

# 2008 Global Hunger Index (GHI)

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### ***About the GHI***

#### **Q: What is the GHI?**

**A:** The Global Hunger Index is a comprehensive measure of hunger and malnutrition.

#### **Q: How does the GHI work?**

**A:** The GHI ranks countries on three indicators and combines them into one. The three indicators are: proportion of people who are calorie deficient, child malnutrition prevalence, and child mortality rate. Countries are ranked on a 100-point scale, with 0 being the best score (no hunger) and 100 being the worst, though neither of these extremes is achieved in practice.

**Q: Why are these three specific indicators selected?**

**A:** The proportion of people who are calorie deficient is a key indicator of hunger. The Index also includes child undernutrition, because children are the most vulnerable to the effects of hunger. Since half of all child deaths are related to undernutrition, child mortality rates are an important measure of the impact of hunger.

**Q: How is the GHI different (better? more insightful?) than other global hunger reports by the FAO, etc.?**

**A:** By combining three indicators into one Index, we get a more comprehensive picture of the extent of hunger than if we simply looked at overall calorie deficiency or another single indicator.

**Q: How many countries were ranked in the 2008 GHI report?**

**A:** The 2008 GHI was calculated for 120 countries in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Excluding countries for which hunger was low, 88 countries were ranked in the 2008 GHI report.

**Q: How are the countries in the 2008 GHI report selected?**

**A:** The calculation of GHI scores is restricted to developing countries and countries in transition for which measuring hunger is considered most relevant and data on the three indicators are available.

**Q: What is different about this year's report compared to previous years?**

**A:** This year's GHI – the third to date – highlights the countries and regions facing the greatest risk in the current context of high food prices. The 2008 GHI is calculated using the latest data available on the three indicators. Both the 1990 and the 2008 GHI incorporate the new WHO Child Growth Standards for child malnutrition, which were revised in 2006.

**Q: What data sources are used for the three indicators in the 2008 GHI?**

**A:** Data about the proportion of people who are calorie deficient (2002-2004) are from FAO 2006 and authors' estimates. Data on child malnutrition (2001-2006) are from

WHO 2006 and authors' estimates. Data for child mortality for 2006 are from UNICEF 2006.

**Q: Are there any limitations of the 2008 GHI?**

**A:** The GHI is limited by the collection of data by various governments and international agencies. The GHI 2008 incorporates data only until 2006 — the most recent available. Therefore, the report offers a picture of the past, not the present. The report does not reflect the effects of recent increases in food and energy prices on hunger.

***Key Findings***

**Q: What is the main finding of the 2008 GHI?**

**A:** Thirty-three countries have levels of hunger that are alarming or extremely alarming, and world progress in hunger reduction since 1990 has been slow. South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa continue to suffer from high levels of hunger. South Asia has made rapid progress in combating hunger, but Sub-Saharan Africa has made only marginal progress.

**Q: Which countries have the highest (worst) 2008 GHI scores?**

**A:** The countries with the highest 2008 GHI scores are predominantly in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Burundi, Niger, and Sierra Leone at the bottom of the list.

**Q: Which countries have the lowest (best) 2008 GHI scores?**

**A:** Mauritius, Jamaica, Moldova, Cuba and Peru have the lowest 2008 GHI scores.

**Q: Which countries have made the most progress in reducing hunger since 1990, according to the 2008 GHI report?**

**A:**

Kuwait (most progress)

Peru

Syrian Arab Republic

Turkey

Mexico

Egypt

Vietnam

Thailand

Brazil

Iran

**Q: In which countries did hunger deteriorate between 1990 and 2008?**

**A:** The GHI increased in:

Democratic Republic of Congo (least progress)

North Korea

Swaziland

Guinea-Bissau

Zimbabwe

Burundi

Liberia

Comoros

Botswana

Zambia

**Q: Explain why South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa have similar poverty rates and GHI scores.**

**A:** Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia have the highest GHI scores and highest rates of poverty. The trends in poverty and hunger reduction in the two regions, however, are different in magnitude. South Asia's GHI and poverty rate reflect rapid progress since 1990 from very high levels, whereas in Sub-Saharan Africa the GHI has decreased much more slowly and poverty has been persistent.

**Q: What is causing the high GHI scores in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia?**

**A: Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia** share the highest regional GHI scores (23.3 and 23.0 respectively), but this stems from different sources.

In **South Asia**, the major problem is a high prevalence of child malnutrition, which stems from the lower nutritional and educational status of women, as well as poorly designed and poorly implemented nutrition and health programs, and inadequate water and sanitation services. In contrast, the high GHI in Sub-Saharan Africa is due to high child mortality and a high proportion of people who cannot meet their calorie requirements. Low government effectiveness, conflict, and political instability, as well as high rates of HIV/AIDS, have driven these two indicators.

**Q: What factors contribute to a high GHI score?**

**Income and Poverty Levels:** Countries with high levels of hunger are overwhelmingly low- or low-middle-income countries with high levels of poverty. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are the regions with the highest GHI scores and the highest poverty rates.

**War and Violent Conflict:** This has been a major cause of widespread poverty and food insecurity in most of the countries with high GHI scores.

**Lack of Participation:** All 15 countries with the highest GHI scores have been consistently rated by the Freedom House Index as non-free or partially free (political rights and civil liberties) in the period 2006–2008.

**Women's status (in South Asia):** Women's status is an important contributor to child malnutrition, which in turn is the major contributor to high GHI scores for South Asian countries.

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