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POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE
sustainable options for ending hunger and poverty

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worldwide



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Global Hunger Index 2017 Q&A

Key Takeaways

Q: Which countries have the highest (worst) 2017 GHI scores?

A: Many countries still face unacceptably high levels of hunger. The report rates one country as having an “extremely alarming” hunger level, seven countries as having “alarming” hunger levels, and a further 44 with “serious” hunger levels. *“Extremely Alarming” Country:* The Central African Republic (50.9); *“Alarming” Countries:* Chad (43.5), Sierra Leone (38.5), Madagascar (38.3), Zambia (38.2), Yemen (36.1), Sudan (35.5) and Liberia (35.3).

For the first time in three years, a country figured in the highest category of “extremely alarming” hunger. However, 9 countries – including Burundi, South Sudan, Somalia and Syria – that do not have complete data to calculate their full index scores raise significant concerns of high hunger levels based on the existing data for them and reports from on the ground. Ongoing conflict and political turmoil in many of these places contributes to inability to collect this data, and also signals that many of these countries may be the worst impacted by hunger.

Q: Why have hunger levels risen this year?

A: Global Hunger Index scores have actually fallen 27 percent since 2000, representing significant progress in the global fight to eliminate hunger. This year, however, the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization released new data showing the number of undernourished people grew in 2016 by 38 million people. This updated data contributes to each country’s GHI score and raises serious concern that the progress made in reducing hunger over the last few decades could be slowing down or even reversing in some places. The UN has attributed increases in undernourished people to the proliferation of violent conflicts and climate-related shocks, and many of the countries with the highest GHI scores have experienced some combination of conflict and climate shocks in recent years that have contributed to high hunger levels.

Q: What is the difference between GHI 2017 and the recently released State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World?

A: The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report is based on the latest data on undernourishment from 2014-2016, which is one of the factors used to calculate GHI scores. But undernourishment is just one of four parts of a country’s GHI score, and does not provide the full picture of a

country's levels of hunger. Under 5 child mortality, child stunting levels, and child wasting levels also contribute to a country's GHI score, creating a broader understanding of hunger levels.

Q: What about hunger levels in countries where a famine was declared this year or were on brink of one?

A: Sufficient data to calculate GHI scores was not available for South Sudan, parts of which were declared to be under famine earlier this year, or Somalia, for which famine warnings were issued. As of May 2017, nearly 6 million South Sudanese were believed to be facing levels of food insecurity ranging from critical to catastrophic. In Somalia too, more than a quarter of population are believed to be facing crisis or emergency-level food insecurity.

Ongoing conflict in these areas is one of the major factors inhibiting the collection of the necessary data, which is also often a key contributor to acute food insecurity and high hunger levels. Many of these countries without sufficient data to calculate GHI scores may be the ones suffering from the worst hunger (Ex: Syria, DRC).

The other two countries with famine threatened areas – Nigeria and Yemen, which fall into the “serious” and “alarming” hunger levels in GHI 2017 – are experiencing violent conflict in those areas that is contributing to food insecurity. The 2017 GHI scores are based on data from 2012-2016, and it is expected that GHI scores in the coming years will reflect the current crises.

Q: How does inequality impact hunger?

A: Inequalities within and between countries are perpetuating hunger, and it is often the groups with the least social, economic, or political power – like women and girls, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, and the poor – who suffer the most from hunger and malnutrition. To reach zero hunger it is critical that we create the spaces and means for these underrepresented groups to participate in policy making processes that affect food security; and provide the most vulnerable groups with access to nutritious food, education, health services, and social safety nets that can help reduce inequalities.

Q: Have hunger levels improved in recent decades?

A: Yes, the GHI report shows that overall there has been a steady decline in hunger in recent decades, including a 27% decrease in GHI scores since 2000 for the countries included in the report, so we are making progress in reducing hunger. But progress has been uneven, and in much of the world too slow to meet the UN goal of zero hunger by 2030.

Q: Which countries have made the most progress in reducing hunger, according to the 2017 GHI report?

A: 14 countries have reduced their GHI scores by 50% or more since 2000 – including China, Brazil, Senegal, and Peru.

A further 72 countries have reduced their GHI scores by at least 25% since 2000 – including Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Malawi and North Korea.

In terms of absolute change (as opposed to the percentage change), Angola, Rwanda, and Ethiopia have reduced their hunger levels the most since 2000, with GHI scores dropping by 24 to 25 points for each country in this period.

The Report and Methodology

Q: What is the Global Hunger Index?

A: The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to comprehensively measure and track global hunger. The report is published by IFPRI, Welthungerhilfe, and Concern Worldwide.

Q: How are scores calculated?

A: The GHI captures the multidimensional nature of hunger by ranking countries based on four key indicators: undernourishment, child mortality, child wasting and child stunting.