

YOUTH AND HUNGER



HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 85 per cent of the approximately 1.2 billion youth (15-24) lives in developing countries and half of them work in the agricultural sector.¹
- Every year the World Food Programme feeds more than 20 million children in school feeding programmes in some 60 countries.²
- The Food and Agricultural Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development and WFP work with agricultural youth associations and networks to undertake youth development projects and capacity building initiatives in local communities. Since 2004, the Junior Farmer Field and Life School Programme has trained over 25,000 young people in 20 countries.³
- Public awareness campaigns, such as FAO's "1 billion hungry campaign" or WFP's "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 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 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that 146,000,000 children in developing countries are underweight and undernourished as a result of acute or chronic hunger.⁴ If children don't receive adequate nutrition food in their first 2 years of life, they may be stunted (too short for their age) for life. In 2011, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 165,000,000 children under the age of 5 were stunted, 101,000,000 children under 5 were underweight (too light for their age), while 52,000,000 children under 5 suffered from wasting (too thin for their height).⁵ Faced with such figures, it is clear that ensuring enough and good quality nutrition from an early age is a priority for a healthy, productive world

population.

United Nations and the fight against hunger

The United Nations response to 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

¹ www.fao-ilo.org/fao-ilo-youth/fao-ilo-iffis/en/

² www.wfp.org/school-meals

³ http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/YDE_CAADP2011.pdf

⁴ www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/food/childhunger.shtml

⁵ www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/jme_unicef_who_wb.pdf





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; empowering the poor 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 range from educational programmes to the provision of access to resources such as microcredit, financing, and inputs such as seeds and fertilizers.

The UN agencies also work with agricultural youth associations and networks; support youth organizations, 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.

Since 2010, 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 given counsel by the largest international advisory group of civil society organizations, the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM). The CSM's Coordination Committee also incorporates designated youth focal points, representing the opinions and interests of youth civil society organizations (CSOs) allowing young people to contribute to the CFS process, by feeding into policy and strategy discussions and exchanging knowledge on practices and technologies.

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 Philippines, Côte 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 60 countries.⁶ 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 India, girls' attendance increased by 15 per cent, causing the completion of primary education at a rate of 30 per cent. The "Junior Farmer Field and Life School" (JFFL) programme, a collaboration between FAO and ILO, has trained over 25,000 rural youth in 20 countries since 2004.⁷ The objective is not only to provide vulnerable young people with livelihood options and ensure their long-term food security, but also to promote gender-equality by enabling youth to exercise the same responsibilities and developing their capacities to critically assess relationships. The strength of the JFFLS is its unique learning methodology and curriculum, which combines agricultural, life and

⁶ www.wfp.org/school-meals

⁷ http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/YDE_CAADP2011.pdf





entrepreneurship skills in an experiential and participatory learning approach uniquely suited to rural communities and low literacy levels.

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" (<http://www.1billionhungry.org/>) and the "Billion for a Billion" campaign (www.wfp.org/donate/1billion). Other educational resources include the "Students and Teachers" section of the WFP Web site (<http://www.wfp.org/students-and-teachers>) and FAO's "Feeding Minds" and "Right to Food" initiatives (www.feedingminds.org and <http://www.fao.org/righttofood/en/>).

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 inter-national forums 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 2013:
www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3434e/i3434e00.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:
http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/ERP_RuralYouth_en.htm





- YUNGA website
www.yunga-youth.weebly.com
- Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools:
www.fao-ilo.org/?id=20904
- World Food Programme Youth Outreach website:
www.wfp.org/students-and-teachers

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