An Outlook on Hunger to 2030

Executive Summary

Image by Niclas Ingvarsson

The number of people in the world suffering from hunger is usually cited as 795 million, a figure based on FAO's estimates. While many question accuracy and utility of this measure, it is very difficult to estimate global hunger and this is one of the most reliable. However, this metric defines hunger as "chronic undernourishment", a caloric deficiency lasting greater than one year. At Action Against Hunger we define hunger as a "state of deprivation according to which an individual cannot satisfy his/her basic food needs (quantity and quality), required for a healthy and active life." Our definition goes further to additionally include transitory hunger, lasting less than a year, as can occur as the rest of natural disaster or conflict. It also includes the nutritional quality of food, rather than just calories, as it is essential to human health and wellbeing. The total number of people suffering from all forms of hunger could be far greater than 795 million.

The objective

The aim of the report is to provide insight into the factors that drive hunger and their trajectories through 2030, using structured analysis techniques that help to unravel their complex web of interactions.

A history of commitments

Since the 1990s, the international community has set forth three principal commitments to combating hunger. The World Food Summit (1996), Millennium Development Goals (2000), and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015). While great progress has

made in reducing global hunger, the situation has not improved in many parts of the world and hunger will continue to be an issue for many people through 2030.

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Identifying trends

A number of heavy trends are identified, that will predictably shape hunger over the reference period, including:

- Climate Change
- Natural disasters
- Urbanization
- Population growth and structure
- Economic inequality
- Market integration
- Access to markets
- Financial capital
- Humanitarian and development assistance
- Social exclusion/discrimination
- Agricultural productivity
- Agricultural dependence (as share of GDP)
- International agribusinesses
- Land tenure

Summary of scenarios

Strong & Equitable Growth	Rise of the Rest	Slow & Fragile Growth	Deepening Divide	System Shock
Hunger decreases globally due to more a equitable form of Western-led development	This scenario is based on growth coming from the strong, and at times tumultuous, development of the non-Western world.	This scenario unfolds along the lines of business as usual, whereby no major changes in trajectory occur.	The negative trends we witness today become more dominant, threatening to halt the progress made in ending hunger.	A series of shocks occur at a global level, causing hunger to become even worse of a crisis.

Key drivers

The following key drivers with uncertain trajectories can be more successfully redirected through interventions to affect positive change:

- Conflict
- Women's empowerment
- Food policy
- Energy policy
- Climate change policy and adaptation
- Purchasing power
- Commodity prices
- Trade

5 scenarios to 2030

The possible ways these key drivers could shape the near future were used to develop 5 scenarios for how the world might look like in 2030 with regard to global hunger. These are intended for leaders to use, in decision-making and strategic planning processes. Two scenarios show a reduction in global hunger, one from more equitable Western-led growth, and the other from growth from the developing world. A business as usual scenario describes a continued slow reduction in hunger. The remaining two scenarios outline situations where global hunger could worsen, one is based on deepening global inequality, and the other through a major economic crisis.

Quantitative modelling

A quantitiative analysis of hunger shows that different factors (the nine key drivers previously mentioned) affect different hunger related metrics such as undernourishment, stunting, wasting, and child mortality. So different factors could be targeted for intervention depending on the particular issues facing a country or region. For example, women's empowerment and conflict reduction were the most relevant factors in reducing wasting. While this is preliminary work, it suggests that we should not treat hunger as a problem with a one size fits all solution.

Recommendations:

- The key drivers identified -- conflict, women's empowerment, food policy, energy policy, climate change policy and adaptation, purchasing power, commodity prices, and trade -- make for good targets for programming to maximize its impact.

- The 5 scenarios presented in this report should be used to help us think about the future and in so doing, make more informed decisions today as we plan for the years to come.

- Committed, long-term programming will be necessary to affect the heavy trends associated with hunger. By combining these long-term efforts with the immediate gains that can be made by targeting the key drivers of hunger, we can achieve substantive results by 2030 and ultimately bring about a world free from hunger.

Find the full report on our website: iaran.org/hunger

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