

Media Update

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United Nations

PRESS RELEASE

As more go hungry and malnutrition persists, achieving Zero Hunger by 2030 in doubt, UN report warns

Securing healthy diets for the billions who cannot afford them would save trillions in costs

Rome, 13 July 2020 – More people are going hungry, an annual study by the United Nations has found. Tens of millions have joined the ranks of the chronically undernourished over the past five years, and countries around the world continue to struggle with multiple forms of malnutrition.

The latest edition of the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*, published today, estimates that almost 690 million people went hungry in 2019 – up by 10 million from 2018, and by nearly 60 million in five years. High costs and low affordability also mean billions cannot eat healthily or nutritiously. The hungry are most numerous in Asia, but expanding fastest in Africa. Across the planet, the report forecasts, the COVID-19 pandemic could tip over 130 million more people into chronic hunger by the end of 2020. (Flare-ups of acute hunger in the pandemic context may see this number escalate further at times.)

The *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* is the most authoritative global study tracking progress towards ending hunger and malnutrition. It is produced jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Writing in the Foreword, the heads of the five agencies^[i] warn that “five years after the world committed to end hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition, we are still off track to achieve this objective by 2030.”

The hunger numbers explained

In this edition, critical data updates for China and other populous countries^[ii] have led to a substantial cut in estimates of the global number of hungry people, to the current 690 million. Nevertheless, there has been no change in the trend. Revising the entire hunger series back to the year 2000 yields the same conclusion: after steadily diminishing for decades, chronic hunger slowly began to rise in 2014 and continues to do so.

Asia remains home to the greatest number of undernourished (381 million). Africa is second (250 million), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (48 million). The global prevalence of undernourishment – or overall percentage of hungry people – has changed little at 8.9 percent, but the absolute numbers have been rising since 2014. This means that over the last five years, hunger has grown in step with the global population.

This, in turn, hides great regional disparities: in percentage terms, Africa is the hardest hit region and becoming more so, with 19.1 percent of its people undernourished. This is more than double the rate in Asia (8.3 percent) and in Latin America and the Caribbean (7.4 percent). On current trends, by 2030, Africa will be home to more than half of the world's chronically hungry.

The pandemic's toll

As progress in fighting hunger stalls, the COVID-19 pandemic is intensifying the vulnerabilities and inadequacies of global food systems – understood as all the activities and processes affecting the production, distribution and consumption of food. While it is too soon to assess the full impact of the lockdowns and other containment measures, the report estimates that at a minimum, another 83 million people, and possibly as many as 132 million, may go hungry in 2020 as a result of the economic recession triggered by COVID-19.^[iii] The setback throws into further doubt the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger).

Unhealthy diets, food insecurity and malnutrition

Overcoming hunger and malnutrition in all its forms (including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity) is about more than securing enough food to survive: what people eat – and especially what children eat – must also be nutritious. Yet a key obstacle is the high cost of nutritious foods and the low affordability of healthy diets for vast numbers of families.

The report presents evidence that a healthy diet costs far more than US\$ 1.90/day, the international poverty threshold. It puts the price of even the least expensive healthy diet at five times the price of filling stomachs with starch only. Nutrient-rich dairy, fruits, vegetables and protein-rich foods (plant and animal-sourced) are the most expensive food groups globally.

The latest estimates are that a staggering 3 billion people or more cannot afford a healthy diet. In sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia, this is the case for 57 percent of the population – though no region, including North America and Europe, is spared. Partly as a result, the race to end malnutrition appears compromised. According to the report, in 2019, between a quarter and a third of children under five (191 million) were stunted or wasted – too short or too thin. Another 38 million under-fives were overweight. Among adults, meanwhile, obesity has become a global pandemic in its own right.

A call to action

The report argues that once sustainability considerations are factored in, a global switch to healthy diets would help check the backslide into hunger while delivering enormous savings. It calculates that such a shift would allow the health costs associated with unhealthy diets, estimated to reach US\$ 1.3 trillion a year in 2030, to be almost entirely offset; while the diet-related social cost of greenhouse gas emissions, estimated at US\$ 1.7 trillion, could be cut by up to three-quarters.^[iv]

The report urges a transformation of food systems to reduce the cost of nutritious foods and increase the affordability of healthy diets. While the specific solutions will differ from country to country, and even within them, the overall answers lie with interventions along the entire food supply chain, in the food environment, and in the political economy that shapes trade, public expenditure and investment policies. The study calls on governments to mainstream nutrition in their approaches to agriculture; work to cut cost-escalating factors in the production, storage, transport, distribution and marketing of food – including by reducing inefficiencies and food loss and waste; support local small-scale producers to grow and sell more nutritious foods, and secure their access to markets; prioritize children's nutrition as the category in greatest need; foster behaviour change through education and communication; and embed nutrition in national social protection systems and investment strategies.

The heads of the five UN agencies behind the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* declare their commitment to support this momentous shift, ensuring that it unfolds “in a sustainable way, for people and the planet.”

Read the full here and the In-Brief report here: <http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/en/>

Media contacts for interview requests (several languages are covered):

FAO – Andre VORNIC, +39 345 870 6985, andre.vornic@fao.org

IFAD – Antonia PARADELA, +34 605 398 109, a.paradelatorices@ifad.org

UNICEF – Sabrina SIDHU, +1 917 476 1537, ssidhu@unicef.org

WFP – Martin PENNER, +39 345 614 2074, martin.penner@wfp.org

WHO – Fadela CHAIB, [+41 79 475 5556](tel:+41794755556), chaibf@who.int

FAO

PRESS RELEASE

FAO distributes Kharif crop packages in the newly merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Peshawar: The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is distributing Kharif crop packages to 16 000 vulnerable households to strengthen agriculture-based livelihoods in the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Under a similar intervention, the United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (US-INL) is supporting distribution of Kharif crop packages amongst 2 000 people to help these communities resume agricultural production.

The packages consist of 25 kilograms of certified maize seeds, 1.5 kilograms of sunflower seeds, 5 kilograms of red beans and 10 kilograms of French beans for each household. The distribution is being conducted in collaboration with

the Department of Agriculture and District Administration and in strict compliance with the COVID-19 prevention protocols.

With the COVID-19 pandemic adversely affecting the farming community, FAO is stepping up efforts to protect livelihoods of food producers and all food chain workers by providing quality agri-input packages to beneficiaries so that the season bound agriculture activities are not disrupted. Through its interventions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's newly merged districts, FAO has introduced high value crops and agriculture value chains to create sustainable livelihoods for the farmers.

“This intervention has been timely in providing support to smallholder farmers in these vulnerable areas, helping build sustainable food system and ensuring food security to mitigate the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on agriculture. Providing farmers with a mix of high quality certified seeds such as maize, sunflower and beans for the Kharif season crop will also contribute to ensuring some dietary diversification as well as supply to keep markets and food supply chains going,” said Mina Dowlatchahi, FAO Representative in Pakistan.

Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, FAO projects are playing a vital role in ensuring food security, reducing poverty and bringing economic stabilization in the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In addition to distribution of various agriculture packages to vulnerable smallholder farmers, FAO through its farmer field schools and field training activities is also arranging regular sessions for local farmer communities to raise awareness on safety and hygiene measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

For media enquiries please contact Mehr Hassan, FAO Pakistan at mehr.hassan@fao.org or Seema Ghazi, FAO Pakistan at seema.ghazi@fao.org

UNDP

PRESS RELEASE

The Ministry of Climate Change and UNDP celebrate Pakistan's achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action

July 13, 2020, Islamabad— The Ministry of Climate Change and UNDP hosted a media briefing today to celebrate Pakistan's achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action, well before the 2030 deadline. The recent release of the 2020 Sustainable Development Report shows that out of 17 goals, Pakistan has achieved the Climate Action goal under which countries are required to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

The event was attended by the Prime Minister's Advisor on Climate Change, Malik Amin Aslam, Additional Secretary Ministry of Climate Change, Joudat Ayaz, Deputy Resident Representative UNDP Pakistan, Aliona Niculita, Assistant Resident Representative Environment & Climate Change Unit UNDP, Amanullah Khan and additional UNDP and Ministry of Climate Change representatives.

The Prime Minister's Advisor on Climate Change, **Mr. Malik Amin Aslam** said at the occasion, “ *I would like to highlight that the SDGs are not 17 individual goals, but are rather interconnected. Progress in one goal can both depend on and unlock progress in another – and interconnected goals require an interconnected approach. Our efforts in the realm of climate action can surely help create a positive impact on other goals and countries. Pakistan is the 5th most vulnerable country in the world to climate change. We are committed to this, and have started a number of projects over the past two years, an example being GLOF-II (Glacial Lake Outburst Floods II), where we are working to establish early warning systems and train communities to deal with glacial lake outburst floods.*”

“UNDP Pakistan and the Ministry of Climate Change has a long-standing strategic partnership and we are happy to say that our continued collaboration has borne fruit for the people of Pakistan,” said **Ms. Aliona Niculita**, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Pakistan, at the media briefing. “*With strong political will, increased investment, use of technology and mutual collaboration, it is evident that we can limit the increase in global*

mean temperature to two degrees Celsius or less, above the pre-industrial level. This will require collective action, continuous efforts, and meaningful and effective partnerships.”

Across the globe, UNDP has a clear mandate to support countries that are vulnerable to the effects of Climate Change and to help them in achieving the desired goals. In Pakistan, UNDP provided technical support to the Ministry of Climate Change in the achievement of this goal. UNDP has supported the implementation of various national level projects under multiple international environmental protocols thus ensuring that the targets were met as per the government’s commitments. One of the flagship outputs of this partnership is Pakistan’s first National Climate Change Policy, which was developed by the Ministry of Climate Change with the support of UNDP in 2012 followed by a number of flagship projects in the arena of Climate Action.

The Sustainable Development Goals were adopted to address risks across economic, social, and environmental domains. These include poverty, widening inequalities in income and access to decent lives, continued high disease burdens, and massive environmental disasters. UNDP stands committed to work together with the Government of Pakistan, civil society, national partners, and the people of Pakistan to help find solutions to persistent development challenges, including those related to Climate Change.

For additional information, please contact Ayesha Babar at ayesha.babar@undp.org or +92 (51) 835 5650
