



The State of Food Insecurity in the World

2005

Eradicating world hunger –
key to achieving
the Millennium Development Goals



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About this report

As the international community reviews progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and prepares for the mid-term review of the World Food Summit (WFS), *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2005* focuses on the critical importance of reducing hunger, both as the explicit target of the WFS and MDG 1 and as

an essential condition for achieving the other MDGs.

The first section of the report analyses long-term trends in reducing undernourishment and explores the impact of economic growth, governance and natural disasters.

The second section examines each of the MDGs separately,

highlighting ways that hunger holds back development and hunger reduction could accelerate progress.

Tables (pp. 30–35) provide: FAO's latest estimates of undernourishment and of progress towards the WFS and MDG targets for reducing hunger; and key indicators for the other MDGs.

The Millennium Development Goals and links to reducing hunger

MDGs	Selected targets	Links to reducing hunger
1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US\$1 a dayHalve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hunger perpetuates poverty by reducing productivityPoverty prevents people from producing or acquiring the food they need
2 Achieve universal primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hunger reduces school attendance and impairs learning capacityLack of education reduces earning capacity and increases the risk of hunger
3 Promote gender equality and empower women	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hunger reduces school attendance more for girls than for boysGender inequality perpetuates the cycle in which undernourished women give birth to low-birth weight children
4 Reduce child mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">More than half of all child deaths are caused directly or indirectly by hunger and malnutrition
5 Improve maternal health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Undernourishment and micronutrient deficiencies greatly increase the risk of maternal death
6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Have halted, by 2015, and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDSHave halted, by 2015, and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hunger spurs risky behaviour that accelerates the spread of HIV/AIDSUndernourished children are more than twice as likely to die of malaria
7 Ensure environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resourcesHalve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hunger leads to unsustainable use of resourcesRestoring and improving ecosystem functions are key to reducing hunger among the rural poor
8 Develop a global partnership for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial systemAddress the special needs of the least developed countriesDeal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Subsidies and tariffs in developed countries hamper hunger-reducing rural and agricultural development



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Foreword

Towards the World Food Summit and Millennium Development Goal targets: food comes first

"We pledge our political will and our common and national commitment to achieving food security for all and to an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015." (Rome Declaration, 1996)

"We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty ...". (Millennium Declaration, 2000)

Only ten years now remain before the 2015 deadline by which world leaders have pledged to reduce hunger and extreme poverty by half and to make substantial gains in education, health, social equity, environmental sustainability and international solidarity. Without stronger commitment and more rapid progress, most of those goals will not be met.

If each of the developing regions continues to reduce hunger at the current pace, only South America and the Caribbean will reach the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of cutting the proportion of hungry people by half. None will reach the more ambitious World Food Summit (WFS) goal of halving the number of hungry people.

Progress towards the other MDG targets has also lagged, particularly in the countries and regions where efforts to reduce hunger have stalled, as the accompanying graph clearly illustrates.

Most, if not all, of the WFS and MDG targets can still be reached. But only if efforts are redoubled and refocused. And only by recognizing and acting on two key points:

1. without rapid progress in reducing hunger, achieving all of the other MDGs will be difficult, if not impossible; and
2. the fight to eliminate hunger and reach the other MDGs will be won or lost in the rural areas where the vast majority of the world's hungry people live.

- As the underlying cause of more than half of all child deaths, hunger and malnutrition are the greatest obstacle to reducing child mortality (MDG 4).
- Hunger and malnutrition increase both the incidence and the fatality rate of conditions that cause a majority of maternal deaths during pregnancy and childbirth (MDG 5).
- Hunger and poverty compromise people's immune systems, force them to adopt risky survival strategies, and greatly increase the risk of infection and death from HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases (MDG 6).
- Under the burden of chronic poverty and hunger, livestock herders, subsistence farmers, forest dwellers and fisherfolk may use their natural environment in unsustainable ways, leading to further deterioration of their livelihood conditions. Empowering the poor and hungry as custodians of land, waters, forests and biodiversity can advance both food security and environmental sustainability (MDG 7).

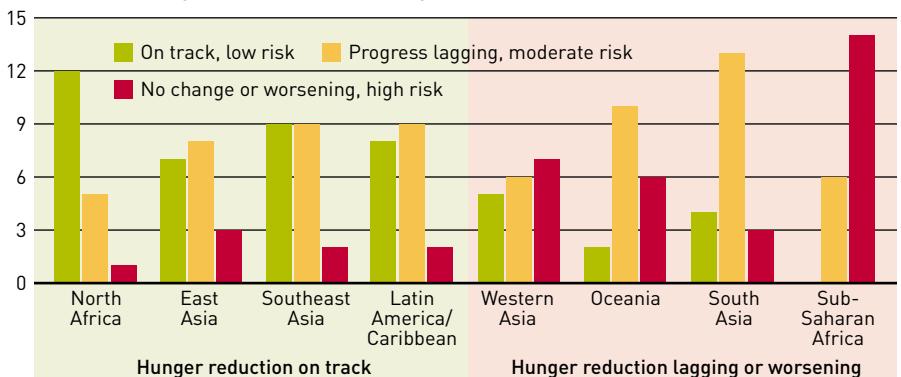
Food comes first

As this report documents, hunger and malnutrition are major causes of the deprivation and suffering targeted by all of the other MDGs (see diagram, facing page):

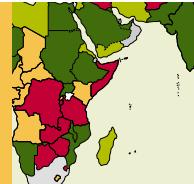
- Hungry children start school later, if at all, drop out sooner and learn less while they do attend, stalling progress towards universal primary and secondary education (MDG 2).
- Poor nutrition for women is one of the most damaging outcomes of gender inequality. It undermines women's health, stunts their opportunities for education and employment and impedes progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women (MDG 3).

Progress towards the MDG targets by subregion

Number of MDG targets (out of 20 selected targets)



Source: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs



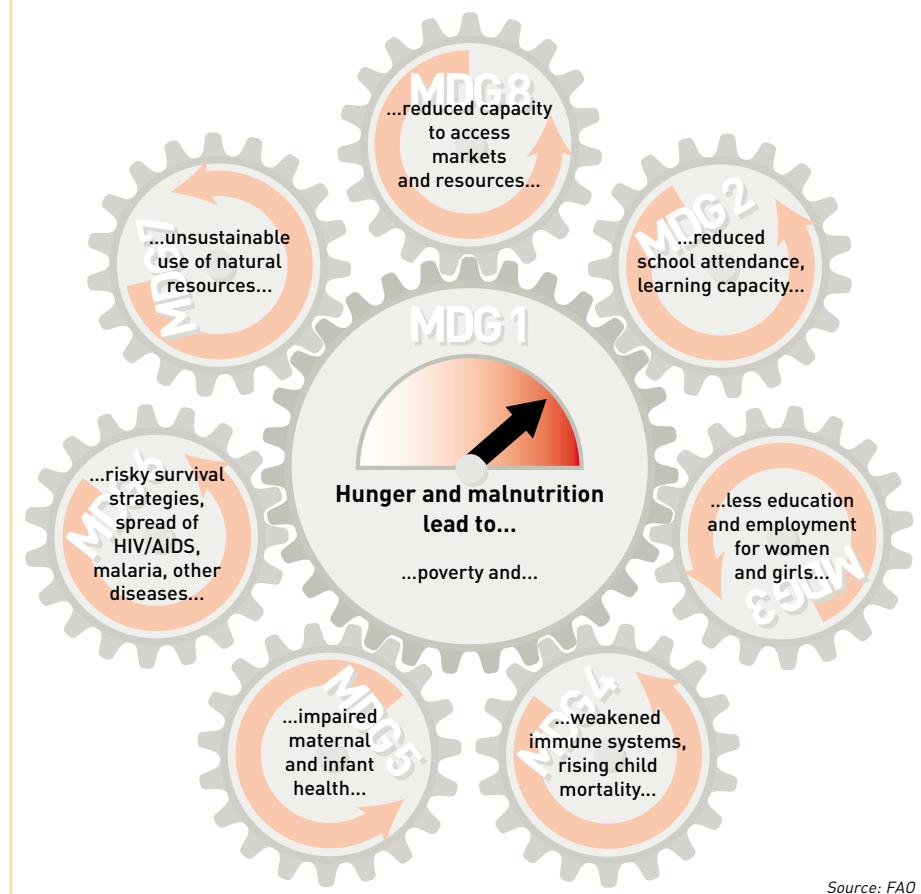
Giving priority to rural areas

Given the importance of hunger as a cause of poverty, illiteracy, disease and mortality, given the fact that 75 percent of the world's hungry people live in rural areas, it is hardly surprising that these same rural areas are home to the vast majority of the 121 million children who do not attend school, of the nearly 11 million children who die before reaching the age of five, of the 530 000 women who die during pregnancy and childbirth, of the 300 million cases of acute malaria and more than 1 million malaria deaths each year. Clearly, to bring these numbers down, to reach the MDG targets, priority must be given to rural areas and to agriculture as the mainstay of rural livelihoods, through sustainable and secure systems of production that provide employment and income to the poor, thus improving their access to food.

Yet, in recent decades, agriculture and rural development have lost ground on the development agenda. Over the past 20 years, resources for these sectors have declined by more than 50 percent. That must change. And we can be encouraged by signs that it is indeed changing, that both national governments and international donors are recognizing the critical importance of rural areas as the location and agriculture as the engine for reaching the MDGs.

After years of dwindling support to agriculture, the countries of the African Union have committed themselves to increasing the share of their national budgets allocated to agriculture and rural development to 10 percent within five years. The Commission for Africa has emphasized that "agriculture is key to Africa". The United Nations Millennium Project has stated that

Running in reverse: persistent hunger slows progress towards other Millennium Development Goals



Source: FAO

"the global epicenter of extreme poverty is the smallholder farmer". If increased recognition leads to scaled-up action, the MDGs can still be reached.

For far too long, hunger and poverty have driven an infernal engine of deprivation and suffering (see diagram). The time and the opportunity have finally come to throw that engine into forward gear – to turn hunger reduction into the driving force for progress and hope, as improved nutrition fuels better health, increases school attendance, reduces child and maternal

mortality, empowers women, lowers the incidence and mortality rates of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, and helps reverse the degradation of soil and water resources, the destruction of forests and the loss of biodiversity.

It can be done.

Jacques Diouf
FAO Director-General