

# Hunger and Poverty Around the World

compiled by Bessie Hilliard

- 854 million people across the world are hungry, up from 852 million a year ago.  
—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2006*
- Every day, almost 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes—one child every five seconds.  
—*Robert Black, Saul Morris, & Jennifer Bryce: “Where and Why Are 10 Million Children Dying Every Year?” The Lancet, 2003*
- In essence, hunger is the most extreme form of poverty, where individuals or families cannot afford to meet their most basic need for food. Hunger manifests itself in many ways other than starvation and famine. Most poor people who battle hunger deal with chronic undernourishment and vitamin or mineral deficiencies, which result in stunted growth, weakness and heightened susceptibility to illness.  
—*Bread for the World Institute, 2004*
- Countries in which a large portion of the population battles hunger daily are usually poor and often lack the social safety nets we enjoy, such as soup kitchens, food stamps, and job training programs. When a family that lives in a poor country cannot grow enough food or earn enough money to buy food, there is nowhere to turn for help.  
—*Bread for the World Institute, 2004*
- In 2004, almost 1 billion people lived below the international poverty line, earning less than US\$1 per day.  
—*The World Bank, 2007*
- People who live on less than US\$1 per day have problems obtaining adequate, nutritious food for themselves and their families. As a result, 820 million people in the developing world are undernourished. They consume less than the minimum amount of calories essential for sound health and growth.  
—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2006*
- Undernourishment negatively affects people’s health, productivity, sense of hope and overall well-being. A lack of food can stunt growth, slow thinking, sap energy, hinder fetal development and contribute to mental retardation.  
—*Bread for the World Institute, 2004*
- Economically, the constant securing of food consumes valuable time and energy of poor people, allowing less time for work and earning income. Socially, the lack of food erodes relationships and feeds shame so that those most in need of support are often least able to call on it.  
—*Bread for the World Institute, 2004*
- Poor nutrition and calorie deficiencies cause nearly one in three people to die prematurely or have

disabilities.

–*World Health Organization*

- Malnutrition contributes to 53 percent of the 10.6 million deaths of children under five each year in developing countries. This amounts to one child dying every five seconds. Malnutrition has many other adverse effects:

1. Malnutrition inhibits the ability to learn. A condition of malnutrition called “wasting” affects up to 52 million pre-schoolers in developing countries. Stunting affects 160 million pre-schoolers in developing countries. In addition to this, up to 60 percent of all pre-school children in the developing world are anemic.
2. Inherited hunger, which causes malnourished mothers to give birth to malnourished children, is a major impediment to development. Maternal malnutrition endangers mothers and children alike in these ways.
3. Every year more than 60,000 mothers worldwide die in pregnancy and childbirth as a result of iron deficiency.
4. More than 20 million children are born annually with low birthweight, the result of their mothers having inadequate nutrition before and during pregnancy. Low birthweight babies are four times more likely to die in the first week of life from infections such as diarrhea.
5. Low birthweight babies who survive are more likely to remain malnourished throughout childhood, and to face health and learning difficulties throughout their lives.

–*World Food Programme*

- Vitamin and mineral deficiencies are among the leading causes of death and disability in developing countries, particularly among children. Iron deficiency is the most prevalent form of malnutrition worldwide, affecting an estimated 2 billion people. For each US\$1 spent on iron fortification of food, there is a US\$84 return in increased productivity and decreased disability. These deficiencies affect people in various ways:

1. Iron deficiency is of particular concern among women of reproductive age and children because of the severe consequences on health, productivity and learning.
2. Vitamin A deficiency affects approximately 40 percent of the developing world’s pre-schoolers. Vitamin A deficiency is associated with blindness, susceptibility to disease and higher mortality rates. It leads to the death of approximately one million children each year.
3. Iodine deficiency is the greatest single cause of mental retardation and brain damage. Worldwide, 1.7 billion people are at risk of iodine deficiency, which can easily be prevented by adding iodine to salt.

–*World Food Programme*

- In the developing world, 27 percent of children under five are moderately to severely underweight. 10 percent are severely underweight. 10 percent of children under five are moderately to severely wasted, or seriously below weight for one’s height, and an overwhelming 31 percent are moderately to severely stunted, or seriously below normal height for one’s age.

–*UNICEF, 2006*

- Between 2005 and 2006, the number of hungry people in 70 lower income countries rose from 804 million to 849 million. Many of these live in Sub-Saharan Africa:

1. By 2016, the number of hungry people is projected to decline in all regions, except Sub-Saharan Africa.
2. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 85 percent of the average nutrition gap, the indicator of food availability which is 13.5 million tons, while low-income countries of Asia account for only 14 percent, and the low-income countries of Latin America and the Caribbean account for the remaining 1 percent.

–*Food Security Assessment, 2006*

Water is one of the major concerns of development programs around the world. One of every six people lacks access to safe drinking water. Two million people—most of them children — die each year from waterborne disease.

–*Church World Service*

About 12 percent of the world’s population uses 85 percent of its water.

–Maude Barlow: “Water as Commodity—The Wrong Prescription,” *Institute for Food and Development Policy Backgrounder*, Summer 2001

*The statistics above were compiled for Sacred Seasons, the Hunger Emphasis 2007 packet, produced by Seeds of Hope Publishers, 602 James Avenue, Waco, Texas 76706; 254-755-7745; [seedseditor@clearwire.net](mailto:seedseditor@clearwire.net); [www.seedspublishers.org](http://www.seedspublishers.org).*