

Better Nutrition, Better Tomorrow

Facts on International Hunger and Poverty

- Worldwide, extreme poverty rates have been cut by more than half since 1990, even while factoring in population growth. While this is a remarkable achievement, 1 in 5 people in developing regions (767 million) still live on less than \$1.90.¹
- Since 1990, global hunger has decreased by nearly half.² “But, after more than a decade of declining, the number of undernourished people increased for the third year in a row, to 821 million in 2017.”³
- Forty-five percent of all preventable child deaths are linked to malnutrition;⁴ this means 2.5 million child deaths are related to malnutrition every year.⁵
- The most dangerous time to be malnourished is the 1,000-day period between a woman’s pregnancy and her child’s second birthday. Those who survive such early childhood malnutrition are very likely to suffer from stunting, which causes irreversible damage to their physical and cognitive development.⁶
- One in four of the world’s children are affected by stunting—151 million children.⁷ Stunting causes lifelong health problems and reduces both the number of years of education people complete⁸ and their lifetime earnings.⁹ In some countries, stunting rates are more than 40 percent.¹⁰
- Undernutrition is also dangerous before and during pregnancy. At least 20 percent of all maternal mortality is caused by anemia, a form of malnutrition.¹¹
- Nutrition programs for pregnant women and young children are highly cost effective. Every dollar spent on them produces on average a \$16 return from reduced health care costs and people’s improved ability to participate in the labor market.¹²
- By 2030, two-thirds of the world’s poor will be living in fragile states—those countries most affected by conflict, climate change, and/or weak institutions.¹³ Children living in fragile states are at higher risk of malnutrition.¹⁴
- The U.S. government has been a leader in providing humanitarian relief for people in emergency situations and development assistance for the longer term.
- U.S. foreign assistance saves millions of lives every year. Some key federal hunger-related programs are Feed the Future (strengthening food security), Food for Peace and the Emergency Food Security Program (emergency and recovery food assistance), the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education (school meals), PEPFAR (prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS), and the Millennium Challenge Account (poverty reduction).

ENDNOTES

¹ World Bank. 2016. Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-0958-3.

² [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf), p. 4.

³ FAO, IFA, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO. 2018. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018: Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition. Rome, FAO.

⁴ <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs178/en/>

⁵ http://www.who.int/gho/child_health/mortality/mortality_under_five_text/en/

⁶ Bread for the World Institute, Hunger Report 2017: *Fragile Environments, Resilient Communities*, www.hungerreport.org, p. 10.

⁷ <http://www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/estimates2017/en/>

⁸ World Health Assembly Global Nutrition Targets 2025, Stunting Policy Brief. http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/globaltargets_stunting_policybrief.pdf

⁹ http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/Food_for_Thought_UK.pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/estimates2016/en/>

¹¹ Khaskheli M-N, Baloch S, Sheeba A, Baloch S, & Khaskheli FK. Iron deficiency anemia is still a major killer of pregnant women. *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences*. 2016;32(3):630-634. doi:10.12669/pjms.323.9557.

¹² <http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/post-2015-consensus/news/childhood-nutrition-most-critical-and-economically-sound-intervention-finds>

¹³ OECD (2015). *States of Fragility 2015: Meeting the Post-2015 Ambitions*.

¹⁴ IFPRI (2016). *Global Nutrition Report 2016: From Promise to Impact: Ending Malnutrition by 2030*.



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