

FACTS on GLOBAL HUNGER

From the United Nations World Food Programme: (www.wfp.org/hunger)

HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION ARE STILL THE NUMBER ONE RISKS TO HEALTH WORLDWIDE.

There are 925 million undernourished people in the world today. (This is more than the populations of USA, Canada and the European Union combined.) That means one in seven people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life. 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.

98% of the world's hungry live in developing countries; 65% of the world's hungry live only in 7 countries: India, China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Ethiopia.

Among the key causes of hunger are poverty, natural disasters, conflict, poor agricultural infrastructure and over-exploitation of the environment.

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. People who are malnourished can die from common infections like measles or diarrhea.

- 10.9 million children under 5 die in developing countries each year, 60% of which are attributed to malnutrition and hunger-related diseases. (UNICEF, 2007, *State of the World's Children*)
- It is estimated that 684,000 child deaths worldwide could be prevented by increasing access to vitamin A and zinc. Lack of vitamin A kills a million infants a year. (UNICEF, *A Global Progress Report*)
- 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 diarrhea, measles, and malaria. (*Fifth Report on the World Nutrition Situation*, 2005)
- 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. (UNICEF, *Vitamin & Mineral Deficiency, a global damage assessment report*)
- Iodine deficiency affects 780 million people worldwide. Some 20 million children are born mentally impaired because their mothers did not consume enough iodine during pregnancy. (UNICEF, *Vitamin & Mineral Deficiency, a global damage assessment report*)
- Zinc deficiency contributes to growth failure and weakened immunity in young children: it results in some 800,000 child deaths per year.

From www.thehungersite.com : Poverty is at the core of the world hunger crisis. The regions across the world that are subjected to extreme poverty conditions are at more risk to have their terrible situation exacerbated by outside forces such as natural disasters and war/conflict, thereby further deepening their difficult situation.

Natural disasters cause famine, hunger, and poverty in areas of the world that are already predisposed to crisis. In regions where food production and availability is only marginally sufficient to provide a sustainable supply for its population, this precarious predicament intensifies when drought or other natural disasters wipe out entire crops. Once a region's food production and supply has been severely degraded, it becomes increasingly necessary for that region to import food and supplies. However, many of these countries lack the funding and supportive government infrastructure that will allow for the necessary, life-saving food and supplies to be brought into the country.

As significant and devastating as natural disasters are as an impetus for famine, humans and their activities are increasingly responsible for sustained hunger emergencies. All too often, these emergencies are triggered by conflict. (2005 article) "The world's poorest countries are disproportionately likely to be at war" – *The Economist*

From www.worldhunger.org : World hunger refers to the want or scarcity of food, aggregated to the world level.

There are basically 2 types of malnutrition. The first and most important is protein-energy malnutrition. This is the type of malnutrition that is referred to when world hunger is discussed. It is the most lethal form of malnutrition/ hunger. It is basically a lack of calories and protein. The second type of malnutrition, also very important, is micronutrient (vitamin and mineral) deficiency.

THE WORLD PRODUCES ENOUGH FOOD TO FEED EVERYONE. World agriculture produces 17% more calories per person today than it did 30 years ago, despite a 70 % population increase.