

# FIGHT HUNGER

Can the world feed itself?

925 million people go hungry every day

**You can help.**



**World Food Programme**

*Fighting Hunger Worldwide*



# act now

## CALLING ALL STUDENTS

*"Ending world hunger is an achievable goal within this generation if the right strategies are adopted"*

**Josette Sheeran**  
Executive Director, World Food Programme

### Vital Statistics: GLOBAL HUNGER

**925 million people do not have enough to eat - more than the combined populations of USA, Canada and the European Union;**

**(Source: FAO news release, 14 September 2010)**

**98 percent of the world's hungry live in developing countries;**

**(Source: FAO news release, 2010)**

**Asia and the Pacific region is home to over half the world's population and nearly two thirds of the world's hungry people;**

**(Source: FAO news release, 2010)**

**Women make up a little over half of the world's population, but they account for over 60 percent of the world's hungry.**

**(Source: Strengthening efforts to eradicate hunger..., ECOSOC, 2007)**

**65 percent of the world's hungry live in only seven countries: India, China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and Ethiopia.**

**(Source: FAO news release, 2010)**

## OVERVIEW:

### Can the world Feed itself?

The short answer is: “Yes”, but before we go further, an explanation of why we should be discussing hunger is necessary. Understanding hunger, in all of its forms and consequences, is critical to addressing the problem in an effective and sustainable manner. In the developed world, we need to understand that hunger is more than just the mild annoyance suggested by our everyday experience of awaiting a meal, but is a life/threatening issue for millions around the globe.

### Why Hunger?

There are 925 million undernourished people in the world today. That means one in seven people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life. Hunger and malnutrition are in fact the number one risk to the health worldwide — greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.

WFP’s Executive Director, speaking to the International Press Club in Washington DC in the wake of the September 2010 conference on progress towards the MDGs had this to say:

*“My personal awakening of the devastating power of hunger happened in 1986. I just had my first child and I was feeding her and watching television. I saw an Ethiopian mother with a child the same age as my baby who was crying very weakly for food. And the mother had no milk in her breasts to feed the baby and she had no food for herself. And I thought there can’t be anything more painful than not being able to answer your child’s call for food.*

*What struck me at the time, and remains with me now, is that*

*there was enough food in the world for everyone to eat. During the food crisis in 2008 there was enough food for everyone in the world to have 2,700 kilocalories. Yet a silent tsunami threw more than 115 million into abject hunger.”* (Josette Sheeran – Executive Director of World Food Programme, Sept. 2010)

### **Solving World Hunger is not rocket science:**

We have the tools, and the technology to put an end to hunger. There is enough food to go around. So what needs to change? To begin with, we need to start talking about hunger, and not just when there is a crisis somewhere in the world. In these days of economic upheaval, it makes sound long-term financial sense to lift nations and populations out of hunger:

“We also should remember that Food is good business. When nations solve the problem it fuels their economy” (Josette Sheeran – Executive Director of World Food Programme, Sept. 2010)

Feeding children – investing in the future:

Every year, World Food Programme feeds an average of 20 million children in some 60 countries around the world – at school. Ensuring that schoolchildren receive a nutritious meal at school is a win for everyone;

- A hungry child can't concentrate on lessons – improving nutrition means that a child performs better in class.
- The main beneficiaries of School Meals are girls – the provision of food at school encourages families to educate ALL of their children, not just the boys.
- Children attain their full cognitive and physical potential – if children don't receive the right nutrition in the developmental years, the damage can not be fixed in later life.

But don't take our word for it;

“A few weeks ago, the Prime Minister of Cape Verde – Jose Maria Neves – visited WFP headquarters in Rome to mark the handover of their school meal programme. He told me that 35 years ago, people considered Cape Verde virtually hopeless. A small, dry, island country – it had barren lands, widespread hunger and a lack of investment in their greatest asset – their people. Yet today we see a country on track to meet every Millennium Development Goal, a country that is only the second to burst out of the Least Developed Nations status index, and is running its own school meals programmes.” (Josette Sheeran – Executive Director of World Food Programme, Sept. 2010)

Video - School meals in Kenya: <http://www.wfp.org/videos/school-meals-kibera>

Video - Vera goes to school – Cape Verde success with School Meals: <http://www.wfp.org/videos/vera-goes-school>

### **Causes of Hunger:**

Among the key causes of hunger are natural disasters, conflict, poverty, poor agricultural infrastructure and over-exploitation of the environment. Recently, financial and economic crises, and the drastic increase in food prices in 2008 have pushed even more people into hunger.

Conversely, the news isn't all bad – although we have had an absolute increase in the number of hungry in the world, huge progress has been made since the 1970s, when around 30% of the world's population were undernourished.

But can we afford to be complacent? The answer is a resounding

“NO!”

Hunger is a solvable problem, and this generation has a real possibility of seeing it end – for good. In order for this to happen, individuals around the world need to become actors in the fight against hunger.

### The end of Hunger?

The costs of ending hunger are not enormous. We have the tools and the resources, it’s just a matter of implementing them. To feed every one of the 66 million school children who go to school hungry every day would cost just US \$3.2 billion. Putting this kind of figure into context is difficult, but this video might help: <http://www.wfp.org/videos/human-rescue-plan>

An investment in child nutrition is an investment in the future. Educating children means that those children are ultimately able to make better life choices, and have a healthier future.

But hunger is more than just a lack of food – what about “Hidden Hunger”?

As well as the obvious sort of hunger resulting from an empty stomach, there is also the hidden hunger of micronutrient deficiencies which make people susceptible to infectious diseases, impair physical and mental development, reduce their labour productivity and increase the risk of premature death.

Video – Nutrition in 2 minutes: <http://www.wfp.org/videos/nutrition-2-minutes-0>

The right food at the right time means more than just filling bellies. Food also has to be nutritious. Take a look at the facts about differ-

ent types of hunger below:

## MALNUTRITION

- It is estimated that 684,000 child deaths worldwide could be prevented by increasing access to vitamin A and zinc

(Source: WFP Annual Report 2007)

- Undernutrition contributes to 53 percent of the 9.7 million deaths of children under five each year in developing countries.

(Source: Under five deaths by cause, UNICEF, 2006)

- Lack of Vitamin A kills a million infants a year

(Source: Vitamin and Mineral Deficiency, A Global Progress Report, UNICEF)

- Iron deficiency is the most prevalent form of malnutrition worldwide, affecting an estimated 2 billion people.<sup>6</sup> Eradicating iron deficiency can improve national productivity levels by as much as 20 percent.

(Source: World Health Organization, WHO Global Database on Anaemia)

- Iron deficiency is impairing the mental development of 40-60 percent children in developing countries

(Source: Vitamin and Mineral Deficiency, A Global Progress Report, p2, UNICEF)

- Vitamin A deficiency affects approximately 25 percent of the

developing world's pre-schoolers. It is associated with blindness, susceptibility to disease and higher mortality rates. It leads to the death of approximately 1-3 million children each year.

(Source: UN Standing Committee on Nutrition. World Nutrition Situation 5th report. 2005)

- Iodine deficiency is the greatest single cause of mental retardation and brain damage. Worldwide, 1.9 billion people are at risk of iodine deficiency, which can easily be prevented by adding iodine to salt

(Source: UN Standing Committee on Nutrition. World Nutrition Situation 5th report. 2005)

### **Global Effects of Hunger:**

Hunger does not only weigh on the individual. It also imposes a crushing economic burden on the developing world. Economists estimate that every child whose physical and mental development is stunted by hunger and malnutrition stands to lose 5-10 percent in lifetime earnings.

Hunger – Frequently asked questions

Is there a food shortage in the world?

There is enough food in the world today for everyone to have the nourishment necessary for a healthy and productive life. The problem is that access to food is often difficult. Obviously, we can't just distribute the world's global food production equally between individuals – but examining and implementing ways to ensure access to food, and to increase and sustain agricultural production are essential if hunger is to be beaten. This is what the United Nations food





agencies, FAO, IFAD, and WFP, and many other international actors, are engaged in doing.

Hunger defined:

The sensation of hunger, a lack of food in your stomach, is universal. But there are different manifestations of hunger which are each measured in different ways:

- Under-nourishment is used to describe the status of people whose food intake does not include enough calories (energy) to meet minimum physiological needs for an active life. At present, there are 925 million undernourished people worldwide, most of them in developing countries.
- Malnutrition means 'badly nourished', but is more than a measure of what we eat or fail to eat. Malnutrition is characterised by inadequate intake of protein, energy and micronutrients and by frequent infections and diseases. Starved of the right nutrition, people will die from common infections like measles or diarrhoea.

Malnutrition is measured not by how much food is eaten but by physical measurements of the body - weight or height - and age.

### **What are the effects of malnutrition?**

Malnutrition covers a range of problems, such as being dangerously thin, being too short for one's age, being deficient in vitamins and minerals (such as lacking iron which makes you anaemic), or even being too fat (obese). It is measured using the following indicators:

- Wasting is an indicator of acute malnutrition that reflects a recent and severe process that has led to substantial weight loss. This is usually the result of starvation and/or disease.

- Stunting is an indicator of chronic malnutrition that reflects the long-term nutritional situation of a population. It is calculated by comparing the height-for-age of a child with a reference population of well nourished and healthy children.
- Underweight is measured by comparing the weight-for-age of a child with a reference population of well-nourished and healthy children. An estimated 146 million children in developing countries are underweight.

### Are micronutrients important?

Micronutrient, or vitamin and mineral deficiencies, are very important afflicting nearly two billion people worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, deficiencies of iron, vitamin A, and zinc rank among the top ten leading causes of death through disease in developing countries.

- Iron deficiency is the most prevalent form of malnutrition, affecting billions of people worldwide. Iron deficiency damages a country's productivity and impedes cognitive development.

Source: Vitamin & Mineral Deficiency, a global damage assessment report; Unicef

- Vitamin A deficiency is a leading cause of child blindness across developing countries. It affects 140 million pre-school children in 118 countries. Deficiency in vitamin A can increase the risk of dying from diarrhoea, measles and malaria.

Source: Fifth Report on the World Nutrition Situation, 2005

- Iodine deficiency affects 780 million people worldwide. Some 20 million children are born mentally impaired because their moth-

ers did not consume enough iodine during pregnancy.

Source: Vitamin & Mineral Deficiency, a global damage assessment report; Unicef

Zinc deficiency contributes to growth failure and weakened immunity in young children; it results in some 800,000 child deaths per year.

### **So just who are the hungry?**

Despite the impression you often get from the media, emergencies account for less than eight percent of hunger's victims. Few people realise that there are close to one billion hungry people in the world who don't make the headlines -- more than the combined populations of the United States, Canada and the European Union. They are of all ages, from babies whose mothers cannot produce enough milk to the elderly with no relatives to care for them. They are the unemployed inhabitants of urban slums, the landless farmers tilling other people's fields, the orphans of AIDS and the sick, who need special or increased food intake to survive.

Above all, children, women and rural communities are on the front-lines of hunger.

### **CHILD HUNGER**

- More than 70 percent of the world's 146 million underweight children under age five years live in just 10 countries, with more than 50 per cent located in South Asia alone; (Source: Progress for Children: A Report Card on Nutrition, UNICEF, 2006)
- 10.9 million children under five die in developing countries each year. Malnutrition and hunger-related diseases cause 60 per-

cent of the deaths;

(Source: The State of the World's Children, UNICEF, 2007)

- The cost of undernutrition to national economic development is estimated at US\$20-30 billion per annum;

(Source: Progress for Children: A Report Card on Nutrition, UNICEF, 2006)

- One out of four children - roughly 146 million - in developing countries are underweight;

(Source: The State of the World's Children, UNICEF, 2007)

- WFP now provides school meals to an average of 22 million children each year in 60 countries (Source: WFP School Feeding Unit)

## **FOOD & HIV/AIDS**

- In the countries most heavily affected, HIV has reduced life expectancy by more than 20 years, slowed economic growth, and deepened household poverty.

(Source: 2008 UNAIDS Global Report on the AIDS Epidemic)

- In sub-Saharan Africa alone, the epidemic has orphaned nearly 12 million children aged under 18 years.

(Source: 2008 UNAIDS Global Report on the AIDS Epidemic).

- WFP and UNAIDS project that it will cost on average US \$0.70 cents per day to nutritionally support an AIDS patient and his/her family.

(Source: Cost of Nutritional Support for HIV/AIDS Projects, WFP, July 2008)

- Assistance for orphans and vulnerable children is estimated at US\$0.31 per day.

(Source: Cost of Nutritional Support for HIV/AIDS Projects, WFP, July 2008)

### **Where are the hungry?**

The percentage of hungry people is highest in east, central and southern Africa. Around three-quarters of undernourished people live in low-income rural areas of developing countries, principally in higher-risk farming areas. However, the share of the hungry in urban areas is rising.

However, of the total number of the 925 million chronically hungry people, over half are in Asia and the Pacific and about a quarter are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Are the numbers going down?**

Whereas good progress was made in reducing chronic hunger in the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, hunger has been slowly but steadily on the rise for the past decade, FAO said. The number of hungry people increased between 1995-97 and 2004-06 in all regions except Latin America and the Caribbean. But even in this region, gains in hunger reduction have been reversed as a result of high food prices and the global economic downturn that started in 2008.

Today, one in seven people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life, making hunger and malnutrition the number one risk to health worldwide -- greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.

## Success Stories:

The most important thing to understand about hunger is that it IS solvable. Small, low-cost interventions can have an amazing impact on the lives of millions of people around the world.

### Combating anaemia on the ground in Peru - with chicken blood!

<http://www.wfp.org/stories/peru-chicken-blood-cookbook-stamps-out-anaemia>

Traditional Peruvian cooking has turned out a secret weapon in the fight against anaemia: chicken blood. High in iron and low on cost, “sangrecita” is the key ingredient of many of Peru’s favourite dishes. WFP has published over 40 in an anti-anaemia cookbook with recipes from local mothers and world renowned chefs.

### Colombian Panaleros fighting poverty:

<http://www.wfp.org/stories/colombia-families-take-sweet-route-out-hunger>

“Mercedes Bohorquez has made panela, the main ingredient in Colombia’s favourite thirst-quencher for as long as she can remember. But, unable to sell her product herself, she remained trapped in poverty. Now, with a helping hand from WFP, she and her fellow paneleros are solving that problem.”

### Food for work – rebuilding after a disaster:

<http://www.wfp.org/stories/philippines-typhoon-past-family-builds-home>

Since a typhoon destroyed their home last year, Mildred’s family has been living on a beach. Their fishing boat damaged and their savings exhausted, they had nowhere to turn. But their fortunes are changing with a programme that takes care of food needs as they rebuild their

lives.

### Food assistance gives farmers a boost:

<http://www.wfp.org/stories/pakistan-farmers-curbs-hunger-cycle-food-aid>

Bakhtawar Mai turned in a great harvest this year, which means she finally grew enough food to feed her family. This was possible because a little food aid at the right time enabled her to cover her immediate food needs and, at the same time, buy enough seeds for the year ahead.

### Women leading the way in El Salvador:

<http://www.wfp.org/stories/el-salvador-food-fuels-women-drive-re-build-after-hurricane>

Hurricane Ida left behind a trail of destruction when it slammed into El Salvador last November. In the town of Monte San Juan, women's groups are spearheading the reconstruction effort with the help of a programme that keeps their families fed. The project has helped women like Carmen Perez become community leaders.

### Overcoming "Hidden Hunger":

<http://www.wfp.org/stories/senegal-women-salt-producers-lead-iodine-drive>

Iodine deficiency is a major problem in Senegal where it causes birth defects in children and goitre in adults. Women salt producers are leading the charge against this form of malnutrition with the help of a WFP programme that helps them to enrich the salt they harvest with iodine and trains them as business leaders.

<http://www.wfp.org/stories/sizzling-vitamins-bring-nutrition-egypt%E2%80%99s-poor>



A project to bring nutritionally-enhanced vegetable oil into the homes of some 60 million people got underway this week in a bid to stem widespread malnutrition in Egypt. The joint effort makes use of Egypt's vast subsidized food system to ensure that the country's poorest get the vitamins and minerals they need.

### **School Meals – a long-term investment:**

<http://www.wfp.org/stories/kenya-school-meals-grads-pass-down-rewards>

WFP has been providing school meals to children in Kenya for over 20 years. Today, a new generation of graduates is turning the rewards of those meals into stronger communities. Anthropologist Timothy J. Finan, author of a new report on school feeding in Kenya, tells us how.

### **Hunger and the Millennium Development Goals:**

Among the Millennium Development Goals which the United Nations has set for the 21st century, halving the proportion of hungry people in the world is top of the list. Whereas good progress was made in reducing chronic hunger in the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, hunger has been slowly but steadily rising for the past decade.

### **SO WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT HUNGER?**

We need to make a concerted effort to fight hunger. Governments, UN Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations and individuals need to take action. But in order for this to happen, we need to start talking about hunger, and spreading the word by all means available.

There are almost 1 billion people on the planet affected by hunger – and yet we don't talk about it. In contrast, there are around 1.6 billion active internet users in the world – if you are reading this, you're one of them.





## Online Action:

Spreading the word about hunger has never been easier – Facebook, Twitter, blogging, and the internet in general mean that we have more means than ever before to access information, and to communicate.

Try these links to find out more about what YOU can do to help:

Get Involved: WFP has a growing community of thousands of individuals around the world who are fighting hunger – click here and find out what you can do <http://www.wfp.org/get-involved>

A Billion for a Billion: an thriving online community of tech-savvy individuals using the power of technology to connect and make a difference! <http://www.wfp.org/1billion>

## Resources:

For Teachers – WFP teaching materials have been developed by educators, with sponsorship by the Alabama 4-H Program in conjunction with Universities Fighting World Hunger at Auburn University, The Cape Breton University Children’s Rights Centre, and the Canadian International Development Agency. You can find them here: <http://www.wfp.org/students-and-teachers/teachers/teach-hunger>

## World Food Programme on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/WorldFoodProgramme>

World Food Programme on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/WFP>, [WFP/helping-pakistan](http://twitter.com/WFP/helping-pakistan) - [WFP/hunger-fighters4](http://twitter.com/WFP/hunger-fighters4) - [WFP/hunger-fighters3](http://twitter.com/WFP/hunger-fighters3) - [WFP/tweeting-educators](http://twitter.com/WFP/tweeting-educators) - [WFP/hunger-fighters2](http://twitter.com/WFP/hunger-fighters2) - [WFP/educators-on-twitter](http://twitter.com/WFP/educators-on-twitter)

## Freerice: The internet phenomenon that feeds the hungry!

With every correct answer, 10 grains of rice are donated to WFP. Doesn’t sound like much? Well – since 2007, Freerice players have



raised enough rice to feed 4.3 million people for a day! Join them and make a difference!

Freerice has also gone social! Log in via Facebook and challenge your friends – tell you teachers and get them to create a group!

Changing the world with a click of the mouse! <http://www.freerice.com>

### **Food Force: The First Humanitarian Video Game**

Since its release in 2005, WFP's video game to teach children about the logistical challenges of delivering food aid in a major humanitarian crisis has been downloaded over 6 million times, and has an estimated network of 10 million players worldwide!

Set on a fictitious island called Sheylan, riven by drought and war, Food Force invites children to complete six virtual missions that reflect real-life obstacles faced by WFP in its emergency responses both to the tsunami and other hunger crises around the world.

With tens of thousands of Sheylan's residents displaced and in urgent need of food aid, players are required to pilot helicopters on reconnaissance missions, airdrop high energy biscuits to internally displaced person (IDP) camps, negotiate with armed rebels on a food convoy run and use food aid to help rebuild villages.

You can download the game here: <http://www.wfp.org/how-to-help/individuals/food-force>

**Each year, the World Food Programme produces the Hunger Map. It is freely downloadable in PDF**

format in English, Spanish, Italian and French: <http://www.wfp.org/hunger/map>