external assistance, while necessary, cannot be sufficient. Sustainable poverty reduction requires parallel investments in identifying and activating internal productive capacity. For Gulf charitable organizations facing reduced resources, the framework offers a pathway to do more with less: shifting from direct service provision to enabling community-led wealth discovery may achieve greater impact with constrained budgets.

The Wealth Discovery Framework aligns with Buheji's broader work on building "hardiness" in crisis-affected populations (Buheji, 2026a) and developing "anti-fragile" systems that strengthen through shocks (Buheji, 2025). Rather than viewing poor communities as passive recipients of assistance, the framework positions them as active agents in their own economic transformation—a perspective that

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becomes particularly critical when external support is disrupted by conflict. Figure (4) Shows the requirement for transitioning from deficit management to latent asset mobilisation to compromise for the external poverty alleviation programs.

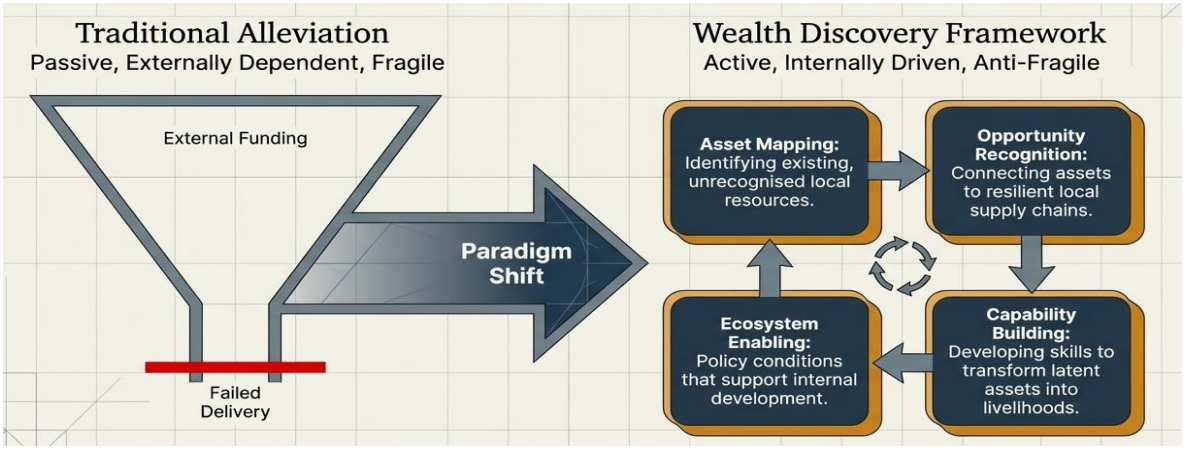

Figure (4) Wealth Discovery Framework Suggested by Inspiration Economy (Buheji,2019a)
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For governments and humanitarian organizations responding to the GCC conflict's poverty impacts, the Wealth Discovery Framework suggests four strategic shifts:

- *From provision to enablement:* Rather than solely providing food aid, invest in local food production, market linkages, and livelihood support that builds long-term capacity.
- *From standardization to contextualization:* Understand that solutions to poverty should be adapted to local resources, limitations, and possibilities rather than using standardized methods.
- *From fragmentation to integration:* Connect poverty interventions across sectors—agriculture, energy, water, education, health—recognizing their interconnections.
- *From relief to development:* Even during crisis response, maintain a horizon beyond immediate survival, investing in activities that build future productive capacity (Buheji, 2019a).

In the context of the 2026 GCC conflict, where traditional poverty alleviation systems are under unprecedented strain, the Wealth Discovery Framework offers both a diagnostic lens—revealing why alleviation-dependent approaches are vulnerable—and a prescriptive pathway—pointing toward more resilient, community-driven models that can withstand disruption and sustain poverty reduction even when external support is compromised.

4.9 Spillover Effects and the Geography of Trauma

The Wealth Discovery Framework also account for the reality that conflict-induced poverty is not merely a matter of economic disruption but is embedded within broader cascades of trauma that extend far beyond the battlefield. As Buheji (2025c) documents in the context of the Gaza war, contemporary conflicts generate secondary and vicarious spillover effects that propagate poverty through psychological, social, and behavioral channels. Secondary spillovers occur when individuals directly exposed to violence—including the migrant workers in Gulf states who have experienced missile strikes, displacement, or the death of colleagues—transmit trauma to their families and communities through disrupted relationships, reduced earning capacity, and impaired decision-making.

Vicarious spillovers operate through mediated exposure. Populations in countries across Asia and Africa, many already vulnerable to food insecurity, absorb the psychological weight of the conflict through news coverage, social media, and communication with affected relatives, generating anxiety, hopelessness, and risk aversion that undermine economic initiative and poverty reduction efforts. These spillover consequences are at the heart of the outcomes of poverty, not on the periphery; they undermine the very skills—future orientation, social trust, entrepreneurial confidence—upon which wealth discovery depends.

For the Wealth Discovery Framework to be effective in the context of the GCC conflict, poverty interventions must therefore be designed as trauma-informed interventions, recognizing that the communities most in need of economic opportunity are simultaneously communities processing indirect exposure to violence, dislocation, and loss. This integration of psychological and economic frameworks suggests that sustainable poverty elimination requires not only asset mobilization and market linkages but also the restoration of hope, agency, and collective efficacy—the foundational conditions upon which wealth discovery depends (Buheji, 2025c).

V. Regional Vulnerability and Projected Poverty Impacts due to Spillovers of US-Israel-Iran Conflict on the GCC

5.1 Asia: The Most Exposed Continent

Asia faces the steepest projected increase in food insecurity as a result of the crisis. WFP projections indicate a 24% increase in acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) across Asian countries relative to pre-conflict baselines.

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Approximately 9.1 million additional individuals could fall into acute food insecurity (WFP, 2026).

This vulnerability reflects several factors:

Fertilizer Import Dependence Factor: India, the world's largest importer of urea and diammonium phosphate (DAP), relies heavily on Gulf supplies. The country is already seeking alternative sources from Indonesia, Belarus, Russia, and China (Jain & Mante, 2026), but these alternatives come at a higher cost and with longer supply chains.

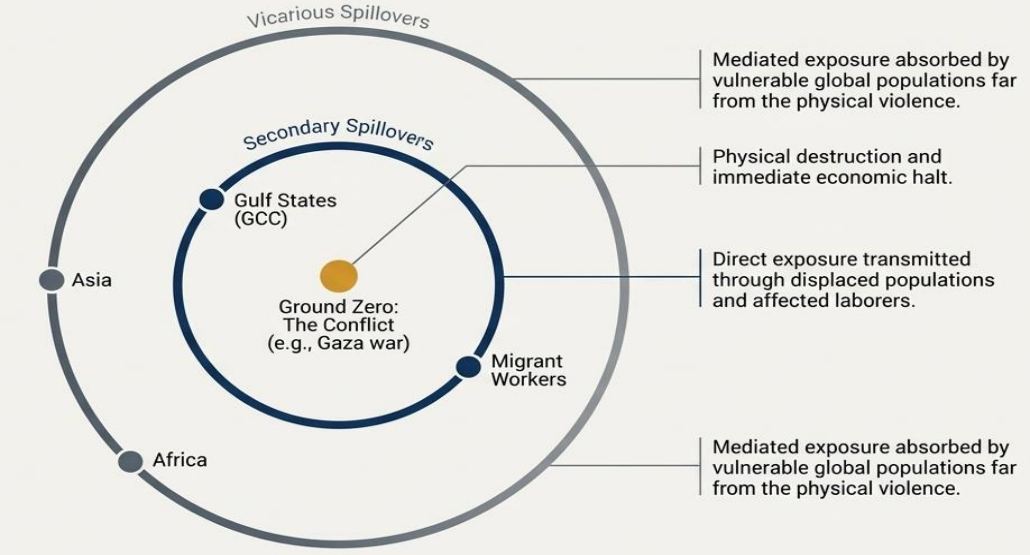

Figure (5) Illsutrates how GCC Trauma Extends far Beyond Physical Battlefields
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Energy Import Dependence Factor: Many Asian countries import substantial portions of their energy needs, exposing them to oil price increases that compound food price pressures. Bangladesh's 25% dependence on Qatari gas for electricity generation exemplifies this vulnerability (Mobarak, 2026).

Smallholder Farmer Vulnerability Factor: The region's agricultural systems are dominated by smallholder farmers with limited financial buffers. Input cost increases that are manageable for large-scale commercial operations can be catastrophic for farmers operating on thin margins.

Rice Dependency Factor: Asia's staple food is rice, which requires significant nitrogen fertilizer inputs. Reduced fertilizer availability threatens the region's primary food source.

Remittance Vulnerability Factor: Countries like Nepal and the Philippines, with remittance-to-GDP ratios exceeding 25%, face acute exposure to Gulf economic contraction (Mobarak, 2026).

5.2 Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa faces the second-highest risk, with projected increases of 17-21% in food-insecure populations across different sub-regions (WFP, 2026). Approximately 28.1 million additional individuals across West, Central, East, and Southern Africa could fall into acute food insecurity.

The region's vulnerability stems from several structural factors:

Extreme Fertilizer Import Dependence Factor: More than 90% of fertilizer used in sub-Saharan Africa is imported (Cakirtekin, 2026). The region has limited domestic production capacity and lacks the fiscal space to subsidize inputs at scale.

High Food Expenditure Shares Factor: African households typically spend 40-60% of their income on food, making them acutely sensitive to price increases (World Bank, 2024). Even modest price increases can push millions below the poverty line.

Limited Social Protection Factor: Governments in the region have constrained resources for subsidies or social protection expansions. The fiscal space that exists is often already committed to debt service or other essential services.

Compounding Crises Factor: Many countries in the region are already experiencing humanitarian crises. Sudan, which imports approximately 80% of its wheat, and drought-affected Somalia have both reported sharp price increases for essential commodities since the conflict began (WFP, 2026). These compounded vulnerabilities mean that the Gulf shock is layered on top of existing stressors.

5.3 Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean face a projected 16% increase in food-insecure populations, representing approximately 2.2 million additional individuals (WFP, 2026). However, the region's vulnerability is differentiated based on agricultural systems.

Brazil's Dual Exposure: Brazil, the world's largest exporter of soybeans, corn, and coffee, imports approximately 85% of its fertilizer requirements (Cakirtekin, 2026). Disruptions to fertilizer supplies threaten not only Brazilian domestic food security but also global supplies of key commodities. Higher production costs in Brazil could translate into reduced global availability and higher prices for staple crops (Shan, 2026).

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Smallholder Vulnerability in Andean and Central American Countries: In countries like Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, smallholder farmers dependent on imported fertilizers face acute vulnerability. These countries also have high rates of poverty and malnutrition, creating a poverty trap where input shortages directly translate to household food insecurity.

Caribbean Import Dependence: Caribbean nations are almost entirely dependent on food imports, with food import bills constituting 15-25% of GDP in some countries (FAO, 2024). The combination of higher global food prices and reduced availability creates acute vulnerability for these small island states.

5.4 The Middle East and North Africa

The MENA region faces a projected 14% increase in food-insecure populations, or approximately 5.2 million people, including the Gaza Strip (Hassoun et al., 2025). This reflects the region's extreme dependence on food imports—GCC states are 80-90% dependent on imported food, with over 70% historically transiting the Strait of Hormuz (WFP, 2026).

GCC Countries' Paradox: Ironically, the GCC states themselves, despite their wealth, face significant food security challenges. Their dependence on imports means that even with substantial financial resources, they cannot fully insulate themselves from global supply disruptions. Countries without alternative port access face particular challenges. As analysts note, "Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Iraq effectively become landlocked and will depend on overland routes through Saudi Arabia," creating costly congestion and logistical challenges (El Safty & El Dahan, 2026).

Egypt's Vulnerability: Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country, is the world's largest wheat importer. The country already faces economic challenges, with high inflation and constrained fiscal space. Fertilizer shortages threaten its domestic agricultural production, while higher global wheat prices increase the cost of its import bill.

Conflict Zones: Countries already experiencing conflict—Yemen, Syria, Libya, Sudan—face compounded vulnerabilities. Their populations are already food-insecure; the additional shock from the Gulf crisis may push them into famine conditions.

VI. Cascading Effects and Amplification Mechanisms

6.1 The Domino Effect Across Agricultural Seasons

The agricultural impacts of input shortages are not confined to a single growing season. Reduced fertilizer application in one season can deplete soil nutrients, affecting subsequent crops even if supplies normalize. As Richard Volpe warns, weak harvests can create a "domino effect" that persists "for an extended period of time" (cited in Cakirtekin, 2026).

This temporal dimension is critical for poverty analysis. Even if the conflict were resolved tomorrow, the agricultural impacts would continue to unfold for 12-24 months. Farmers who reduced fertilizer application this season will experience yield declines; those yields will translate to reduced food availability and higher prices; those prices will affect household food security; and reduced farm incomes will affect farmers' ability to purchase inputs for the next season.

Figure (5) Link between Gas Prices Spike and Severe Food Inflation (Domino Effect)
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6.2 Inter-Market Linkages and Contagion

Global food markets are highly interconnected, meaning that disruptions in one commodity or region rapidly transmit to others. The fertilizer price increases triggered by the Gulf conflict affect all crops, not just those that rely on imported fertilizers. This creates contagion effects where price pressures in one market propagate throughout the food system.

For example, higher fertilizer costs for corn production in the United States affect not only corn prices but also livestock feed costs, which in turn affect meat prices. Similarly, reduced wheat yields in importing countries due to fertilizer shortages affect global wheat markets, with cascading effects on bread prices worldwide.

6.3 Fiscal Constraints and Social Protection Gaps

The conflict creates fiscal pressures on governments already constrained by debt and economic challenges. Many low- and middle-income countries entered 2026 with elevated debt levels following the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 food crisis. The additional fiscal burden of higher import bills, subsidy requirements, and defense expenditures may push some countries into debt distress, limiting their capacity to respond to poverty impacts.

Donmez (2026) notes that many affected countries lack the fiscal space to subsidize food or expand social protection. This means that even where governments recognize the need to protect vulnerable populations, they may lack the resources to do so.

6.4 The Investment and Growth Channel

Beyond immediate poverty impacts, the conflict threatens long-term poverty reduction through its effects on investment and economic growth. The GCC states have been major investors in Africa and Asia, with sovereign wealth funds holding trillions of dollars in assets. If these funds must be liquidated to cover war-related expenses, or if returns diminish due to economic pressures, the development finance that has supported poverty reduction in many countries could be reduced. Even short-term hunger affects children's long-run cognitive and physical development, making them less productive later in life, and making poverty persist intergenerationally. Mobarak (2026)

Young (2026) notes that GCC countries have begun internal reviews to determine whether force majeure clauses can be invoked in current contracts and are reviewing current

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and future investment commitments. Reductions in Gulf investment would affect not only the GCC countries themselves but also the many developing countries that depend on Gulf capital for infrastructure, agriculture, and social development.

6.5 The Long-Term Human Capital Impact

As Mobarak (2026) emphasizes, even if periods of acute hunger are short-lived, children not getting adequate nutrition for a few months affects their long-run cognitive and physical development, making them less productive later in life and making poverty persist intergenerationally. This long-term human capital impact represents one of the most insidious consequences of the conflict—a reduction in the productive capacity of future generations that will affect poverty outcomes for decades.

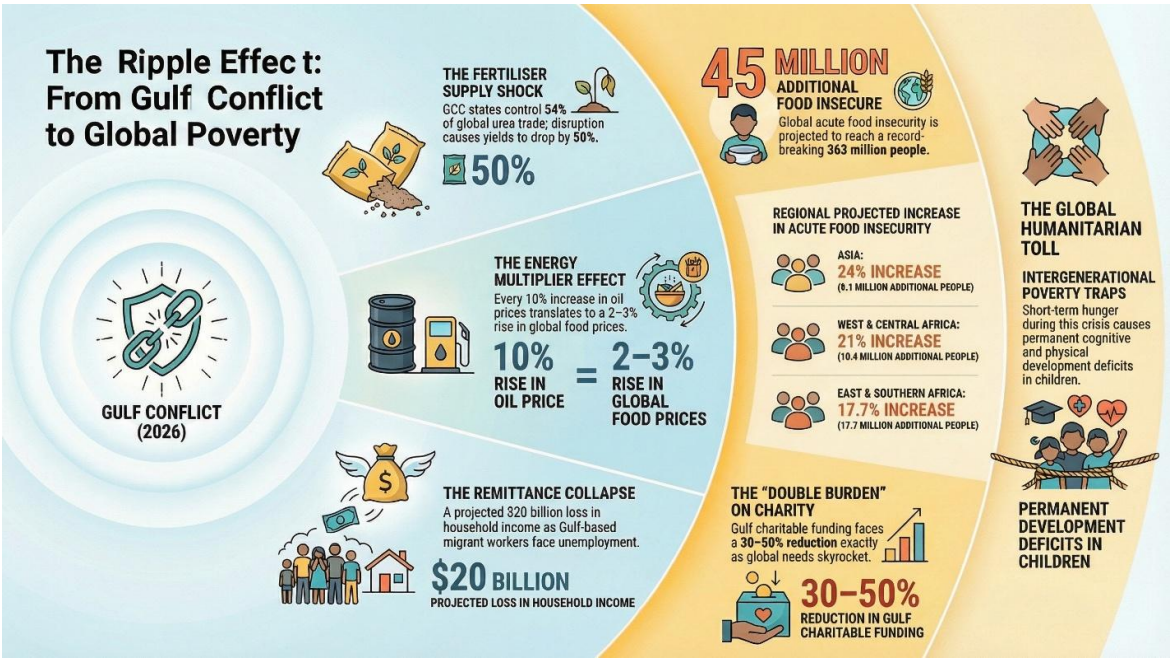

Figure (6) Spillovers of the US-Israeli-Iran War on Global Poverty

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VII. Quantitative Estimates of Global Poverty Impacts

7.1 Projected Increases in Acute Food Insecurity

The World Food Programme has developed rigorous estimates of the conflict's potential human impact. Using pre-crisis baseline numbers of people unable to afford an energy-sufficient diet (2,100 kcal/day), WFP modelled a sustained oil price shock at $100 per barrel, accounting for each country's dependence on imported energy and food (WFP, 2026).

Table 1: Projected Increases in Acute Food Insecurity by Region

Region	Projected Increase	Additional Food-Insecure Population
Asia	24%	9.1 million
West and Central Africa	21%	10.4 million
East and Southern Africa	17.7%	17.7 million
Latin America and Caribbean	16%	2.2 million
Middle East and North Africa	14%	5.2 million
Total		**44.6 million**

Source: WFP, 2026

The projections indicate that approximately 45 million additional people could fall into acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) if the conflict continues through mid-2026 (UN, 2026; WFP, 2026). This would bring global acute food insecurity to approximately 363 million people—surpassing the 349 million recorded during the 2022 Ukraine war-induced crisis (Donmez, 2026).

7.2 Translating Food Insecurity to Poverty

While acute food insecurity is a more severe condition than poverty, the two are closely correlated. Using World Bank poverty thresholds and FAO food expenditure data, we can estimate the poverty impacts of the conflict.

For every 1% increase in global food prices, approximately 1.2 million people fall below the international poverty line ($2.15/day) in low-income countries (World Bank, 2024). Given projected food price increases of 15-20% in the most affected regions, this translates to 18-24 million additional people in extreme poverty.

For the $3.65/day and $6.85/day poverty lines (more appropriate for middle-income countries), the impacts are even larger. Preliminary estimates suggest that the conflict could push 50-70 million people below the $3.65/day line and 80-100 million below the $6.85/day line globally.

7.3 Household-Level Impacts

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The poverty impacts of the conflict will be experienced differently across household types:

Smallholder Farmers: Farmers who cannot afford or access fertilizers will experience yield declines of 20-50%. For subsistence farmers, this directly reduces food availability; for commercial smallholders, it reduces income, affecting their ability to purchase food and other essentials.

Landless Agricultural Workers: Agricultural workers dependent on hired labor face reduced employment as farmers reduce planting or switch to less labor-intensive crops. Their incomes are directly tied to agricultural activity levels.

Urban Poor: Urban households are net food buyers who spend large shares of their income on food. They are directly exposed to food price increases, with no ability to produce food for themselves.

Remittance-Dependent Households: Households in countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, and the Philippines that depend on remittances from Gulf migrant workers face reduced income as Gulf employment contracts and wages decline. With remittance-to-GDP ratios exceeding 25% in some countries, this channel alone could push millions into poverty (Mobarak, 2026).

Migrant Workers Themselves: The migrant workers in Gulf countries face direct physical risks, as evidenced by their disproportionate representation among civilian casualties. For those who survive, employment insecurity, wage reductions, and potential deportation represent immediate poverty risks.

7.4 Temporal Dynamics

The poverty impacts of the conflict will unfold over time:

Phase 1 (Immediate, 0-3 months): Fertilizer price spikes and panic purchasing dominate. Food price impacts begin, but many households still have food stocks or are protected by existing social programs. Urban poor begin to feel pressure as food prices rise. Electricity shortages begin affecting South Asia, with universities closed and businesses facing outages (Mobarak, 2026).

Phase 2 (Medium-term, 3-12 months): Reduced fertilizer application translates to observable yield declines. Food price inflation peaks as reduced harvests reach markets. Smallholder farmers experience income losses. Remittance flows decline as Gulf economies contract. Poverty impacts reach their maximum. Summer heat combines with electricity shortages to create health crises.

Phase 3 (Long-term, 12+ months): Soil nutrient depletion from reduced application affects subsequent seasons. Trade policy adjustments and supply chain reconfiguration may partially offset shortages, but at sustained higher cost levels. Childhood malnutrition from the crisis manifests in long-term cognitive and physical development deficits (Mobarak, 2026). Poverty impacts persist even after the conflict ends, with intergenerational consequences.

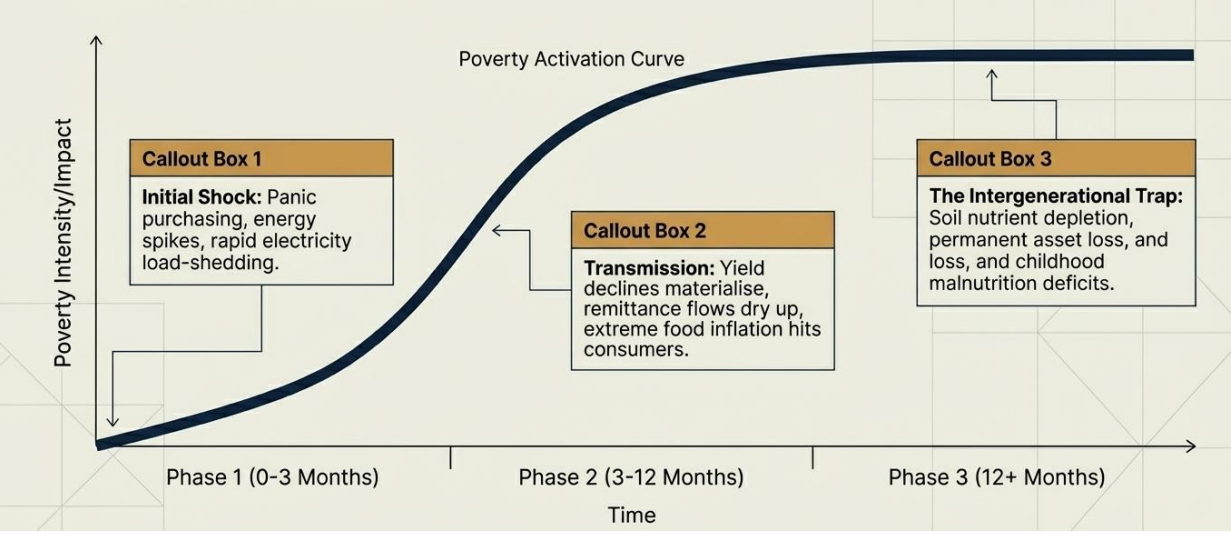

Figure (7) Shows the Temporal Dynamics of Poverty Complexity due to the Impact of the US-Israeli-Iran Conflict on GCC
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VIII. Adaptation Capacity and Resilience

8.1 Market Adjustment Mechanisms

Global agricultural markets possess some capacity to adapt to the disruption. As Kenneth Medlock of Rice University notes, "none of the Persian GCC states ranks in the top 20 countries for global agricultural commodity exports, so the global system has the capacity to manage what is going on, albeit at higher prices" (Cakirtekin, 2026).

Alternative Suppliers: Russia, China, Indonesia, and Belarus may increase fertilizer output, though this depends on their spare capacity and willingness to expand production (Jain & Mante, 2026). Russia's fertilizer exports have already been affected by sanctions related to the Ukraine war, limiting its capacity to fill gaps. China has increased domestic fertilizer production but faces its own agricultural demands.

Alternative Shipping Routes: The Cape of Good Hope can partially substitute for Hormuz transit, though at significantly higher costs and longer transit times. Shipping from the Gulf to Europe via the Cape adds approximately 15 days and 30%

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to shipping costs compared to the Suez Canal route (UNCTAD, 2025).

Strategic Reserves: GCC states have developed substantial strategic food reserves following the 2008 food crisis. Most have constructed modern grain silos capable of storing hundreds of thousands of tons of strategic grains. The UAE's Fujairah grain silos, strategically located on the Indian Ocean coast outside the Strait of Hormuz, have approximately 300,000 metric tons of capacity and were specifically designed to bypass Hormuz (El Safty & El Dahan, 2026).

However, these reserves are finite—generally sufficient for 4-6 months of consumption (El Safty & El Dahan, 2026). Regional cooperation among GCC members will be critical to managing complex logistics and ensuring all states maintain access.

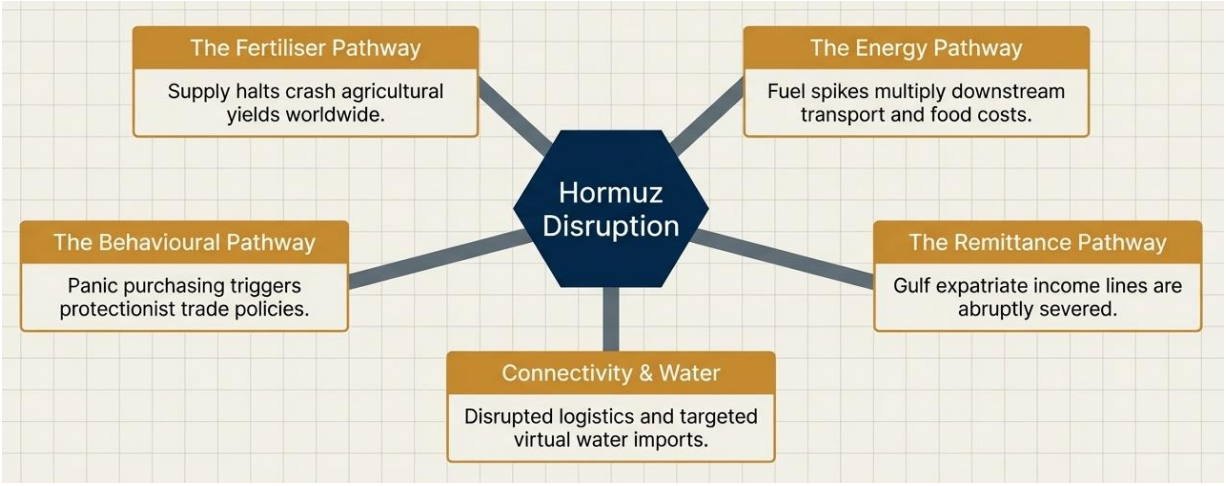

Figure (8) Draws Five Intersecting Vulnerabilities that would Impact Global Poverty if the US-Israeli-Iran Conflict continues
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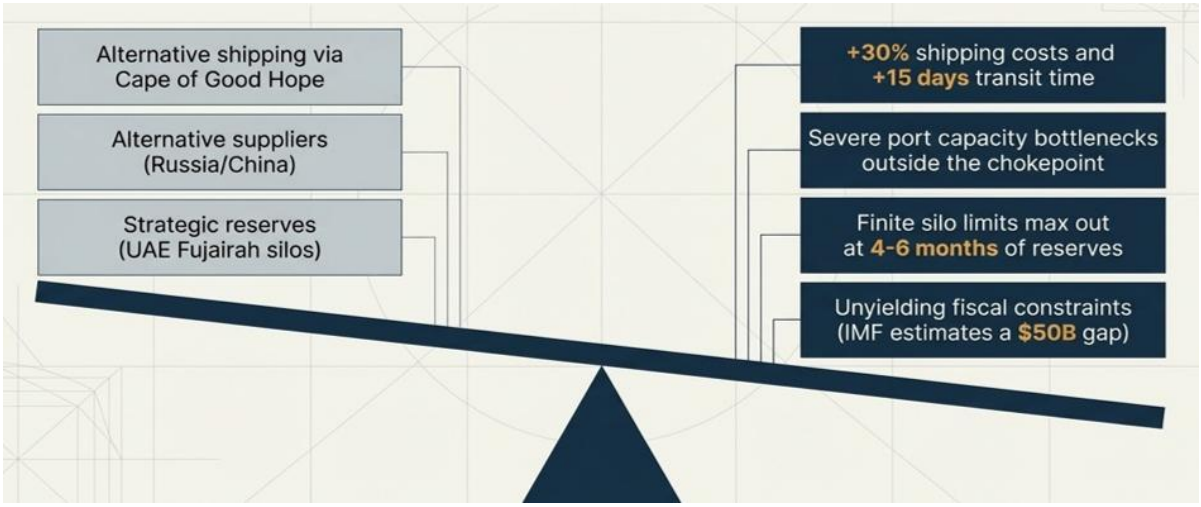

Figure (9) Shows the Global Market Adaptation Capacity for Spillovers on GCC due to US-Israel-Iran War 2026
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8.2 Limitations of Adaptation

Despite these adaptive capacities, significant constraints exist:

Port Capacity: Ports outside the Strait have limited handling capacity. Khorfakkan can handle 5 million TEUs and Fujairah less than 1 million—far below the capacity of Dubai's Jebel Ali port, which serves approximately 50 million people (El Safty & El Dahan, 2026).

Land Transport Constraints: Overland transport through Saudi Arabia provides an alternative but creates costly congestion and depends on infrastructure that may be inadequate for full trade diversion (El Safty & El Dahan, 2026).

Air Freight Limitations: Air freight capacity has dropped by 22% due to airspace closures, and flying perishable goods dramatically increases costs (El Safty & El Dahan, 2026).

Fiscal Constraints: Many affected countries lack the fiscal space to subsidize food or expand social protection (Donmez, 2026). The IMF estimates that low-income countries would need an additional $50 billion annually to maintain food import levels and social protection during the crisis (IMF, 2026).

Electricity Infrastructure: Countries like Bangladesh face acute electricity shortages as Qatari gas imports are blocked. The closure of universities and potential for summer blackouts

demonstrate the limits of adaptation when energy supplies are disrupted (Mobarak, 2026).

8.3 Social Protection as a Resilience Mechanism

Social protection programs can mitigate poverty impacts by providing income support, food assistance, or subsidies. However, the capacity to deploy such programs varies dramatically:

High-Capacity Countries: GCC states and other high-income countries can expand social protection relatively easily. Saudi Arabia has already announced a $5 billion package of subsidies and cash transfers to citizens (Magdy, 2026).

Medium-Capacity Countries: Middle-income countries like Brazil, India, and Indonesia have existing social protection infrastructure that can be scaled up, though fiscal constraints may limit the extent of expansion.

Low-Capacity Countries: Low-income countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, have limited social protection infrastructure. Many rely on humanitarian assistance from international organizations, which themselves face funding constraints.

The WFP estimates that an additional $10 billion in humanitarian funding will be required to respond to the food security impacts of the Gulf conflict (WFP, 2026). However, donor funding has been constrained by competing priorities, leaving a significant funding gap.

IX. Role of GCC Charitable Organizations in Poverty Alleviation and the Impact of the US-Israeli-Iran Conflict

9.1 Overview of GCC Charitable Sector

The Gulf Cooperation Council states host some of the world's most significant charitable and humanitarian organizations, which have historically played a crucial role in global poverty alleviation. These organizations combine substantial financial resources with extensive operational networks, cultural proximity to beneficiary populations, and established relationships with local partners across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

TABLE 1: Major GCC Charitable Organizations and Their Poverty Alleviation Focus

Organization	Headquarters	Annual Budget (Pre-Conflict)	Primary Geographic Focus	Key Poverty Alleviation Programs
King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief)	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	$4-5 billion	Yemen, Palestine, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan	Food security, nutrition, health, water and sanitation, education
Qatar Charity	Doha, Qatar	$1.5-2 billion	Asia, Africa, Middle East	Sustainable development, food security, livelihood support, orphan care
Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation	Abu Dhabi, UAE	$1-1.5 billion	Asia, Africa, Middle East	Food aid, healthcare, education, housing
Kuwait Direct Aid Society	Kuwait City, Kuwait	$300-500 million	Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia	Health, education, water, food security, sustainable agriculture
Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Poverty Alleviation Fund	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	$2-3 billion	IsDB member countries (57 nations)	Poverty reduction, infrastructure, social development, microfinance
Sharjah Charity International	Sharjah, UAE	$200-300 million	Middle East, Asia, Africa	Emergency relief, food aid, education, healthcare
Bahrain Royal Charity Organization	Manama, Bahrain	$100-150 million	Bahrain, Middle East, Asia	Food assistance, education, healthcare, social welfare
Oman Charitable Organization	Muscat, Oman	$50-100 million	Oman, Yemen, East Africa	Food aid, education, healthcare, livelihood support

Sources: Organization annual reports (2024-2025), Alwaleed Philanthropies (2025), OECD DAC data

These organizations collectively represent a unique model of Southern-led development assistance. Unlike traditional Western donors, Gulf charities operate with cultural and religious alignment with many beneficiary populations, enabling access in contexts where other actors face barriers. Their emphasis on direct implementation, local partnership, and long-term community engagement has made them particularly effective in fragile and conflict-affected states (Buheji, 2021).

9.2 Mechanisms of Poverty Alleviation

GCC charitable organizations employ multiple mechanisms to address poverty:

Emergency Food Assistance: In crisis contexts, Gulf charities provide direct food aid, cash transfers, and nutrition support. KSRelief, for example, has been a primary provider of food assistance in Yemen, reaching millions of beneficiaries annually (KSRelief, 2025). Qatar Charity (2023) maintains emergency food distribution networks across sub-Saharan Africa, with particular focus on the Sahel region.

Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Programs: Recognizing that emergency aid alone cannot break poverty cycles, Gulf charities have invested significantly in sustainable agriculture. Kuwait Direct Aid Society operates agricultural training centers across Africa, providing smallholder farmers with improved seeds, fertilizer access (pre-conflict), irrigation systems, and extension services. The Islamic Development Bank's agriculture programs have supported food security across its member countries, with particular emphasis on climate-resilient agriculture.

Livelihood Support and Economic Empowerment: Microfinance, small enterprise development, and vocational training form core components of Gulf charity poverty programs. Qatar Charity's "Bismillah" microfinance program has provided interest-free loans to hundreds of thousands of entrepreneurs across Asia and Africa. Khalifa Foundation's livelihood programs have supported women's economic empowerment through skills training and small business development. Buheji (2025)

Water and Sanitation: Water scarcity is a critical driver of poverty across Africa and Asia. Gulf charities have invested heavily in water infrastructure—wells, boreholes, water purification systems—that simultaneously address health, agriculture, and women's empowerment (since women and girls often bear water collection burdens).

Healthcare and Nutrition: Malnutrition is both a cause and consequence of poverty. Gulf charity health programs include nutrition interventions for children and pregnant women, treatment for preventable diseases, and healthcare infrastructure development. KSRelief's nutrition programs across the Horn of Africa have reached millions of children.

Education: Education is recognized as a pathway out of poverty. GCC charities support school construction, teacher training, scholarship programs, and educational materials across beneficiary countries. Direct Aid Society's educational programs span thousands of schools across sub-Saharan Africa.

Orphan Care and Social Protection: Gulf charities have developed extensive orphan care programs that provide food, education, healthcare, and livelihood support to orphaned children and their families. These programs often serve as de facto social protection systems in countries where government capacity is limited.

9.3 Geographic Distribution of GCC Charity Assistance

Prior to the 2026 conflict, GCC charitable assistance was distributed across multiple regions:

Yemen: The largest single recipient of Gulf charity assistance, reflecting both proximity and the severity of the humanitarian crisis. KSRelief alone has provided over $4 billion in assistance to Yemen since the conflict began in 2015 (KSRelief, 2025). Qatar Charity, Khalifa Foundation, and other organizations have also maintained significant Yemen programs.

Sub-Saharan Africa: The Sahel region (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad), Horn of Africa (Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan), and East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania) have been major recipients. Direct Aid Society (2025) focuses heavily on sub-Saharan Africa, with operations in over 30 African countries.

Palestine and Gaza: GCC charities have been major supporters of Palestinian communities, with particular focus on food security, healthcare, and education in Gaza, where the population has faced a prolonged humanitarian crisis.

Syria and Iraq: The Syria crisis has drawn significant Gulf charity support, with programs addressing food security, shelter, healthcare, and education for displaced populations.

South Asia: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and India have received substantial Gulf charity assistance, particularly for emergency response, education, and livelihood programs.

Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have been recipients of Gulf charity support, particularly for emergency response and community development.

9.4 Financial Scale and Economic Significance

The financial scale of GCC charitable assistance is substantial. Alwaleed Philanthropies (2025) estimates that Gulf charitable organizations disbursed approximately $15-20 billion annually in humanitarian and development assistance prior to the conflict. This compares to official development assistance (ODA) from Gulf governments of approximately $25-30 billion annually (OECD, 2025), meaning that charitable flows represent a significant supplement to official aid.

For many recipient countries, Gulf charity assistance represents a critical component of the poverty alleviation infrastructure. In Yemen, Gulf charities have provided approximately 30-40% of humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 2025). In Somalia and Sudan, Gulf charity programs have been essential to food security and nutrition. In fragile contexts where government capacity is limited, these organizations often serve as primary service providers.

TABLE 2: Estimated Gulf Charity Assistance to Selected Countries (Pre-Conflict)

Country	Estimated Annual Gulf Charity Assistance (USD)	Primary Implementing Organizations
Yemen	$2.5-3.5 billion	KSRelief, Qatar Charity, Khalifa Foundation, Kuwait Direct Aid
Somalia	$300-500 million	KSRelief, Qatar Charity, Direct Aid, Kuwait Direct Aid
Sudan	$250-400 million	KSRelief, Qatar Charity, Khalifa Foundation, Direct Aid
Pakistan	$200-300 million	Qatar Charity, KSRelief, IsDB
Palestine	$150-250 million	Qatar Charity, KSRelief, Khalifa Foundation
Syria	$200-300 million	KSRelief, Qatar Charity, Khalifa Foundation
Afghanistan	$150-200 million	KSRelief, Qatar Charity, IsDB
Sahel Region	$150-250 million	Direct Aid, Qatar Charity, KSRelief

Sources: Organization annual reports, OCHA humanitarian appeals, estimated from reported program expenditures

9.5 The Impact of the GCC Conflict on Charitable Operations

The 2026 conflict has severely impacted the capacity of GCC charitable organizations to maintain poverty alleviation programs. The impact operates through multiple mechanisms:

9.5.1 Funding Reductions

The most immediate impact is on funding availability. GCC charitable organizations derive their resources from several sources, all of which have been disrupted:

Government Allocations: Many Gulf charities receive substantial government funding. KSRelief, for example, is a government-established entity whose budget is determined by Saudi government allocations. As Gulf governments redirect resources to defense and domestic security—Saudi Arabia's defense budget increased by an estimated 30% following the conflict escalation (Magdy, 2026)—allocations to charitable organizations have been reduced.

Private Donations: Gulf charities rely heavily on private donations from individuals and corporations. The conflict has created economic uncertainty; many individuals are conserving resources rather than donating. Corporate donations have declined as businesses face disruption. Qatar Charity reported a 35% decline in private donations in the first month of the conflict (Qatar Charity, 2023).

Zakat Collections: Islamic charitable giving (zakat) is a significant source of Gulf charity funding. Economic disruption reduces zakat collections as business profits

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decline. Reduced property values and investment returns further diminish zakat bases.

Investment Income: Gulf charities maintain investment portfolios that generate income for their programs. Market volatility and the need to liquidate assets to maintain operations during funding shortfalls have reduced investment income.

Preliminary estimates suggest that Gulf charitable organizations face funding reductions of 30-50% compared to pre-conflict levels (Buheji, 2026a; Charity sector reports). This represents a loss of $5-10 billion annually in poverty alleviation resources.

9.5.2 Operational Disruptions

Beyond funding, the conflict has disrupted charitable operations:

Staff and Volunteer Availability: Gulf charities employ thousands of staff, many of whom are themselves affected by the conflict. Some staff have been displaced; others are unable to travel to program locations. Volunteers, who form an essential part of many organizations' operational models, are less available as families focus on domestic safety.

Banking and Financial Transfers: The conflict has disrupted banking systems in the region. Financial transfers to beneficiary countries have been delayed or restricted. Compliance requirements have increased, adding bureaucratic burdens.

Supply Chain Disruptions: The same supply chain disruptions affecting global food and fertilizer markets affect charitable operations. Food procurement costs have increased; shipping delays affect program implementation. Organizations that previously sourced food locally in Gulf countries for regional programs face both higher costs and reduced availability.

Security Constraints: In some GCC countries, security restrictions limit organizational operations. Staff movement is restricted; program activities are curtailed. Organizations with offices in affected areas have had to suspend operations.

9.5.3 Shifting Priorities

Gulf charities have been forced to shift resources to domestic needs:

Domestic Emergency Response: The conflict has created humanitarian needs within GCC states themselves. Iranian missile strikes have caused displacement, infrastructure damage, and casualties. Gulf charities that previously focused exclusively on international programs have been called upon to support domestic emergency response.

Refugee and Displaced Populations: The conflict has generated displacement within the region. GCC states are hosting displaced populations from conflict zones, creating new humanitarian needs that charities must address.

Economic Support to Affected Citizens: Some Gulf charities are providing economic support to citizens affected by the economic disruption—small business support, food assistance, and other forms of social protection.

These domestic demands compete with international poverty alleviation programs, resulting in reduced resources for the African and Asian populations that have historically depended on Gulf charity support.

9.5.4 Reputational and Partnership Challenges

The conflict has also created reputational challenges that affect charitable operations:

Perceptions of Partiality: Gulf charities associated with governments involved in the conflict may face perceptions of partiality from some beneficiary communities. This can affect access and acceptance.

Partnership Disruptions: International partners may reduce cooperation with Gulf charities due to concerns about conflict linkages or due to their own resource constraints.

Regulatory Constraints: Some countries have imposed regulatory restrictions on financial flows from the Gulf region, affecting charitable transfers.

9.6 Projected Impact on Poverty Alleviation

The reduction in Gulf charity capacity has significant implications for global poverty:

9.6.1 Direct Service Reduction

The most immediate impact is reduced direct service delivery. Gulf charities supported by the funding and operational capacity reductions will serve fewer beneficiaries. Preliminary estimates suggest that the 30-50% reduction in Gulf charity resources will translate to approximately 15-25 million fewer beneficiaries receiving food assistance, healthcare, education, and livelihood support across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

9.6.2 Geographic Gaps

The reduction will not be evenly distributed. Countries most dependent on Gulf charity assistance—Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Palestine, Afghanistan—will be most affected. In Yemen, where Gulf charities have provided 30-40% of humanitarian assistance, the reduction creates a gap that other actors are unlikely to fill. The UN humanitarian appeal for Yemen was already underfunded before the conflict; the additional gap from reduced Gulf charity support will have severe consequences. Buheji and Korze (2020)

9.6.3 Sectoral Impacts

Different poverty alleviation sectors will be affected differently, Buheji (2019):

Emergency Food Assistance: The most immediate impact will be on food aid. Gulf charities have been major providers of food assistance; reductions will increase food insecurity for millions already vulnerable.

Sustainable Agriculture Programs: The conflict's impact on fertilizer availability compounds the reduction in charity agricultural programs. Organizations that previously provided fertilizer support to smallholder farmers are now unable to do so, exacerbating the productivity declines described earlier.

Healthcare and Nutrition: Reductions in charity health programs will affect nutrition interventions for children and pregnant women, with long-term consequences for child development and human capital formation.

Education: Gulf charity education programs, particularly those serving displaced and vulnerable children, face reductions that will affect educational attainment and long-term poverty outcomes.

9.6.4 The Gap Filling Problem

The reduction in Gulf charity assistance creates a gap that other actors face challenges filling. Official development

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assistance from Western donors has not increased to compensate; indeed, many Western donors are facing their own fiscal constraints. The UN humanitarian system was already underfunded before the conflict, with less than 50% of appeal requirements typically met. Private foundations and other charitable actors have limited capacity to scale up rapidly. The result is a significant gap in the poverty alleviation infrastructure for countries that depend on Gulf charity support.

9.6.5 Long-Term Structural Implications

Beyond immediate service reductions, the conflict may have long-term implications for Gulf charitable capacity:

Organizational Sustainability: Gulf charities face existential challenges. Reduced funding, operational disruptions, and reputational challenges may weaken organizational capacity that has been built over decades. Some organizations may not survive the crisis, representing a permanent loss of poverty alleviation capacity. Buheji (2019)

Donor Confidence: Private donors who have reduced giving during the crisis may not return to previous levels post-conflict. Economic recovery may be slow, affecting zakat and other charitable giving for years.

Partnership Erosion: Partnerships with international organizations and local implementing partners may be disrupted, with effects that outlast the conflict.

Institutional Memory Loss: Staff reductions, displacement, and organizational disruption will result in loss of institutional knowledge that is critical for effective poverty programming.

9.7 The Moral Dimension: A Double Burden

The conflict creates a moral dimension to poverty impacts. The same GCC populations that have historically been sources of charitable support are now themselves affected by the conflict. The reduction in Gulf charity assistance comes at precisely the moment when global poverty needs are increasing due to the conflict's other impacts.

This double burden—increased poverty due to the conflict's economic effects, combined with reduced capacity of key institutions that have historically addressed poverty—represents a systemic failure of the global poverty alleviation infrastructure. The populations most dependent on Gulf charity support are also those most vulnerable to the food security impacts of the fertilizer and energy disruptions. The compounding of these effects creates a poverty trap from which recovery will be difficult.

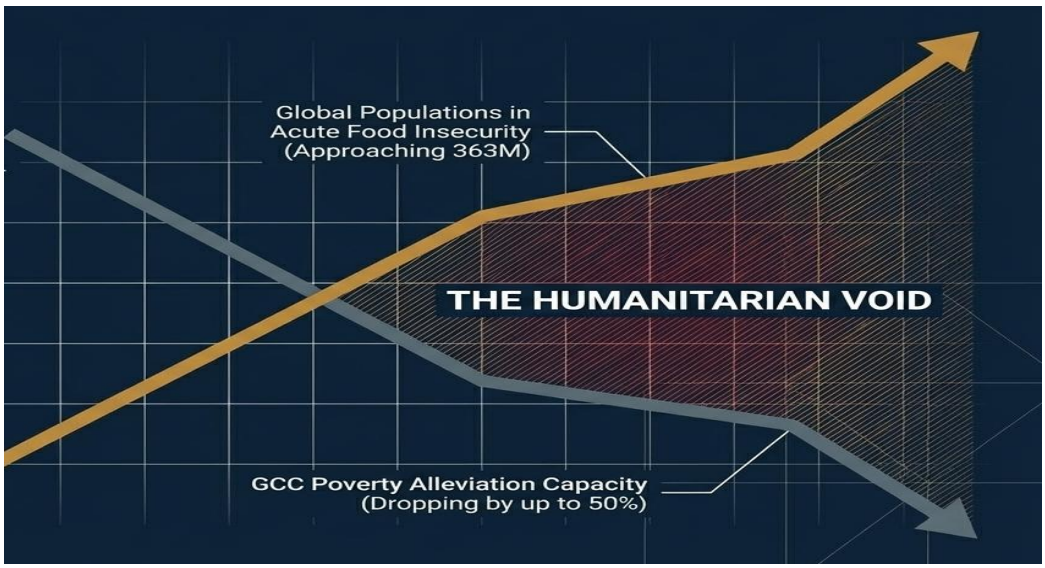

Figure (10) Shows a Possible Humanitarian Void due to the Dropping of Poverty Alleviation Capacity by 50%
Generated by the author using NotebookLM

X. Discussion: Long-Term Implications for Global Poverty

10.1 Structural Vulnerabilities Exposed

The Gulf crisis exposes several structural vulnerabilities in the global food system and poverty alleviation infrastructure:

Geographic Concentration of Input Production: The concentration of fertilizer production in a single geopolitically volatile region creates systemic risk (Jain & Mante, 2026). This vulnerability suggests that poverty reduction efforts that depend on global food system stability are inherently fragile.

Tight Coupling of Energy and Food Systems: The close relationship between energy and food systems means that energy disruptions rapidly transmit to food availability and affordability (Cakirtekin, 2026). This coupling creates vulnerability for net food-importing countries that also depend on energy imports.

Maritime Chokepoint Dependence: Reliance on critical maritime corridors like the Strait of Hormuz creates single points of failure in global supply chains (El Safty & El Dahan, 2026). Countries with extreme import dependence and insufficient supplier diversification face acute vulnerability.

Inadequate Social Protection: The crisis reveals the inadequacy of social protection systems in many countries to respond to large-scale shocks. Even where systems exist, they are often underfunded or lack the capacity for rapid scaling.

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Concentration of Charitable Capacity: The concentration of Islamic charitable capacity in the Gulf region creates vulnerability for poverty alleviation. When conflict affects the Gulf, the entire system of Southern-led poverty assistance is disrupted.
Funding Model Fragility: The reliance on government allocations, private donations, and zakat collections creates a funding model vulnerable to economic disruption. Diversification of funding sources for poverty alleviation is essential.
Migrant Worker Vulnerability: The conflict exposes the profound vulnerability of migrant workers who constitute a majority of the population in several Gulf states. Their lack of citizenship protections, family networks, and long-term stakes makes them disproportionately affected by conflict and economic disruption (Mobarak, 2026).
Global Connectivity Dependence: The reliance on Gulf-based airlines and transit hubs for global connectivity creates vulnerability for developing countries that depend on these networks for business, healthcare, education, and migration (Mobarak, 2026).

10.2 Potential for Long-Term Poverty Traps

The conflict creates conditions for long-term poverty traps, particularly in agriculture-dependent economies. Reduced fertilizer application not only affects current yields but can also deplete soil nutrients, reducing productivity for multiple seasons. Farmers who sell productive assets to cope with current shocks may lack the resources to resume normal operations when conditions improve.

In countries where the conflict compounds existing stressors—conflict, climate shocks, economic instability—the result may be a permanent increase in poverty that persists even after the Gulf crisis resolves. This "ratchet effect" means that poverty levels may not return to pre-crisis baselines even with recovery assistance.

The reduction in Gulf charity capacity compounds these long-term effects. Organizations that have supported poverty alleviation for decades may not recover their capacity. The loss of institutional knowledge and partner networks represents a setback that will affect poverty outcomes for years.

As Mobarak (2026) emphasizes, the most insidious long-term impact may be on child nutrition and development. Even short periods of acute hunger during critical developmental windows can affect children's cognitive and physical development, reducing their lifetime productivity and perpetuating intergenerational poverty. This human capital impact will affect poverty outcomes for decades, long after the conflict itself has ended.

10.3 Implications for Sustainable Development Goals

The crisis directly threatens progress toward multiple Sustainable Development Goals:
SDG 1 (No Poverty): The projected increases in poverty represent a significant setback to global poverty reduction goals. The World Bank estimates that the conflict could add 5-7 years to the timeline for eradicating extreme poverty (World Bank, 2026). The reduction in Gulf charity capacity adds additional years to this timeline.
SDG 2 (Zero Hunger): The 45 million additional people facing acute food insecurity represent a substantial setback to hunger reduction goals. The WFP projects that the conflict will push the global hunger target beyond 2030 (WFP, 2026). The reduction in food assistance from Gulf charities exacerbates this setback.
SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being): The electricity shortages and health impacts from the conflict, combined with reduced charity healthcare programs, threaten progress on health outcomes in affected regions (Mobarak, 2026).
SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth): The disruption to remittance flows and migrant worker employment directly affects decent work and economic growth in remittance-dependent countries (Mobarak, 2026).
SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production): The fertilizer supply chain vulnerabilities exposed by the crisis highlight the need for more resilient production systems that are less dependent on concentrated input sources.
SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals): The crisis underscores the importance of international cooperation for food system resilience and poverty alleviation. The current response has been characterized by unilateral actions rather than coordinated global governance. The disruption of Gulf charity partnerships demonstrates the fragility of development partnerships in conflict contexts.

10.4 The Geopolitical Realignment and Development Implications

As Mobarak (2026) argues, the conflict may accelerate a geopolitical realignment with profound implications for development. If the United States is perceived as an unreliable guarantor of global stability, developing countries may increasingly turn to China as a more dependable partner. This shift could fundamentally alter the landscape of development finance, with implications for poverty alleviation that extend far beyond the immediate conflict.

Businesses and governments in developing countries require stability to plan investments, manage supply chains, and implement long-term poverty reduction strategies. If the U.S. is perceived as having failed to maintain stability in the Gulf, and China positions itself as a more reliable partner, the resulting shift in economic and diplomatic alignment could have lasting consequences for global poverty dynamics.

10.5 The Moral Imperative

As noted by WTO Trade Dialogues on Food, "trade in food is a moral obligation" (cited in Donmez, 2026). The Gulf crisis illustrates the consequences of treating food as a commodity like any other, rather than as an essential human need. Preventing the collapse of global food supplies requires coordinated international action to maintain trade flows, support vulnerable import-dependent countries, and ensure that the burden of adjustment does not fall most heavily on those least able to bear it.

Similarly, the disruption of Gulf charitable capacity highlights the need to protect the poverty alleviation infrastructure during crises. The organizations that serve the

world's poorest populations are themselves vulnerable to conflict and economic disruption. Ensuring their continuity is a moral obligation.

The vulnerability of migrant workers—who constitute a majority of the population in several Gulf states but lack citizenship protections—represents a particularly acute moral challenge. Their disproportionate representation among civilian casualties and their economic vulnerability during the crisis demand attention from the international community (Mobarak, 2026).

XI. Conclusion and Recommendations

11.1 Summary of Findings

This analysis has demonstrated that the 2026 GCC conflict is generating global poverty impacts through multiple interconnected mechanisms. The disruption of fertilizer supplies from the Gulf, combined with energy price increases and behavioral amplification, is projected to push 45 million people into acute food insecurity and tens of millions more into poverty. These impacts are not evenly distributed; they fall most heavily on import-dependent regions in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East, and on vulnerable populations, including smallholder farmers, landless agricultural workers, urban poor, remittance-dependent households, and migrant workers themselves.

The crisis also severely impacts the capacity of Gulf charitable organizations that have historically played a critical role in global poverty alleviation. Funding reductions of 30-50%, operational disruptions, and shifting priorities to domestic needs will result in 15-25 million fewer beneficiaries receiving assistance. The reduction in Gulf charity assistance compounds the direct poverty impacts of the conflict, creating a double burden for vulnerable populations.

The conflict has exposed multiple structural vulnerabilities: geographic concentration of critical inputs, tight coupling of energy and food systems, dependence on maritime chokepoints, inadequate social protection, concentration of charitable capacity, migrant worker vulnerability, and dependence on Gulf-based global connectivity. These vulnerabilities suggest that even if the current conflict resolves quickly, the global system remains susceptible to future shocks.

The long-term human capital impacts—particularly childhood malnutrition affecting cognitive and physical development—represent one of the most insidious consequences, with effects that will persist for decades and perpetuate intergenerational poverty (Mobarak, 2026).

11.2 Policy Recommendations

11.2.1 For Global Governance Institutions:

1. Operationalize the Food Import Financing Facility: The FAO's proposed FIFF should be fully funded and operationalized to provide balance-of-payment support for food-import-dependent countries during crises (Donmez, 2026).
2. Strengthen WTO Disciplines on Export Restrictions: International rules on export restrictions should be strengthened to prevent cascading trade policy responses during crises.
3. Establish Strategic Fertilizer Reserves: Create globally coordinated strategic reserves of key fertilizers, located in multiple regions to reduce dependence on any single chokepoint.
4. Enhance Commodity Market Transparency: Improve data collection and dissemination on fertilizer stocks, prices, and trade flows to reduce information asymmetries that contribute to panic responses.
5. Establish a Global Charitable Capacity Protection Mechanism: Create mechanisms to support charitable organizations during crises, ensuring continuity of poverty alleviation programs when their funding and operations are disrupted. Bioumy et al. (2025)
6. Develop Migrant Worker Protection Frameworks: Establish international protocols for protecting migrant workers during conflicts, including evacuation procedures, compensation mechanisms, and support for families of those killed or injured (Mobarak, 2026).
7. Ensure Continuity of Global Connectivity: Work with Gulf-based airlines and transit hubs to maintain essential connectivity for medical travel, academic collaboration, and supply chains critical to developing countries (Mobarak, 2026).

11.2.2 For Regional Organizations:

1. Develop Regional Food Reserves: GCC states should coordinate the development and management of regional food reserves to ensure access for all member states during disruptions (El Safty & El Dahan, 2026).
2. Integrate Food Security into Security Coordination: Regional security frameworks should explicitly incorporate food security considerations, recognizing that food system stability is a security issue.
3. Create Regional Fertilizer Production Capacity: GCC states should invest in fertilizer production capacity in locations outside the Strait of Hormuz to reduce supply chain vulnerability.
4. Establish Regional Charitable Coordination Mechanisms: Create mechanisms for coordinating charitable responses across the GCC to maximize efficiency and ensure continued support for priority poverty alleviation programs.
5. Develop Regional Migrant Worker Protections: GCC states should establish coordinated frameworks for protecting migrant workers during conflicts, including minimum standards for evacuation, compensation, and communication with sending countries.

11.2.3 For National Governments:

1. Diversify Fertilizer Sourcing: Countries should reduce dependence on any single fertilizer source by diversifying import sources and, where feasible, developing domestic production capacity (Jain & Mante, 2026).
2. Invest in Social Protection Infrastructure: With a focus on coverage of at-risk communities, social protection systems should be improved in order to facilitate quick scaling during emergencies.
3. Promote Climate-Smart Agriculture: Investments in nutrient management, regenerative farming, and bio-fertilizers can

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reduce dependence on chemical fertilizers and enhance resilience (Cakirtekin, 2026).
4. Develop Emergency Communication Protocols: Establish clear protocols for communicating during crises to counter misinformation and reduce panic responses.
5. Support Charitable Sector Resilience: Governments should implement policies that support the continuity of charitable organizations during crises, including regulatory flexibility, bridge funding, and operational support.
6. Diversify Energy Sources: Countries dependent on Gulf energy imports should accelerate diversification of energy sources, including renewable energy development, to reduce vulnerability to future disruptions (Mobarak, 2026).
7. Strengthen Remittance Infrastructure: Establish mechanisms to maintain remittance flows during crises, including alternative transfer channels and protections for remittance-dependent households (Mobarak, 2026).

11.2.4 For Gulf Charitable Organizations:

1. Diversify Funding Sources: Reduce dependence on government allocations and private donations within the Gulf region by developing diversified funding bases, including international partnerships and endowment models.
2. Strengthen Institutional Resilience: Develop contingency plans for crisis scenarios, including remote operations, supply chain alternatives, and staff protection mechanisms.
3. Enhance Transparency and Accountability: Strengthen reporting on program impacts and financial management to maintain donor confidence and partner trust during challenging periods.
4. Coordinate with International Partners: Strengthen relationships with international humanitarian organizations to enable coordinated responses when individual organizational capacity is constrained.

11.2.5 For Humanitarian Organizations:

1. Anticipate and Pre-Position: Humanitarian actors should anticipate crisis impacts and pre-position supplies in vulnerable regions to enable rapid response.
2. Support Local Food Systems: Humanitarian assistance should, where possible, support local food production and markets rather than relying solely on imported food aid.
3. Integrate Poverty and Food Security Programming: Programs should recognize the linkages between poverty and food security, addressing both simultaneously.
4. Backstop Gulf Charity Programs: International organizations should develop mechanisms to temporarily backstop critical poverty alleviation programs when Gulf charity capacity is reduced.
5. Address Migrant Worker Needs: Humanitarian organizations should develop specific programming to address the needs of migrant workers affected by the conflict, including those in Gulf countries and their families in sending countries.

11.2.6 For Donor Governments:

1. Increase Humanitarian Funding: Donor governments should increase humanitarian funding to compensate for the reduction in Gulf charity assistance, ensuring that critical poverty alleviation programs continue.
2. Support Charitable Capacity Building: Invest in strengthening the institutional capacity of Southern charitable organizations to enhance their resilience to future shocks.
3. Promote Policy Coherence: Ensure that security, trade, and development policies are coherent and do not inadvertently undermine poverty alleviation capacity.
4. Support Energy Transition in Vulnerable Countries: Provide financial and technical support for energy diversification in countries dependent on Gulf energy imports (Mobarak, 2026).
5. Strengthen Remittance Corridors: Support the development of resilient remittance transfer systems that can function during crises (Mobarak, 2026).

11.3 Final Reflection

The 2026 GCC conflict serves as a stark reminder of the interconnectedness of global systems and the vulnerability created by the geographic concentration of critical inputs and charitable capacity. For the millions facing reduced access to food in the coming months, the abstract concept of systemic vulnerability will be experienced as hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. For the millions more who depend on Gulf charity support for healthcare, education, and livelihood assistance, the reduction in charitable capacity will mean lost opportunities and deepened poverty.

For the millions of migrant workers who constitute a majority of the population in several Gulf states, the conflict represents a particularly acute threat. Their lack of citizenship protections, family networks, and long-term stakes makes them disproportionately vulnerable to the physical and economic impacts of the war. Their families back home, dependent on remittances that sustain household consumption and investment, face a secondary poverty shock that compounds the food security impacts of the crisis (Mobarak, 2026).

For the children whose nutrition is compromised during this crisis, the impacts will extend far beyond the conflict itself. Even short periods of inadequate nutrition during critical developmental windows can affect cognitive and physical development, reducing lifetime productivity and perpetuating intergenerational poverty (Mobarak, 2026).

Preventing such outcomes requires not only immediate humanitarian response but also fundamental changes to the structure of global food systems and poverty alleviation infrastructure. The international community must recognize that poverty alleviation capacity is itself vulnerable to geopolitical shocks and must be protected.

As the international community confronts this crisis, there is an opportunity to build back more resilient systems—food systems that are less dependent on concentrated supply sources, better able to withstand shocks, and more capable of protecting vulnerable populations when disruptions occur. There is also an opportunity to build more resilient charitable infrastructure—diversified funding bases, strengthened institutional capacity, coordinated response mechanisms—that can maintain poverty alleviation programs even when its traditional sources of support are disrupted.

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Whether these opportunities will be seized remains to be seen. What is clear is that the cost of inaction—measured in human lives and livelihoods—is too high to accept. The moral imperative to prevent suffering and protect the most vulnerable must guide the international response to this crisis and the rebuilding that must follow.

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