



World Hunger—Who, Where, What

Who are the hungry in the world today, where do they live, what are the root causes of their hunger?

The public image of hunger is the starving child, whether in current Somalia famine Ethiopia or a previous famine in Africa. That is a recurring and tragic reality and evokes a generous response to save lives whenever it occurs. But acute hunger such as this represents less than 10% of the hungry in the world.

Defining 'hunger' can be tricky. The television images of starving children on the verge of death, although shocking, do not tell the entire story. These are suffering from the most severe form of malnutrition and food deprivation, but millions more suffer from chronic undernourishment.

Hunger occurs in three main forms: **acute, chronic, and hidden.** Distinguishing between the three of

them is important, since their underlying causes differ. Similarly, although all three are food related, solutions are not uniform: there is no blanket, one-size-fits-all approach to eliminating world hunger in all its forms.

- The starving 'skin-and-bones' images we see on our television screens are experiencing **acute** hunger, which is the most extreme form of malnourishment. At this stage, death is a looming reality. However, people in this category only constitute some 10% of the world's hungry.

- Chronic** hunger is the most widespread global form of malnourishment and is characterised by a constant lack of access to food of sufficient quality and quantity, as well as a lack of good healthcare and caring practices. The majority of child mortality related to nutritional factors stems from chronic hunger causes.



- Hidden** hunger results from a poor quality diet (lack of foods rich in vitamins and minerals) and to a lesser extent illness (which reduces appetite and affects the body's ability to use key nutrients) and is the most difficult form of hunger to detect, since many of those affected consume enough calories and proteins. It afflicts over 2 billion people worldwide.

Hunger Related Definitions

Hunger— a condition in which people do not get enough food to provide the nutrients (carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals and water) for active and healthy lives.

Malnutrition— refers to improper/inappropriate consumption of food (not just inadequate); it is most commonly used to refer to under-nutrition. Malnutrition mostly affects the poor, but it is not just a problem among the poor (malnutrition is about vulnerability, not poverty). Over-weight people in developed countries can also suffer malnutrition.

Under-nutrition— a condition resulting from inadequate consumption of calories, protein and/or nutrients to meet the basic physical requirements for an active and healthy life (the FAO defines under-nutrition as less than 2100 kcal per day.) Conversely, **over-nutrition** is excessive consumption (too many calories in the diet), possibly combined with low levels of physical activity.

Food Security - assured access for every person to enough nutritious food to sustain an active and healthy life, including: food availability (adequate food supply); food access (people can get to food); and appropriate food use (the body's absorption of essential nutrients).

Food Insecurity—where food supply, access and nutrients are not guaranteed. For the more than 800 million people who do not get enough regular, healthy food, ill health and a shorter life expectancy are real risks. Children, and especially very young children, who suffer from food insecurity will be less developed than children of the same age who have had sufficient food. They will most likely be shorter and weigh less, and be less able physically and intellectually, because of poor nutrition.

- **Sources:** Bread for the World Hunger Report 2004, Global Education 2011

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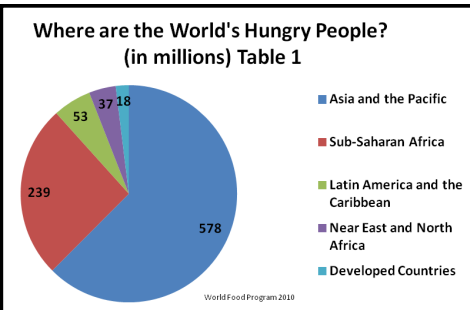
Who and where are the hungry in our world?

Most of the world's hungry live in **developing countries**. According to the latest Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) statistics, there are **925 million** hungry people in the world and 98 percent of them are in developing countries. They are distributed like this:

- 578 million** in Asia and the Pacific
- 239 million** in Sub-Saharan Africa
- 53 million** in Latin America and the Caribbean
- 37 million** in the Near East and North Africa
- 18 million** in developed countries

In this statistics, it is interesting to note the data from the world's most populous two countries:

240 million people live in hunger in India, and **150 million** people live in hunger in China.



Rural risk

Three-quarters of all hungry people live in rural areas, mainly in the villages of Asia and Africa. Overwhelmingly dependent on agriculture for their food, these populations have no alternative source of income or employment, or access to other sources of food. As a result, they are vulnerable to crises. Many migrate to cities in their search for employment, swelling the ever-expanding populations of shanty towns in developing countries.

As a result of the poverty found in rural areas, ALWS is committed to working in the rural areas in all countries, even if it is more challenging and harder to access the areas.

Farmers

The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations calculates that of the 75 percent of hungry people in developing countries, half are farming families, surviving off marginal lands prone to natural disasters like drought or flood. One in five of the hungry belongs to landless families dependent on farming and about 10 percent live in communities whose livelihoods depend on herding, fishing or forest resources. The remaining 25 percent live in shanty towns on the periphery of the biggest cities in developing countries. The numbers of poor and hungry city dwellers are rising rapidly along with the world's total urban population.

ALWS works exceptionally hard to teach farmers new and better ways of growing food crops so that food resources become more sustainable in all villages.

Children

An estimated 146 million children in developing countries are underweight - the result of acute or chronic hunger. This means that 25 percent of all hungry people are children. All too often, child hunger is inherited: up to 17 million children are born underweight annually, the result of inadequate nutrition before and during pregnancy.

(Source: *The State of the World's Children*, UNICEF, 2009).

ALWS works hard to make sure families are able to provide for their



children, and that children are going to school. This will increase the chance of breaking the cycle of poverty for these children.

Women

Women are the world's primary food producers, yet cultural traditions and social structures often mean women are much more affected by hunger and poverty than men. A mother who is stunted or underweight due to an inadequate diet often gives birth to low birth-weight children. Around 50 percent of pregnant women in developing countries are iron deficient (source: UNICEF). Lack of iron means 315,000 women die annually from haemorrhage at childbirth. As a result, women, and in particular expectant and nursing mothers, often need special or increased intake of food.

ALWS works hard to make sure that women are supported in all our programs. Women are put into support groups, receive help with farming, animals, farming, and encouraged to learn to read and write.

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations



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