
How We Can Combat the New Rise in World Hunger

World hunger was on a steady decline for over a decade, however a new UN report focusing on eight countries and regions shows that world hunger is once again on the rise due to multiple factors. The number increased from 777 million in 2015 to 815 million in 2016, that is from 10.6% to 11%. There are three main causes for the rise in hunger. First is the growth in violent conflicts around the world which takes a heavy toll on all aspects of human life. The second reason is the extreme climate changes which cause natural disasters such as floods and draughts. The third reason is economic slowdown which can be seen in areas like South America. Due to these factors the UN has warned that their 2030 goal to end all world hunger is no longer on track to be reached and more needs to be done. Global leaders and the UN are attempting to combat this rise in world hunger through aid, education, political pressure and diplomacy.

About 489 out of 815 million hungry people live in countries affected by conflict. These wars take a heavy toll on human lives and the infrastructures which then effects food production. The new UN report looked at sixteen conflict-torn regions and countries. In eight of these countries, more than a quarter of the population is facing hunger. Yemen is currently facing the worst situation out of those eight nations, where 17 million people are dealing with acute hunger. The UN has called to scale up efforts to prevent hunger through aid and to continue to use diplomacy to help deescalate conflicts. There is a desperate need for better and quicker access in the conflict zones to support those in need. Unfortunately In every location the UN did their study, attacks on the humanitarian workers was on the rise. The violence against the workers often forces them to suspend their operations which leaves the civilians in need at risk. In other countries humanitarian aid has been blocked by governments as a war tactic. In 2016 Sudan's government blocked humanitarian aid to parts of its rebel territory in hopes to starve rebel fighter. This left civilians trapped without water and food worsening the famine situation there which by 2017 was estimated at 20 million starving to death. In Nigeria a similar situation happened. Since 2009 the government has been fighting the Islamist group Boko Haram. The Nigerian government restricts aid to areas controlled by the Boko Haram which once again lead to civilian starvation. The Security Council's Resolution 2417 in 2018 has tried to combat these situations by unequivocally condemning starvation as a method of war. It calls to all sides involved in conflicts to follow the Humanitarian Law in order to minimize impact on civilians. The joint UN agency acknowledges that "The millions of men, women and children going hungry as a result of armed conflict will not be reduced unless and until these fundamental principles are followed". However only time will tell if all groups in conflict zones will comply with Resolution 2417.

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Extreme weather is another major factor in the increase in world hunger. Climate shocks such as droughts and floods are caused by extreme weather which scientists are linking to global warming. Two examples are El Niño and La Niña. Extreme weather negatively affects agricultural production which leads to food availability going down. Also when food availability goes down it often raises food prices. According to the UN report, there has been more frequent heatwaves over the last five years which also affects the patterns of rainfall. Important crops such as rice and wheat are particularly at risk when it comes to extreme climate patterns. The UN is calling governments to scale up their humanitarian efforts to get food supplies to those in need but also to help fund poor countries to adapt to the effects of global warming. Farmers living in at-risk areas need to learn to diversify crops to best use the rainfall or use crops which are drought-resistant in areas being affected by heat waves. Farmers also need to be given technology to forecast weather and have better transportation to markets. However the bigger issue at work is global warming itself. The UN warns that if we do not change course by 2020, we risk missing the point where we could stop runaway climate change. In 2015 the Paris Agreement was signed where the UNFCCC reached a landmark agreement to intensify their efforts to combat climate change and in September of 2019 another climate summit will be held where the UN Secretary General António Guterres will bring governments, world leaders and the private sector together to discuss a multilateral process to accelerate climate action.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, the third major reason for the increase in global hunger is economic slowdown. Even in countries with no conflicts or dramatic climate effects economic slowdown has led to the rise in hunger. In Latin America severe food insecurity increased from 7.6% in 2016 to 9.8% in 2017. The economic impact comes as export earnings have gone down due to commodity prices going down. This leads to a negative impact on the economy which in turn affects the Government's revenues. This affects the country's ability to import food and therefore can not protect its own people from hunger. The crisis unfolding in Venezuela is the most media covered situation currently concerning the Americas. This is the worst economic crisis in Venezuela's history and among the worst in Americas. Though there are multiple factors including political corruption and economic mismanagement which have led to Venezuela's current socioeconomic and political crisis, lower oil prices in early 2015 made the situation much worse. Venezuela's oil sales are 98.3% of the country's total product shipment. By 2017, hunger had become such an issue in the nation that 75% of the population had lost an average of 8 kg and most had not had enough earnings to meet basic good needs. The UN continues to push for provide aid for the people facing such conflicts in the wake of economic slowdown but there also needs to be a longer action plan such as the twin track approach which the Food and Agriculture organization has always advocated. The twin track is to strengthen the productive sectors from which poor people derive their income and also to strengthen social production so poor people do not fall into situations of hunger and malnutrition.

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Though hunger is on the rise again after a steady decline over a decade, the UN still believes that their sustainable development goal of zero hunger by 2030 is possible. The first step will always be to provide aid to those in need effected by war, conflict, extreme weather and economic slowdown. From there they must help strengthen the livelihood of the poor and support their productive sectors. In the case of changing weather patterns due to global warming to educate farmers on new methods of growing crops. In areas affected by war and conflict political will and diplomacy is a must to aid in peaceful resolutions to support the civilians and their safety. Last but not least the UN urges that countries, politicians and world leaders must unite and do more to stop global warming which is a major attributer to global hunger.

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