



INTERNATIONAL
**YEAR OF
YOUTH**
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OUR YEAR OUR VOICE

Dialogue and Mutual Understanding

Fact Sheet: Youth and Hunger

- Over 85 per cent of the approximately 1 billion youth (18 per cent of the world population) live in developing countries and half of them work in the agricultural sector.
- Every year, the World Food Programme (WFP) feeds more than 20 million children in school feeding programmes in some 70 countries.
- The Food and Agricultural Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development and WFP work with agricultural youth associations and networks and undertake youth development projects and capacity building initiatives in local communities.
- Public awareness campaigns, such as FAO's "1 billion hungry campaign", WFP's "Fight Hunger: Walk the World" and "Billion for a Billion" have been developed to highlight unacceptable levels of world hunger.

Halving the number of undernourished by 2015 from 1990 levels was the goal of the 1996 World Food Summit and the target of the Millennium Development Goal 1. Unfortunately, however, hunger and malnutrition rates in the world continue to grow and are accelerating due to the current unprecedented financial crisis and the 2008 food crisis.

The combination of lower incomes and higher prices has caused food, a basic right for all, to be beyond the reach of millions of people. One sixth of all of humanity – approximately 1 billion – are hungry and undernourished. The hardest hit are populations in rural areas, especially in regions of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Children and young people, particularly girls, are among the most vulnerable as, hunger and malnutrition severely affect their physical and mental development and inhibit their ability to learn and participate in social and recreational activities.

United Nations and the fight against hunger

The United Nations response against hunger is principally carried-out through the three Rome-based agencies: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Food Programme (WFP). These agencies work in collaboration with a number of entities including: governments, research organizations, farmer groups, non-governmental organizations and civil society. They fight hunger through emergency food relief; enabling poor people to overcome poverty; building capacity through the transfer of knowledge and information; supporting the modernization of the agricultural sectors; developing programmes on nutrition, and acting as a neutral forum for discussions and negotiations.

The United Nations has a number of specific programmes and initiatives dedicated to young people. These programmes range from educational to providing access to resources such as micro credit, financing, and inputs such as seeds and fertilizers.





The UN agencies also work with agricultural youth associations and networks; support youth organization, in particular youth farmers' organizations and youth cooperatives, and undertake youth development projects and capacity building initiatives in local communities.

Progress

The 2008 G-8 Summit in Japan, the 2009 L'Aquila Joint Statement on Global Food Security, and the 2009 FAO World Summit for Food Security generated a renewed commitment by world leaders to end hunger.

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) — the intergovernmental body established in 1974 to review and follow-up on food security policies within the UN system — is under reform to make it more effective. A new advisory group will include young people who will contribute to the CFS process, by participating in policy and strategy discussions and exchanging knowledge on practices, technologies and expertise.

Other areas of progress in reducing poverty and hunger include the strengthening of rural development programmes and initiatives as well as the enlargement of safety nets and social-protection programmes.

Examples of such schemes include national food safety-net programmes, such as the WFP school-feeding programmes in Pakistan, Sudan and Yemen, and "Cash/or Food for Work" initiatives in the Phillipines, Cote D'Ivoire, Laos and Djibouti. Voucher programmes in Zambia, Haiti, Afghanistan and Syria are designed to stimulate the local economy by creating jobs and increasing agriculture and local value-added food production. Every year, WFP feeds more than 20 million children in school-feeding programmes in some 70 countries. The number of girls reached by these programmes has increased from 0.8 million in 2002 to 10.2 million, or 47 per cent, in 2009. In northern rural Indian, girls' attendance increased by 15 per cent, rising by 30 per cent the changes for a complete primary education.

UN Agencies have also developed a number of public awareness campaigns to highlight the unacceptable levels of hunger in the world. Examples include FAO's "1 billion hungry campaign" (see: www.1billionhungry.org/yunga), WFP's "Fight Hunger: Walk the World" initiative (<http://walktheworld.wfp.org>) and the "Billion for a Billion" campaign (www.wfp.org/1billion). Other educational resources include the "Students and Teachers" section of the WFP Web site (www.wfp.org/students-and-teachers) and FAO's "Feeding Minds" and "Right to Food" initiatives (www.feedingminds.org and www.fao.org/righttofood).

Youth are always at the core of these campaigns and initiatives, through participation as well as the organization and promotion of events.

The way forward

Denying children and young people an education and placing them in work situations that interfere with their health, mental and physical growth hinders training opportunities for more skilled jobs. Hunger and malnourishment prevent poor people, especially the young, from escaping poverty because it diminishes their ability to learn, work and care for themselves.

Appropriate policy, financial investment and incentives need to be created to reward farming and prevent the large-scale migration of young people to urban areas. Adequate education, vocational training and professional training opportunities are necessary to prepare young people for life in rural areas. Assistance and access to resources, such as technical knowledge, finances, land, water, seeds, fertilizers, equipment, technologies and markets also need to be provided.





Additional opportunities should be provided for young people to engage and contribute to national and international fora and platforms dealing with food security, such as the CFS. Such involvement would ensure that local concerns are considered and concrete programmes of action created with the long-term commitment of young people.

For further reading

- Feeding minds fighting hunger: www.feedingminds.org/
- *State of World Insecurity in the World 2009*: www.fao.org/docrep/012/i0876e/i0876e00.HTM
- *FAO at Work 2008-2009: Hunger and Crisis*: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/i1023e/i1023e00.pdf>
- ILO & FAO: Food, Agriculture & Decent Work: www.fao-ilo.org/fao-ilo-youth
- Rural Youth: www.fao.org/sd/erp/ERP_RuralYouth_en.htm
- YUNGA Web site: www.yunga.org
- *Junior Farmer field and Life Schools*: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/i1208e/i1208e00.pdf>
- World Food Programme Youth Outreach web site: <http://www.wfp.org/students-and-teachers>

This Fact Sheet was prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Programme on Youth. It is part of a collaborative effort of the Inter-Agency Network for Youth Development, coordinated by the United Nations Programme on Youth.

