



## Food Security and Nutrition

According to the latest UN report, **The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019**, more than **821 million people** suffered from **hunger** worldwide in the year 2018.

- The report was prepared by the [UN](#) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and other United Nations agencies including the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

### Key Findings

- **Undernourishment:** After decades of steady decline, the trend in world hunger – as measured by the prevalence of undernourishment – reverted in the year 2015, remaining virtually unchanged in the past three years at a level slightly **below 11 %**, posing a challenge to achieving the **SDG Goal 2** (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture)
  - Hunger is on the rise in almost all African subregions, making **Africa** the region with the **highest** prevalence of undernourishment, at almost 20 %.
  - In Asia, despite great progress in the last five years, **Southern Asia** is still the subregion where the prevalence of undernourishment is **highest**, at almost 15 %.
  - It is projected that undernutrition will **reduce** Gross Domestic Product (**GDP**) by up to 11 % in Africa and Asia.
  - Most countries (65 out of 77) that experienced a rise in undernourishment between 2011 and 2017 simultaneously suffered an **economic slowdown** or downturn.
  - Economic shocks have also prolonged and worsened the impact of conflict and climate events on acute food insecurity.
- **Breastfeeding:** Only 40% of infants under six months are exclusively breastfed, which is far from the 2030 target of 70 %.
- **Low Birthweight:** No progress has been made in reducing the prevalence of low birthweight since 2012. One in seven live births, or 20.5 million babies globally, suffered from low birthweight in 2015.
- **Stunting:** The number of stunted children has declined by 10% over the past six years. In the year 2018, Africa and Asia accounted for more than nine out of ten of all stunted children globally, representing 39.5% and 54.9 % of the global total, respectively.
- **Food Insecurity:** About 2 billion people in the world experience moderate or severe food insecurity.
  - In every continent, the prevalence of food insecurity is slightly higher among women than men, with the largest differences found in Latin America.
  - **Moderate food insecurity:** People experiencing moderate food insecurity face uncertainties about their ability to obtain food, and have been forced to compromise on the quality and/or quantity of the food they consume.
  - **Severe food insecurity:** People experiencing severe food insecurity have typically run out of food and, at worst, gone a day (or days) without eating.
- **Obesity:** Overweight and obesity continue to increase in all regions, particularly among school-age children and adults. In 2018, an estimated 40 million children under five were overweight.
  - Throughout the world, most school-age children do not eat enough fruit or vegetables, regularly consume fast food and carbonated soft drinks, and are not physically active on a

daily basis.

- **Anaemia:** It currently affects 33 % of women of reproductive age – more than double the 2030 target of 15 %.

## India Specific Findings

- The prevalence of **undernourishment** in India **declined** from 22.2% in 2004-06 to 14.5% between 2016 and 2018.
- In Southern Asia, food insecurity increased from less than 11% in 2017 to more than 14% in 2018. This possibly reflects an **increase in the unemployment rate** in India between 2017 and 2018, and especially in Pakistan, where growth is expected to slow down significantly.
  - In the Indian Himalayas, economic slowdown coupled with natural resource depletion and climate change negatively impacted on food production and employment opportunities. This resulted in increased threats to food security due to lower purchasing power.

## Suggestions

- **Reducing gender inequalities** and those inequalities arising from social discrimination.
- Creating synergies between poverty reduction, hunger and malnutrition eradication.
- Policies to protect, promote and **support breastfeeding** and to increase the availability and affordability of **nutritious foods** that constitute a healthy diet are required, along with measures to create healthier food environments and limit consumption of harmful fats, salt and sugars.
- Safeguarding food security and nutrition through economic and social policies that help **counteract the effects of economic slowdowns** or downturns, including guaranteeing funding of social safety nets and ensuring universal access to health and education.

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