

The number of undernourished people in the world remains unacceptably high at near the one billion mark despite an expected decline in 2010 for the first time since 1995. This decline is largely attributable to increased economic growth foreseen in 2010 – particularly in developing countries – and the fall in international food prices since 2008. The recent increase in food prices, if it persists, will create additional obstacles in the fight to further reduce hunger.

However, a total of 925 million people are still estimated to be undernourished in 2010, representing almost 16 percent of the population of developing countries. The fact that nearly a billion people remain hungry even after the recent food and financial crises have largely passed indicates a deeper structural problem that gravely threatens the ability to achieve internationally agreed goals on hunger reduction: the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and the 1996 World Food Summit goal. It is also evident that economic growth, while essential, will not be sufficient in itself to eliminate hunger within an acceptable period of time.

This edition of *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* focuses on people living in a group of countries in which the incidence of hunger is particularly high and persistent, and which face particular challenges in meeting the MDG targets – namely countries in protracted crisis. These countries are characterized by long-lasting or recurring crises, both natural and human-induced, and limited capacity to respond. In the 22 countries identified by this report as being in protracted crisis (or containing areas in protracted crisis), the most recent data show that more than 166 million people are undernourished, representing nearly 40 percent of the population of these countries and nearly 20 percent of all undernourished people in the world.

This unacceptably high degree of hunger results from many factors, including armed conflict and natural disasters, often in combination with weak governance or public administration, scarce resources, unsustainable livelihoods systems and breakdown of local institutions. Faced with so many obstacles, it is little wonder that protracted crises can become a self-perpetuating vicious cycle.

Protracted crises are not a series of one-off, short-lived phenomena, and they are not temporary interruptions from which countries easily return to a path towards longer-term development. Rather, they represent ongoing and fundamental threats to both lives and livelihoods, from which recovery may become progressively more difficult over time.

Protracted crises call for specially designed and targeted assistance. Assistance focused on the immediate need to save lives is critical in protracted crises – as it is in shorter-duration emergencies – but in protracted crises it is also essential to direct assistance towards underlying drivers and longer-term impacts. These may include conflict, disintegration of institutions, depletion of resources, loss of livelihoods and displacement of populations. There is thus an urgent need for assistance in protracted crises to protect livelihoods as well as lives, because this will help put the country on a constructive path to recovery.

Despite these additional needs, trends in development assistance give cause for concern: nearly two-thirds of countries in protracted crisis receive less development assistance per person than the average for least-developed countries. More importantly, agriculture receives only 3 to 4 percent of development and humanitarian assistance funds in countries in protracted crisis, despite accounting for 32 percent of their gross domestic product and supporting the livelihoods of 62 percent of their populations.

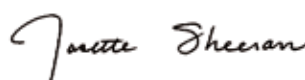
There are a number of things that we can do to improve the way we handle protracted crises, and provide more effective and lasting help for people living in these situations. Lessons from the experience of many countries show that building longer-term assistance activities on the framework of existing or revitalized local institutions offers the best hope of long-term sustainability and real improvement of food security. Social protection mechanisms, such as school meals, cash and food-for-work activities and vouchers, can make a vital difference in the long term. Food assistance contributes to building these social protection mechanisms – providing food as part of safety net programmes, stimulating markets through purchase of food aid supplies on local markets or through cash-based schemes – and helps to bridge the gap between traditional humanitarian assistance and longer-term development assistance. Efforts should also aim at achieving sustained, long-term improvements in the productive capacity of vulnerable countries and at the same time strengthening their resilience to shocks. Underlying all of these improved responses, a proper understanding of the nature of protracted crises themselves constitutes an essential step towards addressing their specific problems. These messages are developed further in the report, and provide the basis for specific

recommendations to support improved understanding and, most importantly, stronger and more effective response to help people in protracted crisis situations break the downward cycle.

The 2010 edition of *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* is again the product of close collaboration between our two organizations and other partners. Drawing on the expertise and knowledge of staff from both organizations has brought a fresh perspective to the issues of food insecurity in countries in protracted crisis and has provided a platform for a new vision on combining the strengths of humanitarian assistance with longer-term development assistance. We hope that this report will shape the response by decision-makers at local, national, regional and international levels to improve food security in protracted crises, and ultimately, to save lives, strengthen communities and help build a more hopeful, prosperous and self-sufficient future.



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The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2010 was prepared under the overall leadership of Hafez Ghanem, Assistant Director-General, and the guidance of the management team of the Economic and Social Development Department. The technical coordination of the publication was carried out by Kostas Stamoulis and Keith Wiebe of the Agricultural Development Economics Division (ESA) while the technical editors were Luca Alinovi and Luca Russo of ESA and Dan Maxwell of the Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. The staff of the Statistics Division (ESS) generated the underlying data on undernourishment.

This is the second year that SOFI has been jointly prepared by FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP). Nicholas Crawford and Sarah Laughton of the Policy, Planning and Strategy Division of WFP acted as technical coordinators for all contributions from WFP and provided valuable insights and advice as drafts were reviewed.

The chapter "Undernourishment around the world in 2010" was prepared by the Economic and Social Development Department with key technical contributions from Luca Alinovi and Erdgin Mane (ESA).

In the chapter "Countries in protracted crisis: what are they and why do they deserve special attention", the section "Common features of countries in protracted crisis" was prepared by Dan Maxwell with contributions from Luca Alinovi and Luca Russo. The Global Information and Early Warning Systems (GIEWS) data considered in this chapter for the selection of countries in protracted crisis were provided by Kisan Gunjal of the Trade and Markets Division (EST). The section "How livelihoods adapt in protracted crises" was provided by Margie Buchanan-Smith, Susan Jaspars and Sara Pantuliano of Overseas Development Institute (ODI). The section "Gender issues in protracted crises" was contributed by Gabriel Rugalema and Libor Stloukal with the support of Carina Hirsch and Joseph Ssentongo of the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESW). The section "Learning from and building on community responses" was written by Karel Callens of the Policy and Programme Development Support Division (TCS), with contributions from Kevin Gallagher (FAO Sierra Leone), Luca Russo (ESA), Rene Salazar (SEARICE Sierra Leone) and Oriane Turot (ESA).

In the chapter "National and International responses to protracted crises" the section "Analysis of aid flows to countries in protracted crisis" was written by Luca Russo and Winnie Bell (ESA) with statistics, analysis and support provided by Daniel Coppard and Asma Zubairi of Development Initiatives. The section "Humanitarian food assistance in protracted crises" was provided by Nicholas Crawford and Sarah Laughton, both of WFP, with an additional contribution (Box 6) by Saskia de Pee, Martin W. Bloem and Tina van den Briel on behalf of WFP. The section "Towards social protection in protracted crises" was written by Ugo Gentilini of the Policy, Planning and Strategy Division of WFP. The section "Using short-term responses to support longer-term recovery in agriculture and food security" was prepared by Jennifer Nyberg, Neil Marsland, Lucia Palombi and Dick Trenchard of the Emergencies Operations and Rehabilitation Divisions (TCE). The final section, "Success stories: the example of Mozambique", was provided by Karel Callens (TCS), in collaboration with Margarida David e Silva and Christopher Tanner (FAO Mozambique).

The final chapter "Towards ensuring food security in protracted crises: recommended actions" was prepared by Luca Alinovi and Dan Maxwell with contributions from Luca Russo. Contributions to Box 12 were provided by Nick Haan and Zoé Druilhe (ESA).

Ricardo Sibrian produced Table 1 of the Technical annex with support from Cinzia Cerri, Seevalingum Ramasawmy (ESS) and Erdgin Mane (ESA). Initial projections were contributed by Rafik Mahjoubi and Panagiotis Karfakis (ESA). The editorial process benefited through invaluable comments, suggestions and inputs from Jean Balié (ESA), Boubaker BenBelhassen (ODG), André Croppenstedt (ESA), David Dawe (ESA), Bénédicte de la Brière (ESA), Xiaoning Gong (ESS), David Hallam (EST), Arif Husain (WFP), Henri Josserand (EST), David Marshall (ESS), Steven Were Omamo (WFP), Terri Raney (ESA), Alexander Sarris (EST), Shahla Shapouri of the Economic and Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Dick Trenchard (TCE), Jeff Tschirley (TCE) and Marcela Villarreal (ESW). The readability of the report was greatly enhanced by Paul Neate, who provided English editorial support. Daniela Farinelli provided excellent administrative support throughout the process. Helpful research and support was provided throughout the writing process by Lavinia Antonaci, Winnie Bell, Marco D'Errico, Erdgin Mane and Denise Melvin.

The language editing, graphic and layout services were provided by Visiontime. Translations and printing services were provided by the Meeting Programming and Documentation Service of the FAO Corporate Services, Human Resources and Finance Department.