Hunger and Food Assistance: Key Trends and Challenges

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Outline

• What is the state of food insecurity in the world today?

• What are the main trends in food assistance policy in recent years?

• What big challenges remain for addressing chronic food insecurity?
1. What do the new UN hunger numbers tell us (and not tell us?)

**Undernourishment in 2010–12, by region (millions)**

- **Total = 868 million**
  - Oceania: 1
  - Caucasus and Central Asia: 6
  - Developed regions: 16
  - Western Asia and Northern Africa: 25
  - Latin America and the Caribbean: 49
  - South-Eastern Asia: 65
  - Eastern Asia: 167
  - Sub-Saharan Africa: 234
  - Southern Asia: 304

*Source: FAO.*
Undernourishment in the developing world

Note: Data for 2010-12 in all graphics refer to provisional estimates.
Source: FAO.
Hunger trends in the developing regions

Asia and the Pacific

- Millions
- Percentage undernourished

- 1990-92: 723
- 1999-2001: 608
- 2004-06: 589
- 2007-09: 549
- 2010-12: 528

- Percentage:
- 1990-92: 24.7%
- 1999-2001: 18.2%
- 2004-06: 16.7%
- 2007-09: 15.1%
- 2010-12: 14.0%

- MDG target: 10%

Latin America and the Caribbean

- Millions
- Percentage undernourished

- 1990-92: 65
- 1999-2001: 60
- 2004-06: 54
- 2007-09: 50
- 2010-12: 49

- Percentage:
- 1990-92: 14.6%
- 1999-2001: 11.2%
- 2004-06: 9.7%
- 2007-09: 8.7%
- 2010-12: 8.3%

- WFS target: 5%

Near East and North Africa

- Millions
- Percentage undernourished

- 1990-92: 170
- 1999-2001: 200
- 2004-06: 205
- 2007-09: 216
- 2010-12: 234

- Percentage:
- 1990-92: 34.3%
- 1999-2001: 31.8%
- 2004-06: 28.8%
- 2007-09: 28.0%
- 2010-12: 28.2%

- WFS target: 30%

Sub-Saharan Africa

- Millions
- Percentage undernourished

- 1990-92: 6.8%
- 1999-2001: 8.8%
- 2004-06: 8.4%
- 2007-09: 8.4%
- 2010-12: 8.5%

- MDG target: 5%

Source: FAO.
Undernourishment and food inadequacy in the developing world
Impact on hunger estimates of alternative definitions of the minimum dietary energy requirements

Note: The graphs show estimates obtained with alternative definitions of the minimum dietary energy requirements, based on different assumptions of the coefficients for physical activity level (PAL). The standard prevalence of undernourishment indicator (PoU) assumes a PAL coefficient of 1.55, which corresponds to a sedentary lifestyle. Normal activity is associated with a PAL of 1.85, while intense physical activity is associated with a PAL of 2.25. The prevalence of food inadequacy (PoFI) estimates in the graphic (calculated using PAL coefficients of 1.85 for normal activity and 2.25 for intense activity) appear to have declined less compared with the PoU (calculated using a PAL coefficient of 1.55 for a sedentary lifestyle).

Lacking disaggregated data on occupational status and physical activity levels by gender and age groups, in all cases shown, the threshold is calculated by applying the same PAL coefficient to the entire population, irrespective of gender, age and occupational status. For this reason, while the lower threshold yields a conservative estimate of food inadequacy, the higher threshold (corresponding to a PAL of 2.25) almost certainly overestimates the extent of food inadequacy, even where a large part (but not all) of the population is engaged in heavy physical work.

Source: FAO.
2. Trends in the food assistance landscape in recent years

• Some improvements worth noting:
  
  • Less politically motivated
  
  • Less economically self-serving for donors

  • Untying of food aid and use of more flexible tools for some key donors
Some key trends...

Steady Decline: Food Aid Deliveries 1987-2011

Source: WFP
US is still the largest donor – but by less than was the case in the past

Figure 3: Breakdown by Donor in 2011

- United States of America: 53%
- Others: 29%
- Australia: 3%
- European Commission: 4%
- Canada: 4%
- Japan: 7%

Source: WFP
Sub-Saharan Africa is the main recipient region (Asia was largest recipient in food aid’s early years)

Source: WFP
Multilateral and NGO channels for food aid delivery have grown in significance

Source: WFP
Programme (long-term) aid has dropped off significantly, and short-term emergency aid is now the main type of food assistance.

Sources: WFP
A New Food Assistance Convention in 2012

Important Features:

• From commitments in quantity to commitments in cash or quantity (or a mix)

• Encourages untying, LRP, grants, etc.

• Potentially more transparent and participatory

BUT

• Transfers price risk to recipient countries
3. Key Challenges for Addressing Chronic Food Insecurity

*Complex linkages between short and long-term food insecurity:*

- Climate Change
- Structural Issues in the Global Economy
- Donor Fatigue
Figure 3. Percent of Normal Rainfall:
1 Jun – 10 July 2012

Source: USGS/FEWS NET
Agricultural investment decline in developing countries

Share of Agricultural Aid in ODA 1979-2009

Source: OECD
Volatile world food prices

* The real price index is the nominal price index deflated by the World Bank Manufactures Unit Value Index (MUV)
Source: World Bank (2011) Responding to Higher and More Volatile World Food Prices Development Committee Paper prepared by the Agriculture and Rural Development Department using data from FAOSTAT for net cereal imports as a share of consumption and the USDA for food share in household expenditures.
Complex Dynamics of a Food Crisis

To build resilience into the system, interventions must strive to address all dimensions of the crisis – vulnerability, triggers, and short-term hunger.