

**Forum:** Economic and Social Council

**Issue:** The Question of Improving the global distribution of food to end world hunger

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Hunger is the term used to define periods when populations are experiencing severe food insecurity—meaning that they go for entire days without eating due to lack of money, lack of access to food, or other resources. Around the world, more than enough food is produced to feed the global population—but as many as 811 million people still go hungry. After steadily declining for a decade, world hunger is on the rise, affecting 9.9 percent of people globally. From 2019 to 2020, the number of undernourished people grew by as many as 161 million, a crisis driven largely by conflict, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Projections now show the world is not on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2, Zero Hunger by 2030 and, despite some progress, most indicators are also not on track to meet global nutrition targets. The food security and nutritional status of the most vulnerable population groups is likely to deteriorate further due to the health and socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021 report.

## **KEY DEFINITIONS**

**Hunger:** Hunger is the distress associated with lack of food. The threshold for food deprivation, or undernourishment, is fewer than 1,800 calories per day.

**Undernutrition:** Undernutrition goes beyond calories to signify deficiencies in energy, protein, and/or essential vitamins and minerals.

**Malnutrition:** Malnutrition refers more broadly to both undernutrition and overnutrition (problems with unbalanced diets).

**Food security:** Food security relates to food availability, access, and utilization. When a person always has adequate availability and access to enough safe and nutritious food to maintain an active and healthy life, they are considered food secure.

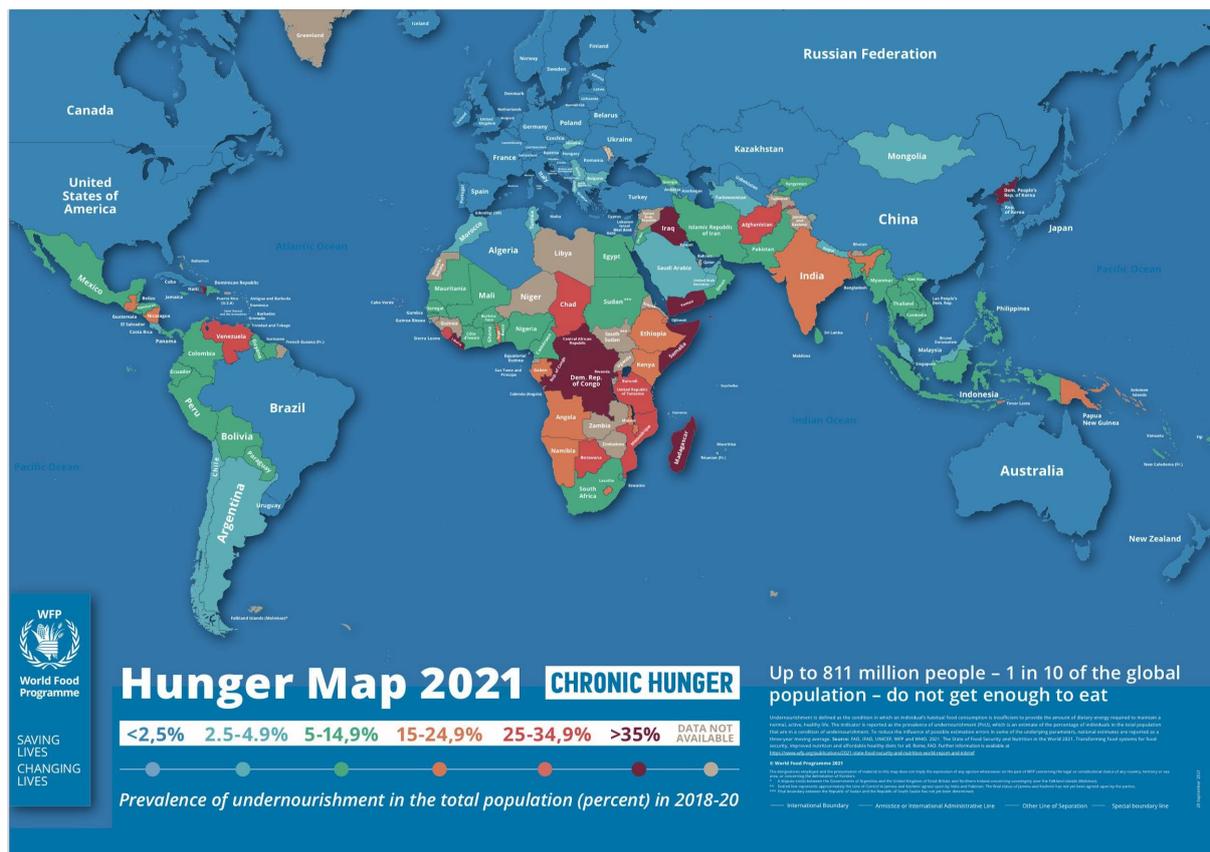
**Socio-economic:** relating to or concerned with the interaction of social and economic factors.

**COVID-19:** Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases.

**Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs):** The Sustainable Development Goals or Global Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all".

**Food and Agriculture Organization(FAO):** The FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve nutrition and food security.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION



(From source 7)

Food-related health issues involve nutrition, undernourishment, food security, fitness and exercise, and nutrition-related diseases. Some of these issues are based on personal choices, but many are determined by opportunities and availability of resources. Hunger is strongly interconnected with poverty, and it involves interactions among an array of social, political, demographic, and societal factors. People living in poverty frequently face household food insecurity, use inappropriate care

practices, and live in unsafe environments that have low access to quality water, sanitation, and hygiene, and inadequate access or availability to health services and education—all of which contribute to hunger.

Conflict is also a key driver of severe food crises, including famine—a fact officially recognized by the UN Security Council in May 2018 . Hunger and undernutrition are much worse when conflicts are prolonged and institutions are weak. The number of conflicts is on the rise, some worsened by climate-related shocks. People and organizations working to combat hunger must take conflict-sensitive approaches, much more so than in the past.

Weather-related events, in part associated with climate change, have also impacted food availability in many countries and thus contributed to the rise of food insecurity. Economic downturns in countries dependent on oil and other primary-commodity export revenues have also affected food availability and decreased people’s ability to access food.

Hunger is also more than just having enough food to eat – it’s about having enough nutritious food to eat. Poor nutrition is attributed to 45 percent of deaths in children under the age of five, while one out of every six children in developing countries is underweight. A significant portion of the world’s population is also affected by micronutrient deficiencies – a shortage of vitamins and minerals necessary to good health. This is sometimes called “hidden hunger,” because there may not be obvious, visible signs of malnutrition. Iron deficiency in women of reproductive age is a prime example of a micronutrient deficiency.

The right to food is a basic human right. And while our planet produces enough food to feed the more than 7 billion people who inhabit it, systemic inequality and economic disparity has led to unbalanced distribution and unequal access.

### **APPROACHES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**

**South Africa:** The Government of South Africa has ensured tenure security for rural populations. They instituted a separate budget line for nutrition, enabling transparency and accountability for spending. 95.5% of the population of South Africa in 2017 has access to an improved drinking water source.

**Brazil:** The Government encourages varied agricultural research and extension services, and local farmer organisations are involved in setting policy priorities. The extension system is effective and

properly reaches out to poor farmers. Policymakers in Brazil benefit from regular nutrition surveys that are statistically representative at national level.

**Peru:** In Peru, the law gives women economic rights equal to men. Women also have equal legal access to agricultural land. These reduce women's vulnerability to hunger and undernutrition. The National Nutrition Policy/Strategy identifies time bound nutrition targets and a multisectoral and multistakeholder policy coordination mechanism has been set up.

**Guatemala:** Relative to other countries, Guatemala's medium/long term national development policy (Política General de Gobierno 2016 - 2020) assigns strong importance to nutrition. The Government of Guatemala promotes complementary feeding practices.

**Indonesia:** 90.8% of the population of Indonesia in 2017 has access to an improved drinking water source. Indonesia instituted a separate budget line for nutrition, enabling transparency and accountability for spending.

**Philippines:** In the Philippines, constitutional protection of the right to food and the right to social security is strong. The government conducts surveys regarding nutrition and hunger in the country that helps them to focus their efforts into parts of the country that need it most.

**Bangladesh:** Bangladesh is exploring the idea of urban farming and rooftop vegetable gardens as one solution to food insecurity. The Dhaka Food System project (DFS) - funded by the Netherlands - has been supporting urban gardeners across the capital city. A pilot project supported 400 women from poor communities with training, vegetable seeds, fruit saplings, fertiliser and tools.

**Nepal:** Nepal works with many organisations like the Action Against Hunger, Feed the Future, Eradicating Hunger and the WFP. As part of their work to address hunger in Nepal, WFP established the Zero Hunger strategy, which is a program with the goal to achieve zero hunger by 2030. This program has directly helped strengthen the government's capacity to improve "food security, nutrition, as well as emergency preparedness and response."

## **TIMELINE OF EVENTS**

**1945:** The economic collapse around the world during World War II started the world hunger crisis as there was a huge food shortage and people couldn't afford to purchase food or products. People across the globe couldn't afford the products they normally purchased or needed so they opted for food alternatives to satisfy those needs.

**1961:** The World Food Programme is created as an experiment to provide food aid through the UN system. It soon proves its worth, responding to multiplying hunger crises.

**1962:** WFP's first aid operation after a September earthquake in Iran kills more than 12,000 people. WFP swung into action, delivering to survivors 1,500 tons of wheat, 270 tons of sugar and 27 tons of tea.

**1973:** The first food airdrops targeting Africa's drought-stricken Sahel.

**1974:** Famine breaks out in Bangladesh as a result of their war of liberation.

**1975:** Famine rampages through Khmer Rouge camps in Cambodia after its brutal civil war. The famine lasted till 1979.

**1980:** The Karamoja Famine rips through Uganda after its war against Tanzania

**1982:** A 16-year civil war in Mozambique resulted in 1 million civilian casualties and, in the 1980s, two major famines from 1982-1985.

**1984:** Ethiopia suffers its worst famine in a century. WFP delivers two million tons of food in relief operations over two years.

**1989:** Leading a consortium of UN agencies and charities alongside UNICEF, WFP releases 1.5 million tons of food in airdrops above war-torn and drought-affected regions of what is now South Sudan. The 20-aircraft, three-sorties-a-day operation remains the largest humanitarian airdrop in history.

**1991:** The collapse of Somalia's central government in 1991 marked the decline of the country's infrastructure. That same year, a drought took hold of the Horn of Africa. With agricultural resources limited and an absence of government oversight, violent factions weaponized what food was available to exert control, burning crops in the country's main agricultural regions and causing many Somalis to flee their homes in favor of displacement.

**2000:** WFP establishes its first hub, in Brindisi, Italy, to disperse emergency items for aid operations.

**2003:** The war in Darfur resulted in massive displacement of the civilian population to camps as people fled for their lives. The violence and displacement also pushed a tenuous food security situation over the edge, resulting in famine returning to the region.

**2011:** Somalia tips into famine, triggered by drought but intensified by insecurity and conflict.

**2015:** Conflict escalates in Yemen. WFP's response is to provide 13 million people with monthly food assistance.

**2017:** Famine was declared in parts of the Unity State in 2017, and persists to this day. At the end of 2020, an IPC survey classified 6.3 million people as living with severe food insecurity, 105,000 of whom were facing "catastrophic" levels of hunger.

**2020:** The Covid-19 pandemic upends the world as we know it, deepening poverty, hunger and malnutrition among the most vulnerable.

### RELEVANT UN TREATIES AND EVENTS

The Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition is adopted on 16 November 1974 by the World Food Conference convened under General Assembly resolution 3180 (XXVIII) of 17 December 1973; and endorsed by General Assembly resolution 3348 (XXIX) of 17 December 1974. For full resolution see source 16.

In 2015 the United Nations established the Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs). Sustainable Development Goal 2 aims to achieve "zero hunger". SDG 2 has eight targets and 14 indicators to measure progress. The five "outcome targets" are: ending hunger and improving access to food; ending all forms of malnutrition; agricultural productivity; sustainable food production systems and resilient agricultural practices; and genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals; investments, research and technology. The three "means of achieving" targets include: addressing trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets and food commodity markets and their derivatives.

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