

2020

Synopsis

GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX

ONE DECADE TO ZERO HUNGER

LINKING HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

October 2020



Although hunger worldwide has gradually declined since 2000, in many places progress is too slow and hunger remains severe. Furthermore, these places are highly vulnerable to a worsening of food and nutrition insecurity caused by the overlapping health, economic, and environmental crises of 2020.

Hunger Remains High in More Than 50 Countries

Alarming levels of hunger have been identified in 3 countries—Chad, Timor-Leste, and Madagascar—based on GHI scores. Based on other known data, *alarming* hunger has also been provisionally identified in another 8 countries—Burundi, Central African Republic, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. Hunger is classified as *serious* in 31 countries based on GHI scores and provisionally classified as *serious* in 9 countries.

In many countries the situation is improving too slowly, while in others it is worsening. For 46 countries in the *moderate*, *serious*, or *alarming* categories, GHI scores have improved since 2012, but for 14 countries in those categories, GHI scores show that hunger and undernutrition have worsened. The latest GHI projections show that 37 countries will fail to achieve even *low* hunger by 2030. In some countries without crises at the national level, marginalized groups and selected regions nevertheless face tragically high levels of hunger and undernutrition.

Some hunger designations are provisional because for a number of countries, the data needed to definitively calculate GHI scores are

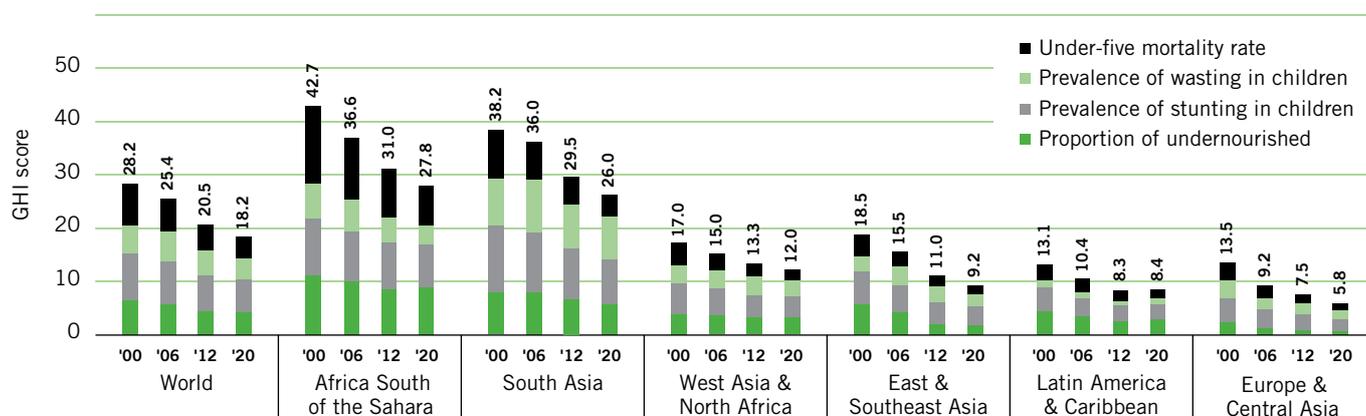
not available. It is crucial to strengthen data collection to gain a clearer picture of food and nutrition security in every country, so that actions designed to eliminate hunger can be adapted appropriately to conditions on the ground.

Hunger Is *Moderate* on a Global Scale but Varies Widely by Region

Hunger worldwide, represented by a GHI score of 18.2, is at a *moderate* level, down from a 2000 GHI score of 28.2, classified as *serious* (Figure 1). Globally, far too many individuals are suffering from hunger: nearly 690 million people are undernourished; 144 million children suffer from stunting, a sign of chronic undernutrition; 47 million children suffer from wasting, a sign of acute undernutrition; and in 2018, 5.3 million children died before their fifth birthdays, in many cases as a result of undernutrition.

In both Africa South of the Sahara and South Asia, hunger is classified as *serious*, owing partly to large shares of people who are undernourished and high rates of child stunting. Moreover, Africa South of the Sahara has the world's highest child mortality rate, while South Asia has the world's highest child wasting rate.

FIGURE 1 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL 2000, 2006, 2012, AND 2020 GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX SCORES, WITH CONTRIBUTION OF COMPONENTS



Source: Authors.

Note: See Appendix C in the full GHI report for data sources. The regional and global GHI scores are calculated using regional and global aggregates for each indicator and the formula described in Appendix B. The regional and global aggregates for each indicator are calculated as population-weighted averages, using the indicator values reported in Appendix D. For countries lacking undernourishment data, provisional estimates provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) were used in the calculation of aggregates only, but are not reported in Appendix D. Appendix F shows which countries are included in each region.

In contrast, hunger levels in Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, East and Southeast Asia, and West Asia and North Africa are characterized as *low* or *moderate*, although hunger is high among certain groups within countries in these regions.

Current Crises Are Worsening the Outlook for Hunger

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic downturn, as well as a massive outbreak of desert locusts in the Horn of Africa and other crises, are exacerbating food and nutrition insecurity for millions of people, as these crises come on top of existing hunger caused by conflict, climate extremes, and economic shocks. The GHI scores presented in this report do not yet reflect the impact of the overlapping disasters of 2020, but they point to hot spots where food insecurity and undernutrition are already severe, putting their populations at greater risk of acute food crises and chronic hunger in the future.

Experience Shows Dramatic Progress Is Possible

Looking back at trends over the past 10 to 20 years, most countries have experienced improvements, sometimes dramatic ones. In Angola, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone, for example, hunger fell from *extremely alarming* in 2000—when civil wars and their aftermaths had contributed to food and nutrition insecurity—to *serious* in the 2020 GHI. Over the same period Cameroon progressed from an *alarming* level of hunger to a *moderate* level, as the country doubled its per capita GDP and boosted its human development indicators. The near-term future will test the world’s capacity to respond to multiple crises simultaneously—health crises, environmental crises, economic crises, and food security crises, among others. With persistence, collective effort, and the dedication of sufficient resources, the world can overcome these crises. If done right, the response will build a stronger foundation on which to move forward, leaving the world more resilient and better prepared for future challenges.

BOX 1 ABOUT THE GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool for comprehensively measuring and tracking hunger at global, regional, and national levels over recent years and decades. GHI scores are based on a formula that captures three dimensions of hunger—insufficient caloric intake (undernourishment), child undernutrition, and child mortality—using four component indicators:

- **UNDERNOURISHMENT:** the share of the population that is undernourished, reflecting insufficient caloric intake
- **CHILD WASTING:** the share of children under the age of five who are wasted (low weight-for-height), reflecting acute undernutrition
- **CHILD STUNTING:** the share of children under the age of five who are stunted (low height-for-age), reflecting chronic undernutrition
- **CHILD MORTALITY:** the mortality rate of children under the age of five

In 2020, data were assessed for the 132 countries that met the criteria for inclusion in the GHI, and GHI scores were calculated for 107 of those countries based on data from 2015 to 2019. Data to calculate GHI scores come from published UN sources (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, World Health Organization, UNICEF, and Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation), the World Bank, and Demographic and Health Surveys. Of the 132 countries assessed, 25 did not have sufficient data to allow for the calculation of a 2020 GHI score, but provisional designations of the severity of hunger were assigned to 18 of those countries based on other known data. For the remaining 7 countries, data were insufficient to allow for either calculating GHI scores or assigning provisional categories.

The GHI categorizes and ranks countries on a 100-point scale, where 0 is the best score (no hunger) and 100 is the worst. In practice, neither of these extremes is reached (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2 NUMBER OF COUNTRIES BY HUNGER LEVEL



Source: Authors.

Note: Of the tallies of countries listed, 1 was provisionally categorized as *low*, 9 were provisionally categorized as *serious*, and 8 were provisionally categorized as *alarming*.

2020 GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX BY SEVERITY



- Alarming 35.0–49.9
- Serious 20.0–34.9
- Moderate 10.0–19.9
- Low ≤ 9.9
- Not included or not designated (see Appendix A and Box 1.3 in the full GHI report for details)
- * Provisional severity designation (see Box 1.3 for details)



Source: Authors.

Note: For the 2020 GHI, data on the proportion of undernourished are for 2017–2019; data on child stunting and wasting are for the latest year in the period 2015–2019 for which data are available; and data on child mortality are for 2018. GHI scores were not calculated for countries for which data were not available and for certain high-income countries, countries with small populations, and non-independent territories; see Appendix A in the full GHI report for details. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by Welthungerhilfe (WHH) or Concern Worldwide.

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TABLE 1 GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX SCORES BY 2020 GHI RANK

Rank ^a	Country	2000	2006	2012	2020	Rank ^a	Country	2000	2006	2012	2020
2020 GHI scores less than 5, collectively ranked 1–17. ^b	Belarus	<5	<5	<5	<5	65	Senegal	34.3	24.4	18.0	17.1
	Bosnia & Herzegovina	9.3	6.7	<5	<5	67	Gambia	29.2	28.0	22.7	17.8
	Brazil	11.3	6.3	<5	<5	68	Gabon	21.1	20.4	18.8	18.2
	Chile	<5	<5	<5	<5	69	Philippines	25.0	20.4	20.4	19.0
	China	13.6	9.5	<5	<5	70	Cameroon	36.4	31.0	23.2	19.1
	Costa Rica	6.1	<5	<5	<5	70	Indonesia	26.1	29.5	23.1	19.1
	Croatia	<5	<5	<5	<5	70	Namibia	25.3	24.7	23.9	19.1
	Cuba	<5	<5	<5	<5	73	Nepal	37.4	31.0	22.8	19.5
	Estonia	5.9	<5	<5	<5	74	Eswatini	26.1	24.1	17.8	20.3
	Kuwait	<5	<5	<5	<5	75	Bangladesh	34.1	29.0	27.8	20.4
	Latvia	7.0	<5	<5	<5	76	Cambodia	41.2	27.2	24.9	20.6
	Lithuania	6.1	<5	<5	<5	77	Guatemala	28.5	24.6	22.2	20.7
	Montenegro	—	5.5	<5	<5	78	Myanmar	39.8	31.8	23.3	20.9
	Romania	8.0	5.5	<5	<5	79	Benin	34.1	28.7	24.2	22.4
	Turkey	10.1	6.3	<5	<5	80	Botswana	28.2	27.3	22.4	22.6
	Ukraine	13.0	<5	<5	<5	80	Malawi	43.2	33.8	27.1	22.6
	Uruguay	7.5	6.8	5.0	<5	82	Mali	41.9	37.0	31.3	22.9
18	North Macedonia	7.5	7.7	6.7	5.2	83	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	14.7	11.2	7.6	23.5
18	Russian Federation	10.0	6.8	6.0	5.2	84	Kenya	37.4	31.4	23.2	23.7
20	Argentina	6.3	5.6	5.2	5.3	85	Mauritania	32.0	29.0	23.7	24.0
21	Kazakhstan	11.4	12.3	8.1	5.4	86	Togo	39.3	36.7	26.6	24.1
22	Bulgaria	8.2	7.3	7.8	5.5	87	Côte d'Ivoire	33.6	34.7	30.1	24.5
23	Tunisia	10.3	7.8	7.0	5.7	88	Pakistan	37.2	33.5	32.8	24.6
24	Albania	20.7	15.8	8.5	5.9	89	Tanzania (United Republic of)	40.8	33.6	30.0	25.0
25	Azerbaijan	25.0	16.0	10.6	6.0	90	Burkina Faso	45.7	46.3	31.1	25.8
26	Georgia	12.3	8.9	<5	6.1	91	Congo (Republic of)	33.8	34.7	27.8	26.0
27	Slovakia	6.5	5.9	<5	6.4	92	Ethiopia	53.7	43.6	35.5	26.2
28	Serbia	—	6.1	5.3	6.6	93	Angola	64.9	47.0	35.9	26.8
28	Trinidad & Tobago	11.1	11.4	10.8	6.6	94	India	38.9	37.5	29.3	27.2
30	Uzbekistan	24.4	16.9	12.7	6.7	94	Sudan	—	—	32.5	27.2
31	Armenia	19.4	13.4	10.4	6.9	96	Korea (DPR)	39.5	33.1	28.2	27.5
32	Dominican Republic	15.2	13.9	10.3	7.1	97	Rwanda	49.7	38.1	26.0	28.3
33	Panama	18.5	15.0	9.8	7.2	98	Nigeria	40.6	34.1	32.0	29.2
34	Peru	20.8	16.5	8.9	7.3	99	Afghanistan	51.0	42.8	33.8	30.3
35	Colombia	10.9	11.5	9.1	7.5	100	Lesotho	36.0	30.4	24.6	30.7
35	Paraguay	12.1	11.6	9.6	7.5	101	Sierra Leone	58.3	53.3	42.4	30.9
35	Saudi Arabia	11.1	12.2	8.2	7.5	102	Liberia	48.0	40.0	33.1	31.4
38	Mexico	10.1	8.4	7.4	7.7	103	Mozambique	48.1	38.4	31.4	33.1
39	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	13.5	8.9	7.6	7.9	104	Haiti	41.9	43.6	35.9	33.5
40	Fiji	9.6	9.1	8.1	8.0		Djibouti, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lao PDR, Niger, Tajikistan, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe*	—	—	—	20–34.9*
41	Jamaica	8.6	9.0	9.2	8.1						
42	Kyrgyzstan	18.4	13.9	11.7	8.4						
43	Jordan	10.8	8.1	8.6	8.8	105	Madagascar	42.7	41.4	34.6	36.0
44	Lebanon	11.6	13.3	12.4	8.9	106	Timor-Leste	—	46.1	36.2	37.6
44	Morocco	15.5	17.5	9.6	8.9	107	Chad	50.9	51.3	47.9	44.7
46	Algeria	14.5	11.7	9.0	9.0		Burundi, Central African Republic, Comoros, Dem. Rep. of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen*	—	—	—	35–49.9*
47	Mauritius	15.0	13.6	12.3	9.3						
	* Moldova (Rep. of)*	—	—	—	0–9.9*						
48	Suriname	15.5	11.7	10.5	10.2						
48	Thailand	17.8	12.3	12.7	10.2						
50	El Salvador	14.7	12.1	10.4	10.5						
51	Ecuador	19.7	19.0	16.3	11.0						
52	Guyana	17.3	15.8	12.2	11.1						
52	Turkmenistan	21.2	16.6	13.6	11.1						
54	Egypt	16.4	14.4	15.3	11.9						
55	Oman	14.8	16.0	11.6	12.2						
56	Honduras	21.9	19.7	16.9	13.1						
56	Mongolia	30.1	23.1	12.7	13.1						
58	Nicaragua	22.3	17.1	14.6	13.2						
59	Malaysia	15.5	13.3	11.8	13.3						
60	South Africa	18.4	19.4	15.3	13.5						
61	Viet Nam	26.3	21.9	16.5	13.6						
62	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	27.6	23.2	16.8	14.0						
63	Ghana	28.5	22.2	17.9	15.2						
64	Sri Lanka	21.9	19.5	20.1	16.3						
65	Iraq	24.0	24.0	21.1	17.1						

■ = low, □ = moderate, □ = serious, □ = alarming, ■ = extremely alarming.

— = Data are not available or not presented. Some countries did not exist in their present borders in the given year or reference period.

Note: As always, rankings and index scores from this table cannot be accurately compared with rankings and index scores from previous reports (see Appendix A).

For the 2020 GHI report, data were assessed for 132 countries. Out of these, there were sufficient data to calculate 2020 GHI scores for and rank 107 countries (by way of comparison, data availability allowed for the ranking of 117 countries in the 2019 report).

* For 25 countries, individual scores could not be calculated and ranks could not be determined owing to lack of data. Where possible, these countries were provisionally designated by severity: 1 country is designated as *low*, 9 as *serious*, and 8 as *alarming*. For 7 countries, no provisional designations could be established (see Box 1.3).

^a Ranked according to 2020 GHI scores. Countries that have identical 2020 scores are given the same ranking (for example, North Macedonia and the Russian Federation are both ranked 18th).

^b The 17 countries with 2020 GHI scores of less than 5 are not assigned individual ranks, but rather are collectively ranked 1–17. Differences between their scores are minimal.

ONE HEALTH, ZERO HUNGER

Guest essay by **Robyn Alders, Osman Dar, Richard Kock, and Francesco Rampa**

Chatham House

The events of 2020 are laying bare many of the vulnerabilities of the world's food system in ways that are becoming impossible to ignore. It was already clear that it would be a struggle to eliminate hunger within the next decade under the current food system. Now we know this system is woefully inadequate for coping with the kinds of overlapping global and regional crises that we are currently experiencing and may expect more of by 2030. However, by taking an integrated approach to health and food and nutrition security, it may yet be possible to achieve Zero Hunger by 2030.

To do so, we must design integrated responses to the current crises and move forward in ways that support the transformation of the current food system to one that is more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient. A One Health approach, based on a recognition of the interconnections between humans, animals, plants, and their shared environment, as well as the role of fair trade relations, would address the various crises we face holistically and help avert future health crises, restore a healthy planet, and end hunger.

Cracks Are Showing in the Global Food System

A One Health lens brings into focus a number of weak points in the global food system:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragility of globalized food systems, characterized by increasing dependence on food imports by low- and middle-income countries; underinvestment in local farmers, farmer associations, and smallholder-oriented value chains; and increasing rates of diet-related noncommunicable disease. Inadequate emergency responses are disrupting local food systems and fail to support local producers. COVID-19 containment measures—enforced without a clear declaration that agricultural and food services are essential—have contributed to food insecurity in many countries.
- We are hitting planetary and social boundaries—that is, the ecological ceiling and the social foundation beyond which humans cannot safely and equitably thrive—and our food systems are part of the problem. The food system contributes 21–37 percent of total net human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases. Intensive livestock systems pose health hazards to humans and the environment, contributing significantly to the zoonotic burden of disease and to huge recent losses of biodiversity.
- Social protection remains insufficient or misdirected: 55 percent of the world's population is not covered by any social protection programs.
- Global food governance, including trade and aid policies, is tilted against low-income countries, smallholder farmers, and food supply chain workers. Most high-income countries provide international agricultural development assistance designed to help increase smallholder farmers' production and income in low- and

middle-income countries, while at the same time retaining trade advantages through nontariff barriers to trade.

- Lack of secure land tenure and resulting food insecurity are persistent issues for rural communities, indigenous people, women, and marginalized groups.
- Formal and informal education on agriculture and nutrition is insufficiently tailored to local conditions.

Reshaping Food Systems for Zero Hunger

To end hunger and ensure the right to adequate and nutritious food for all, we need to approach health and food and nutrition security in a way that considers human, animal, and environmental health and fair trade relations holistically.

Given the current crises, a number of actions must be taken immediately by multilateral institutions, governments, communities, and individuals. To guarantee ongoing food availability, the production and supply of food must be sustained and classified as essential services, and safe working environments must be guaranteed. It will be important for governments, donors, and NGOs to work closely with organizations trusted by communities and authorities to ensure social protection measures, such as cash and food transfers, health care, small business grants, and public employment schemes reach the most vulnerable. Regional and international efforts need to be better coordinated and more efficient. Regional institutions must negotiate strongly with trade groups and donors on behalf of low- and middle-income countries to shore up their own regional food supply chains.

Other actions must also be tackled over the coming decade. To better respond to, and indeed to prevent, complex emergencies, multilateral institutions, governments, communities, and individuals should use the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises to build safe, resilient food systems. They should review food, health, and economic systems through a One Health lens to chart a path to environmental recovery by investing in sustainable food production, distribution, and consumption. Regional trade initiatives should incorporate social and environmental metrics.

Beyond 2030, still other actions will be important, such as working toward a circular food economy that recycles nutrients and materials, regenerates natural systems, and eliminates waste and pollution. We are likely to face more shocks and challenges on our way to 2030. By acting together to start reshaping our food systems as fair, healthy, resilient, and environmentally friendly, we can not only address the current crises but also mitigate the impacts of other health and food crises and chart a path to Zero Hunger.

Note: The views expressed in the guest essay are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of Welthungerhilfe or Concern Worldwide.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Make food systems work better for people and planet

- To support **smallholder farmers in becoming sustainable and diversified producers**, governments and donors must improve those farmers' access to agricultural inputs and extension services, coupling local and indigenous agricultural knowledge with new technologies.
- **Local and regional food markets must be strengthened**, especially through support for farmers' organizations, fair farm-gate prices, and better links between rural and urban areas.
- **Food should be priced not only by its weight or volume** but also by its nutrient density, its freedom from contamination, and its contribution to ecosystem services and social justice. To achieve this, policy makers should educate the public about the importance of these attributes and require appropriate labeling. To curb the spread of agricultural pests and diseases, governments must promote sound biosecurity practices throughout value chains.
- All countries should promote, develop, and implement **circular food economies** that recycle resources and materials, regenerate natural systems, and eliminate waste and pollution.

Improve how food systems are governed

- Governments must hold corporate food system actors legally accountable for respecting **human rights and protecting the environment** throughout their entire value chains as outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- Governments and investors must adopt integrated land use planning and ensure security of **land tenure**, especially for marginalized groups, in line with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security.
- Governments must strengthen **local and participatory governance** that includes marginalized groups, including peasants, indigenous groups, youth, and women.

Expand social investments for resilience

- Governments must **build up social protection systems**, including universal health coverage and social security, and provide job training, especially for rural youth and urban poor. They should expand access to maternal and child health care, as well as education on healthy diets and child feeding practices.

- Governments should prepare and implement **holistic plans to ensure accessible local and national water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) systems**, which are crucial to people's health.
- Governments, donors, and NGOs must work with **organizations trusted and monitored by communities** to ensure social protection programs function optimally and fairly and promote **gender equity and social cohesion**.

Make emergency and long-term development interventions more equitable and sustainable

- Governments, donors, private actors, and NGOs should carefully **coordinate their responses** to overlapping food and health crises and work with community organizations to make sure **interventions are culturally acceptable, reach the most vulnerable, and preserve local ecosystems**.
- Governments must treat the **production and supply of food as essential services** and guarantee safe working environments in those sectors. They must ensure **equitable access to emergency assistance** for both human and animal diseases, including new technologies such as medical supplies.
- To support local food supply chains, donors must continue to **untie food aid** from the requirement to acquire donor-country goods and services. Whenever feasible, humanitarian and development actors should provide **cash and voucher assistance**.
- To track and tackle hunger, governments must **produce data that are timely**, comprehensive, and disaggregated by income, sub-national location, and gender.

Strengthen international cooperation

- **Trade inequities**, such as high-income countries' nontariff trade barriers, **must be reduced**. Governments' trade policies should align with development goals and create market incentives for sustainable food economies.
- Existing **human rights-based multilateral mechanisms and international standards**—such as the Committee on World Food Security—must be strengthened to support inclusive policy making and sustainable food systems.
- Governments must use **upcoming opportunities**, including the UN Food Systems Summit, to reinforce their commitments to equitable and sustainable development.

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