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Hunger

Is it possible to eliminate world hunger?

FOCUS ON ETHIOPIA

WHY ARE SO MANY PEOPLE HUNGRY?

*A person who has food has many problems.
A person who has no food has only one problem.*
—Chinese proverb

Have you ever said, "I'm starving"?

WHAT IS HUNGER?

All of us have felt hungry at times. But there are many degrees of hunger. Malnutrition is an extreme form of hunger, resulting from inadequate consumption of nutrients to meet the basic physical requirements for an active and healthy life. While most people can go without food for a few days, persistent hunger causes severe problems. Lack of essential calories and nutrients can cause impaired vision, fatigue, delayed growth, and increased vulnerability to diseases. Severely malnourished people have difficulty functioning, even at a basic level. In extreme cases, hunger can cause death. Children are especially affected by hunger; they miss out on needed nutrients for growth and development.

CAUSES OF HUNGER

Poverty is one of the root causes of hunger. When people lack the opportunity to earn enough money, they cannot meet their basic needs. But there are many other forces that hold hunger in place: conflict, corrupt governments, damaged environment, poor agriculture, unfair trade, landrights and growing population. In addition, HIV/AIDS is increasing hunger problems because many people affected by this disease are unlikely to be able to work to produce or buy food.

WHAT IS A FAMINE?

A famine occurs when a widespread shortage of food results in starvation for a group of people. Often famines are caused by natural disasters such as floods, droughts, plagues of insects, or crop failures.

There is enough food produced in the world to feed everyone. Yet there are almost one billion people in the world who suffer from hunger every day. How to respond to world hunger is a subject of ongoing debate.

In the year 2000, the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration and world leaders from all countries – rich and poor – agreed to form a partnership to work together towards ending world poverty. In order to do this, a series of Millennium Development Goals were established. These goals include: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving health, combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership. The aim is to achieve these goals by the year 2015.

The first of the Millennium Development Goals is to help eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by halving the population of people who suffer from hunger. *Do you think this is possible?*

HUNGER AFFECTS PEOPLE ON MANY LEVELS.

Individual: Lack of food inhibits the body's ability to do work and greatly increases vulnerability to diseases.

Family: Parents may have to leave the family in search of work, or sometimes entire families will migrate in order to find food.

Community: When there is not enough food, crime tends to increase as people are driven to extreme measures trying to feed themselves and their families.

National: Countries experiencing famine or hunger are usually also suffering economically and politically. Reaching people in need in these settings can be challenging and costly.

WHAT IS BEING DONE?

Many governments and organizations help hungry people by giving food donations. While this form of aid can save lives, it is recognized as a short term solution. *What types of programs do you think would help tackle the root causes of hunger?*



DID YOU KNOW?

About 24,000 people die every day from hunger or hunger-related illnesses.

CHECK IT OUT:

Take a hunger quiz at: <http://www.worldlegacy.org/HungerQuiz.htm>

For information about the Millennium Development Goals, go to: <http://www.developmentgoals.org/>

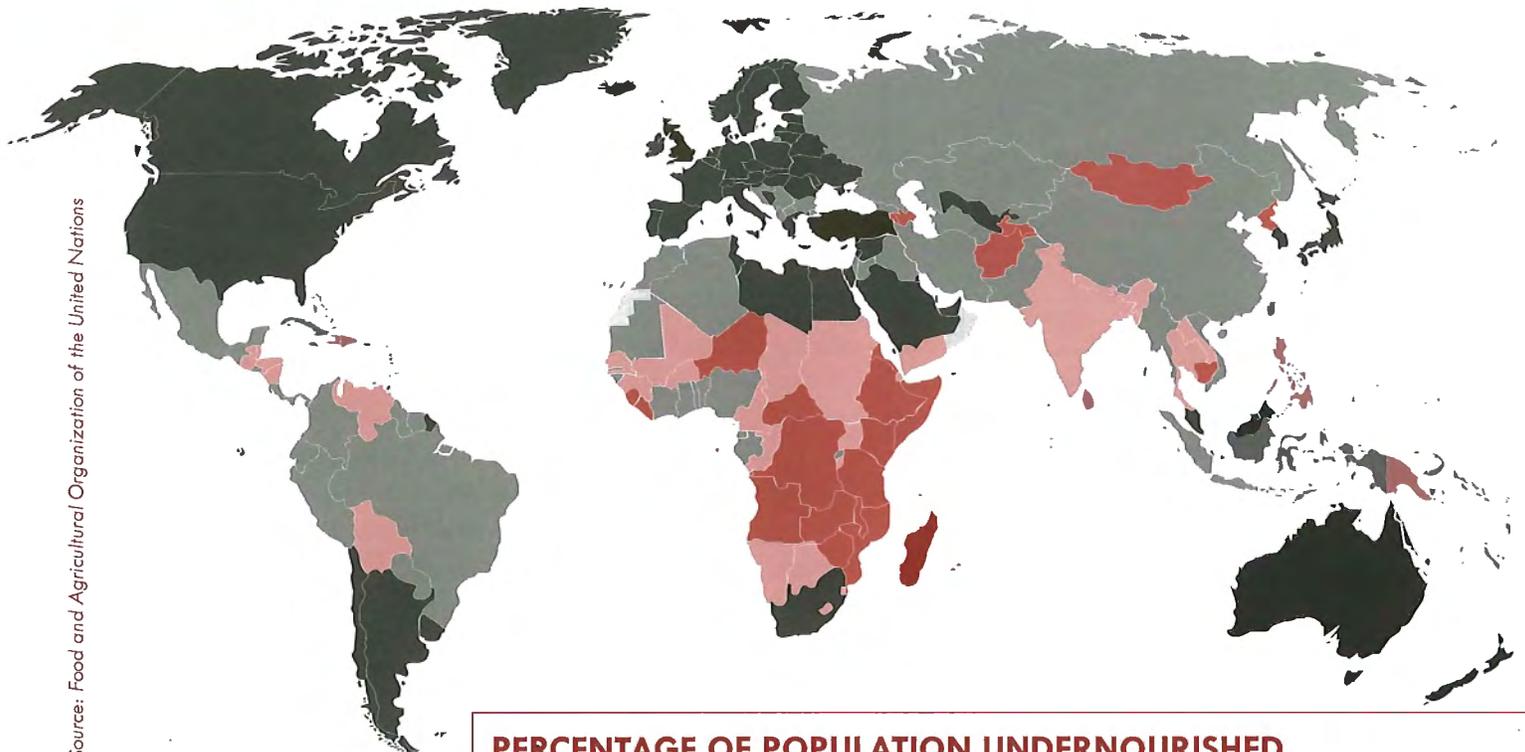
HUNGER AROUND THE WORLD

Is there hunger in your community?

Nearly every country experiences hunger in some form. Many people are outraged by the reality of hunger today. The world produces enough food to adequately feed everyone, and the cost of eliminating hunger is very small in comparison to world resources. So why are people still hungry?

How much are you eating? The typical adult needs about 2000 calories a day. Figure out how many calories you consume.

HUNGER AROUND THE WORLD



Map Source: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION UNDERNOURISHED

■ 35% or more ■ 20-34% ■ 5-1% ■ 0.1-4.9% ■ Not Estimated

DID YOU KNOW?

- The US population spends approximately 50 billion dollars per year on weight loss including low calorie foods and beverages.
- Globally, 1.2 billion people live on less than \$1 per day.
- 34% of the population of Africa is severely malnourished.
- In India, nearly half of the adult population regularly consumes an inadequate number of calories.
- If food was distributed equally, every person would receive 2,720 calories a day - more than the minimum needed for basic survival.

Do you see hungry people in the U.S.?

HUNGER IN THE UNITED STATES

Although the US is the richest country in the world, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that 36 million people in the United States are hungry. Should U.S. tax dollars be spent to feed and house people around the world when there are hungry and homeless people in America? Do you think that it is the responsibility of rich countries to feed the whole world?

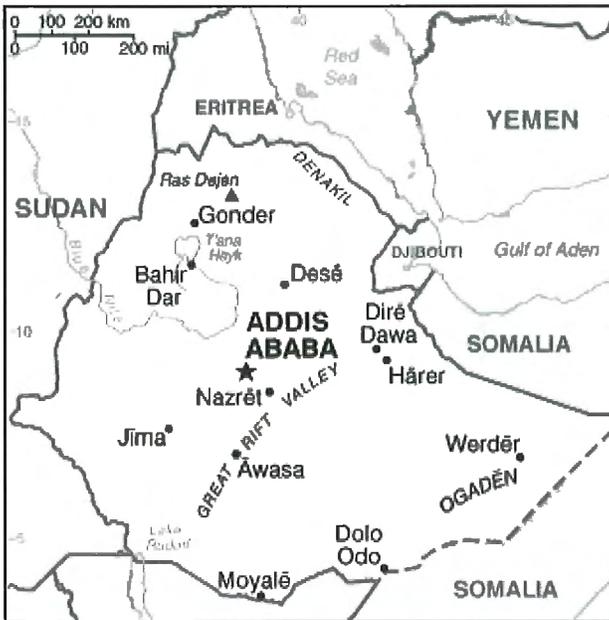
CHECK IT OUT:

Fast Food Calorie Counter: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/flash/health/caloriecounter/calories_static.html

To learn more about how malnutrition is determined: <http://www.who.int/nut/nutrition3.htm>

ETHIOPIA

How would you solve hunger in Ethiopia?



HUNGER IN ETHIOPIA

You may have seen pictures of starvation in Ethiopia. Hunger has plagued the country for many years and for many reasons. Agriculture has suffered due to lack of rain, and the growing population puts added pressure on the environment. Political troubles and years of fighting with the neighboring nation Eritrea have contributed to the harsh poverty that affects the country. In addition, Ethiopia has the third highest number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the world (over 3 million people). The worsening economic situation leaves the people with little money for food and development. In 2002, over 11 million people faced the risk of starvation. That is the equal to the amount of people in Colorado, Utah and New Mexico combined!

WHY CAN'T ETHIOPIA BREAK THE CYCLE OF FAMINE?

Ethiopia is once again faced with famine due to four years of drought. In the Spring of 2003, Ethiopia had another poor rainy season. Not only are people's crops suffering, but their livestock as well. This has a drastic effect on the economy, since 90% of the people work in agriculture. Even if the rains returned, many farmers could not afford to purchase seeds for planting. Households are often forced to cut down to two meals a day, some only one. Because of the failure of crops over the past years, families lost a great deal of money and had to sell many of their belongings. The rural population of Ethiopia now has little choice but to rely upon food aid to simply survive.

FAMINE OF 1984

Civil war and years of drought led to a severe famine across the region in 1984. Half a million people lost their lives. The international community decided to step in and help the country. Many singers recorded a song and donated the money to help those affected by the famine. It was entitled "Do They Know It's Christmas?" and tells of the trouble in Africa. The song's success brought about one of the largest concerts ever, known as LIVE AID, which included musicians Madonna, U2 and Bob Dylan, and raised \$53 million for Ethiopia.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee.
- 81.9% of the population is living on less than \$1 per day.
- Unlike most African countries, the Ethiopian monarchy maintained its freedom from colonial rule, one exception being the Italian occupation of 1936-41.

ETHIOPIA COUNTRY INFORMATION

LOCATION: Eastern Africa, in the Horn of Africa

CAPITAL: Addis Ababa

POPULATION: 67,673,031

SIZE: slightly less than twice the size of Texas

ETHNIC GROUPS: Oromo 40%, Amhara and Tigre 32%, Sidamo 9%, Shankella 6%, Somali 6%, Afar 4%, Gurage 2%, other 1%

TELEPHONES: 4 for every 1,000 people

RELIGIONS: Ethiopian Orthodox 45%-50%, Muslim 35%-40%, Animist 12%, other 3%-8%

LANGUAGE: Amharic

HIV/AIDS: 6.4%

ACCESS TO FRESH DRINKING WATER: 24%

INFANT MORTALITY RATE: 99 deaths/1,000 live births

LIFE EXPECTANCY: 45.7 years

EXTERNAL DEBT: \$5.3 billion (2002)

Sources: UNDP, CIA World Factbook

CHECK IT OUT:

Read Ethiopia's constitution: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ethiopia/ConstitutionEthiopia.pdf>

Information about the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie at: <http://www.imperialethiopia.org/selassie.htm>

HOW CAN WE ELIMINATE HUNGER?

We have enough food to feed everyone on the planet. Yet, in every corner of the world, rich and poor, there are people who are unable to lead healthy, active lives because they do not have adequate food. There are many complex political, economic and social factors that contribute to global hunger and, as a result, there are no easy solutions to the hunger problem. What do you think are the root causes of hunger? How do you think hunger can be eliminated? **Here are some ideas...**

GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT/CHANGE

The international community can help eradicate hunger through food donation programs and other forms of aid. However, many poverty-stricken countries have problems with corruption and mismanagement of their governments. In these cases, aid donations can fall into the wrong hands and may not be received by the people it is intended for. We can ensure that food is going to places that need it the most if we make sure that governments work properly to meet the needs of all citizens. Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen stated that "there has never been a famine in a democracy." *Do you think this is always true?*

CANCEL WORLD DEBT

The world's least developed countries owe a total of \$376 billion in debt. These countries already have poor economies, so repayments leave them with little left to help solve their hunger problems. Many people believe that cancelling world debt would allow these countries the ability to invest in their economy, increase technological development, and help improve their agricultural abilities. However, richer nations may impose certain conditions in exchange for cancellation of debt.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Many people believe that in order to eliminate hunger and poverty, it is necessary to concentrate on long-term, sustainable development. To achieve long-lasting growth, aid programs must focus on combating the spread of HIV/AIDS, providing education for all children and strengthening farming. Micro-finance projects can help people gain access to loans that enable them to start their own businesses. By involving the local community in the design and management of these programs, it is easier for them to continue without the need of outside assistance. *Do you think that development can only be achieved by people in their own country?*

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD

By using genetically modified (GM) food – food in which the DNA has been scientifically altered – we can increase yields of crops and grow crops that are resistant to certain diseases or pesticides. Some scientists think that this new technology has the potential to end world hunger. However, there is a debate on whether or not these foods may have adverse effects on one's health, or may create new allergies and other unintended consequences. *Is donating or encouraging poor countries to grow GM food the answer to world hunger?*

FAIR TRADE

Quotas, tariffs and farm subsidies greatly inhibit farmers in the developing world from trading on the world market. Using these methods, developed countries are able to control the amount of imports into their country, which makes it easier and cheaper to buy domestic goods. While this may help the local economy, it substantially reduces the ability of poorer countries to develop their economies through fair trade. But some argue that if we don't help US farmers, they'll suffer as well.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Worsening environmental conditions have had a drastic effect on people in developing countries. Depletion of natural resources, deforestation and degradation of ecosystems make the land unsuitable to productive farming. Land productivity also diminishes due to soil erosion, desertification, industrial development, population growth, uncontrolled urbanization and natural disasters. We can help solve these problems by involving local residents in environmental conservation programs.

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

One of the major causes of hunger is war. Violence also prevents food from entering and reaching the people who need it the most. Peace negotiations would help to allow aid to enter the needed areas and help the country solve its hunger problems. *What can be done to end conflict and violence?*

CHECK IT OUT:

For more information on genetically modified food: <http://scope.educ.washington.edu/gmfood/>

Find out about US farm subsidies here: <http://www.ewg.org/farm/>

IS IT POSSIBLE TO ERADICATE HUNGER?

How to respond to world hunger is the subject of great debate. There is not always agreement on the best ways to prevent famine and feed the hungry. With all the barriers to overcome, is it really possible to eradicate hunger? *What do you think?*

CAN WE ELIMINATE HUNGER?

YES Hunger can be eliminated

- The industrialized countries have huge economies and tremendous resources. If they would all chip in, hunger could be cut in half at an affordable cost.
- Given the high level of wealth in the developed world, we have a moral responsibility to share some of this wealth to reduce hunger.
- For the amount of money that Americans spend on dieting and weight loss (over \$50 billion per year), we could better invest in sustainable solutions to hunger.
- Because the world is so interconnected today, reducing hunger in the world ultimately serves everyone's interests. It creates more political stability, and by promoting economic growth helps create more markets.

NO Hunger cannot be eliminated

- War and conflict throughout Africa prevent development and perpetuate problems like hunger. All of the aid in the world will not help so long as this violence continues.
- It is not the responsibility of countries like the U.S. to take care of the hungry in other parts of the world; that is the responsibility of their own governments.
- It is unrealistic to try to cut world hunger in half. It would cost more money than people in the industrialized countries would be willing to pay.
- The causes of hunger in other countries are complex and poorly understood. It is naïve to think that outsiders can really make a serious difference by throwing money at the problem.

Victoria and Fatuma are members of a women's self-help group in southern **Sudan**. With a small loan, the group purchased a machine that grinds wild lulu nuts and extracts the oil. The group produces enough for the members to take home and to sell as cooking oil at the local market.

*The Ismani Development Group in **Tanzania** encourages the use of local vegetables and researches the growth of local tree species. These projects build on the strengths, skills, knowledge and experience of the local community. Vegetable production and consumption has now increased dramatically, leading to better nutrition and creating jobs and incomes for local farmers.*

In a rural village of **India**, Jaya is getting weaker every day. Due to strict cultural traditions she feeds her husband and sons before she and her daughters can eat. Since food is very scarce in the village, there is barely any food left when it's time for her to eat.

The Hindu Kush mountain range dominates northeastern **Afghanistan**. Within the mountain range, there are many valleys that are inaccessible during winter. A visiting nutritionist found severe malnutrition among the 90,000 people living there. Since the valley cannot be reached by normal modes of transportation during the winter months, without a good supply of food, disaster is certain. Construction of a road is a way to ensure that food can be transported to this region.

For a number of years, **Kenya** has been developing a flower-growing industry to export flowers to foreign countries. Lands that were once used for grazing and farming are now used to grow flowers. Small, local farmers and producers are having a hard time competing with large multinational corporations for scarce farmland.



Mayanie Turay of **Sierra Leone** remembers war in her village. Rebels came and drove out all the residents, who were forced to live in the bush for 5 years. She recalls having no rice to eat. When they were lucky, they ate bananas, mangos and wild cassava. Many children died during this time because of hunger and lack of medicine.

A scientist in the **United States** discovered a genetically engineered defense against the striga weed. The striga weed has been destroying crops in Sub-Saharan Africa, and almost 100 million farmers have lost all or some of their crops because of it. This new technology may help feed millions of people now facing starvation.

Every day, Doliso Dafa of **Ethiopia** spends up to nine hours patiently removing butterflies and their larvae from his sweet potato crop. It is a last, desperate attempt to save some of the crop since his pesticide spray didn't work. The sweet potato is his only hope, since his main crops of beans and maize were destroyed by the drought.

Since 1996, the government of **China** has focused on improving agriculture. Soil fertility has been improved through better farming practices, expanded irrigation facilities and increased use of organic fertilizers. Crop yields greatly increased in these areas, which increased incomes and food security.

2002 was an extremely challenging year for **Zimbabwe**. Unemployment reached 70 percent and inflation topped 200 percent, making it very hard for most Zimbabweans to earn money. The country's ability to purchase food internationally was virtually non-existent, forcing international governments and aid agencies to help. But with political troubles in the government, food distribution became a difficult task.





REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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Human Development Report 2003

<http://www.undp.org/hdr2003>

USAID Famine Early Warning Systems Network

<http://www.fews.net>

ETHIOPIA

CIA World Factbook

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/et.html>

Parliament of Ethiopia

<http://www.ethiopar.net>

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<http://ethio.com>

ORGANIZATIONS

Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations

<http://www.fao.org>

Bread for the World

<http://www.bread.org>

World Food Programme

<http://www.wfp.org>

International Food Policy Research Institute

<http://www.ifpri.org>

World Bank

<http://www.worldbank.org>

Millennium Project Hunger Task Force

http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/html/force_2.shtm

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Foreign Aid to End Hunger

http://www.bread.org/institute/hunger_report/2001.html

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