

FOOD SECURITY AROUND THE WORLD:

A GUIDE TO WHO'S HUNGRY AND WHY

from the U.S. Committee for World Food Day

ASIA

A period of rapid economic growth has resulted in major gains in food security across most of Asia and the Pacific. Cambodia led the way while China, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Vietnam also showed strong reductions. Undernourishment increased only in Mongolia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

CAMBODIA: REAPING THE DIVIDENDS OF PEACE

More land is being farmed, more food is being produced, and far fewer people are going hungry in Cambodia as the country rebounds from decades of conflict. There is more pork, beef, and poultry production and more rice yields. Cambodians' average food intake in 1996 is still scarcely enough to meet the minimum daily requirement and more than one-third of all households fall below the poverty line. Programs to remove landmines and rehabilitate irrigation systems are continuing after decades of war have left them in ruins, as well as a program being created to reduce poverty by creating jobs for vulnerable groups.

DPR KOREA: A BITTER HARVEST

The floods, drought, and collapse of its trading relationships have devastated food production in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Total cereal production plummeted to less than half its 1980 level, while the proportion of undernourished people soared to almost half the population. Rapid economic

deterioration left the country without the means to finance needed food imports. As crops failed and imports dwindled, rations were cut drastically by the national public distribution system. Gains in food production were achieved through high-input agriculture. But two years of heavy storms and flooding followed by a severe drought devastated large tracts of agricultural land. The country is now trying to revive agricultural production with improved seed varieties, double-cropping methods, rehabilitating irrigation systems and improving soil fertility.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

In most South American countries, levels are low or rapidly declining, but in Central America, levels are increasing in several countries with Honduras registering the strongest gains. In the Caribbean, Cuba, like its island neighbors, has experienced increases in undernourishment since 1980.

HONDURAS: ECONOMIC GROWTH HELPS TO REDUCE HUNGER

Steady economic growth and an effective aid program has helped Honduras to reduce the number of undernourished by almost one-third. Increases in food production, imports, and use of stock have all contributed to this decrease. Maize production nearly doubled, and vegetable oils, sugar, meat, and beans

accounted for most of the increase in food intake.

Safe water now reaches 87 percent of the people, and the literacy rate is at 70 percent. The Honduran Social Investment Fund provides direct aid, and a ration program supplies coupons to help schoolchildren, mothers, and elderly people buy food and other necessities.

Still, half of the Honduran population lives in rural areas, with 40 percent in extreme poverty, and many working as agricultural laborers on large estates. Commercial agriculture offers good possibilities for growth, but the benefits must be distributed more equally.

CUBA: LOSS OF TRADING PARTNER ERODES FOOD SECURITY

The end of Cuba's trading relationship with the former Soviet Union has dropped the daily food intake by more than 500 calories per person because of a steep decline in food imports. This decline has increased the number of people relying on subsidies while reducing productivity and food intake for many workers and their families. Continued restrictions on trade with the United States add to the country's economic difficulties.

Despite its recent problems, Cuba has succeeded in reducing undernourishment to very low levels while relying on trade for more than half of its food. More than half the country's roads are paved and 95 percent of the population have access to safe water. The Cuban government has given priority to increasing food production and restructuring

industry, but the transition process is far from complete.

NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

This region accounts for ten of the 14 developing countries where undernourishment affects less than five percent of the population. Morocco's decline represented the best progress among this group of good performers. Significant increases occurred only in Afghanistan and Iraq.

MOROCCO: THRIVING ECONOMY BOOSTS FOOD SECURITY

Mineral wealth and an established position as a trade and commerce center has allowed Morocco to enjoy a reduction from ten percent to five percent of those undernourished. Between 1980 and 1996, daily food intake increased from 2,723 to 3,186 calories, from increases in food production and trade, reaching levels comparable with industrialized countries. Production of cereals and potatoes has more than doubled.

Improvements in transportation, sanitation, and education have occurred in the cities, but half of the population remains in rural areas where poverty and vulnerability persist. Barely half of the population has access to safe water, 56 percent remains illiterate, and 61 percent of the land is severely degraded. More sustainable agricultural practices need to be

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WHO'S HUNGRY AND WHY

continued

introduced, and urban jobs and income must be generated.

AFGHANISTAN: WAR LEAVES LITTLE GROUND FOR CROPS

As a result of returning refugees, the population of Afghanistan swelled by 25 percent, and average daily food intake fell from 2,186 to 1,710 calories, significantly below minimum requirements. Two-thirds of the country's provinces are now food-deficit areas, and more than 40 percent of the country's arable land is riddled with landmines.

Only 15 percent of the population has access to safe water and 70 percent is illiterate. Every day, mine blasts kill or maim 10 people—a third of whom are women and children—leaving survivors dependent on family members.

Large volumes of food aid remain far from sufficient to satisfy the minimum needs of such a large number of undernourished people. Until peace is restored, there can be little hope of any lasting solutions.

WEST AFRICA

Eight countries in West Africa reduced hunger significantly between 1980 and 1996, along with the five countries worldwide that scored the greatest gains. But in Central, East and Southern Africa, 13 countries showed large increases with Burundi suffering the largest increase rising 38 to 63 percent in the same time period.

GHANA: ECONOMIC GROWTH FUELS RAPID GAINS

A strong economy and increases in food crops caused Ghana's average food intake to soar from 1,790 calories per day to more than 2,600 calories. The

gains came entirely from the betterments in the yields of cassava, yams, maize, and rice. The economy grew at an annual rate of 2.3 percent, leading to improvements in sanitation, health, and education.

The population with access to safe water increased to 65 percent and illiteracy was reduced to 36 percent. Almost one-third of Ghana's population still remains poor, and ten percent live in extreme poverty, in rural areas where food insecurity and vulnerability persist. Continued economic growth and increased opportunities for off-farm employment will be crucial to maintain progress.

BURUNDI: POPULATION GROWTH AND CONFLICT

Undernourishment has increased sharply and food production has fallen as Burundi struggles to cope with rapid population growth, severe land degradation and civil conflict. Average daily food intake tumbled from 2,020 to 1,669 calories, far below minimum requirements. Production of cassava, sweet potatoes and beans have declined.

Burundi's weak economy and geographic isolation have left more than 90 percent of the people living in rural areas almost completely dependent on domestic food production. Poorly developed transport and marketing facilities and civil conflict has disrupted production and further restricted trade opportunities. The spiral of population growth, environmental degradation, and falling agricultural productivity, shows that solutions to Burundi's food security problems must be found outside agriculture.

—compiled from "Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger," an educational project of the U.S. Committee for World Food Day, by Seeds of Hope intern Kimmy Scott. For more information, see www.worldfoodday.com.

BREAD FOR ALL

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

LEADER: I invite you now to the Table of the Lord. Let us now share the bread.

PEOPLE: This is bread that is necessary for life; bread which comes as a gift from God; bread broken and shared to remember Christ's body broken for us.

LEADER: We have not earned this bread, it is a gift from God.

PEOPLE: But what if we feel unworthy to receive this bread?

LEADER: Hear this word, you who are created by

God, everyone here is welcome to this bread, not because of our worthiness, but because God loves us and wants us to have it.

THE SHARING OF THE BREAD

LEADER: So let us pass the baskets of bread to one another and be filled with the bread of heaven. Let us say to each other: God wants you to have this bread!

LEADER: Now let us pass the cup, the fruit of the vine, the drink that is poured out, to remind us of Jesus' love poured out.

PEOPLE: May we be filled with the Holy Spirit; may we be infused with new life; may we be inebriated with that love.

LEADER: Let us say to each other: God wants you to be filled with love.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

BENEDICTION

LEADER: Go in peace from this place, and may all of you be drenched with the spirit of God. And everywhere you go, through your lives, may these things come true: no one will go hungry; no one will shiver in the cold; and no one will cower in fear.

—Katie Cook

