

2023

Synopsis

GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX

THE POWER OF YOUTH IN SHAPING FOOD SYSTEMS

October 2023



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Multiplying Crises and Stagnating Progress against Hunger

The 2023 Global Hunger Index (GHI) shows that after many years of advancement up to 2015, progress against hunger worldwide remains largely at a standstill. With just seven years remaining to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the compounding impacts of climate change, conflicts, economic shocks, the global pandemic, and the Russia-Ukraine war have exacerbated social and economic inequalities and slowed or reversed previous progress in reducing hunger in many countries.

Progress on Reducing Hunger Has Largely Stalled

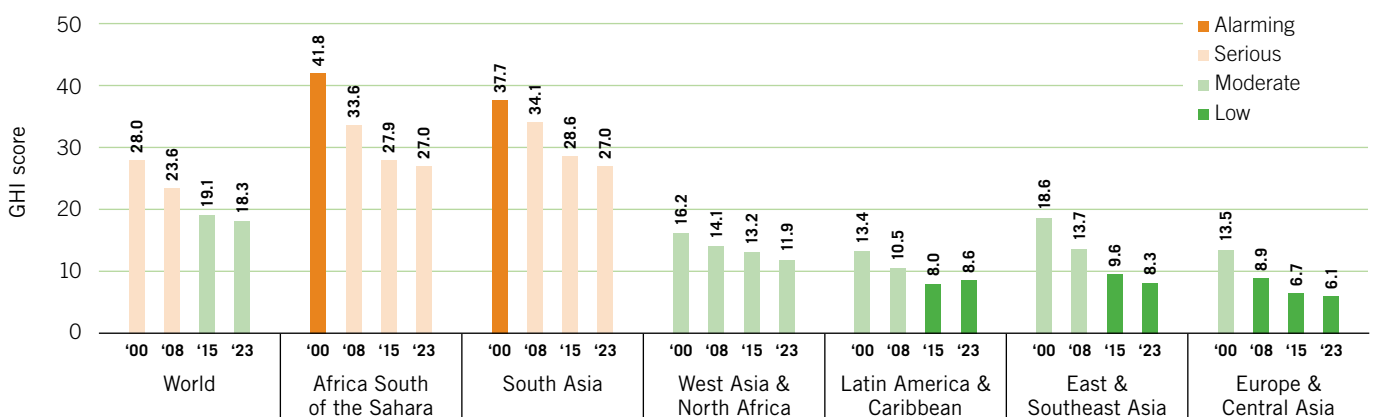
This year's Global Hunger Index (GHI) shows that, though some individual countries have made significant headway, little progress has been made in reducing hunger on a global scale since 2015. The 2023 GHI score for the world is 18.3, considered *moderate*—less than one point below the 2015 GHI global score of 19.1. Furthermore, since 2017 the prevalence of undernourishment, one of the indicators used in the calculation of GHI scores, has been on the rise, and the number of undernourished people has climbed from 572 million to about 735 million. South Asia and Africa South of the Sahara are the world regions with the highest hunger levels, each

with a GHI score of 27.0, indicating *serious* hunger. For the past two decades, these two regions have consistently had the highest levels of hunger. While both regions achieved considerable progress between 2000 and 2015, progress since 2015 has nearly halted, mirroring the trend seen for the world as a whole.

Hunger Remains *Serious* or *Alarming* in 43 Countries

According to the 2023 GHI scores and provisional designations, 9 countries have *alarming* levels of hunger: Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar,

FIGURE 1 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL 2000, 2008, 2015, AND 2023 GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX SCORES



Source: Authors.

Note: See Appendix A in the full report for data sources. The regional and global GHI scores are calculated using regional and global aggregates for each indicator as well as the formula described in Appendix A. The regional and global aggregates for each indicator are calculated as population-weighted averages, using the indicator values reported in Appendix B. For countries lacking undernourishment data, provisional estimates provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) were used to calculate aggregates only but are not reported in Appendix B. Appendix D shows which countries are included in each region.

Niger, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen. In a further 34 countries, hunger is considered *serious*. Many countries have seen hunger worsen in recent years: since 2015, hunger has increased in 18 countries with *moderate*, *serious*, or *alarming* 2023 GHI scores. At the current pace, 58 countries will not achieve *low* hunger by 2030, according to GHI estimates. Nonetheless, there are also examples of progress. Seven countries whose 2000 GHI scores indicated *extremely alarming* hunger levels—Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Niger, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Zambia—have all made progress since then. Another seven countries have achieved reductions of five points or more between their 2015 and 2023 GHI scores: Bangladesh, Chad, Djibouti, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Mozambique, Nepal, and Timor-Leste. These reductions in hunger are particularly impressive given the challenges facing the world and the stagnation in hunger levels at the global level in recent years.

The Fight against Hunger Is Impeded by Overlapping Crises

Overlapping crises, including the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and multiple violent conflicts and climate disasters around the world, have pushed some countries into food crises, while other countries have been more resilient. Low- and middle-income countries, which tend to be more vulnerable to crises, have been hit particularly hard relative to high-income countries. The extent to which countries are able to recover from shocks depends largely on underlying factors, such as state fragility, inequality, poor governance, and chronic poverty. Given that the world is expected to be subject to increased shocks in future years, particularly as a result of climate change, the effectiveness of disaster preparedness and response is likely to become increasingly central to the outlook on food security.

BOX 1.1 ABOUT THE GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX SCORES

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool for comprehensively measuring and tracking hunger at global, regional, and national levels over recent years and decades. GHI scores are calculated based on a formula combining four indicators that together capture the multidimensional nature of hunger:



Undernourishment: the share of the population that is undernourished, reflecting insufficient caloric intake



Child wasting: the share of children under the age of five who are wasted (low weight-for-height), reflecting *acute* undernutrition



Child stunting: the share of children under the age of five who are stunted (low height-for-age), reflecting *chronic* undernutrition



Child mortality: the mortality rate of children under the age of five

In 2023, data were assessed for the 136 countries that met the criteria for inclusion in the GHI, and GHI scores were calculated for 125 of those countries based on data from 2018 to 2022. The data used to calculate GHI scores come from published UN sources (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation), the World Bank, and the Demographic and Health Surveys Program. Of the 136 countries assessed, 11 did not have sufficient data to allow for the calculation of a 2023 GHI score, but provisional designations of the severity of hunger were assigned to 5 of those countries based on other published data. For the remaining 6 countries, data were insufficient to allow for either calculating GHI scores or assigning provisional designations.

The GHI categorizes and ranks countries on a 100-point scale: values of less than 10.0 reflect *low* hunger; values from 10.0 to 19.9 reflect *moderate* hunger; values from 20.0 to 34.9 indicate *serious* hunger; values from 35.0 to 49.9 are *alarming*; and values of 50.0 or more are *extremely alarming* (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2 NUMBER OF COUNTRIES BY HUNGER LEVEL ACCORDING TO 2023 GHI SCORES

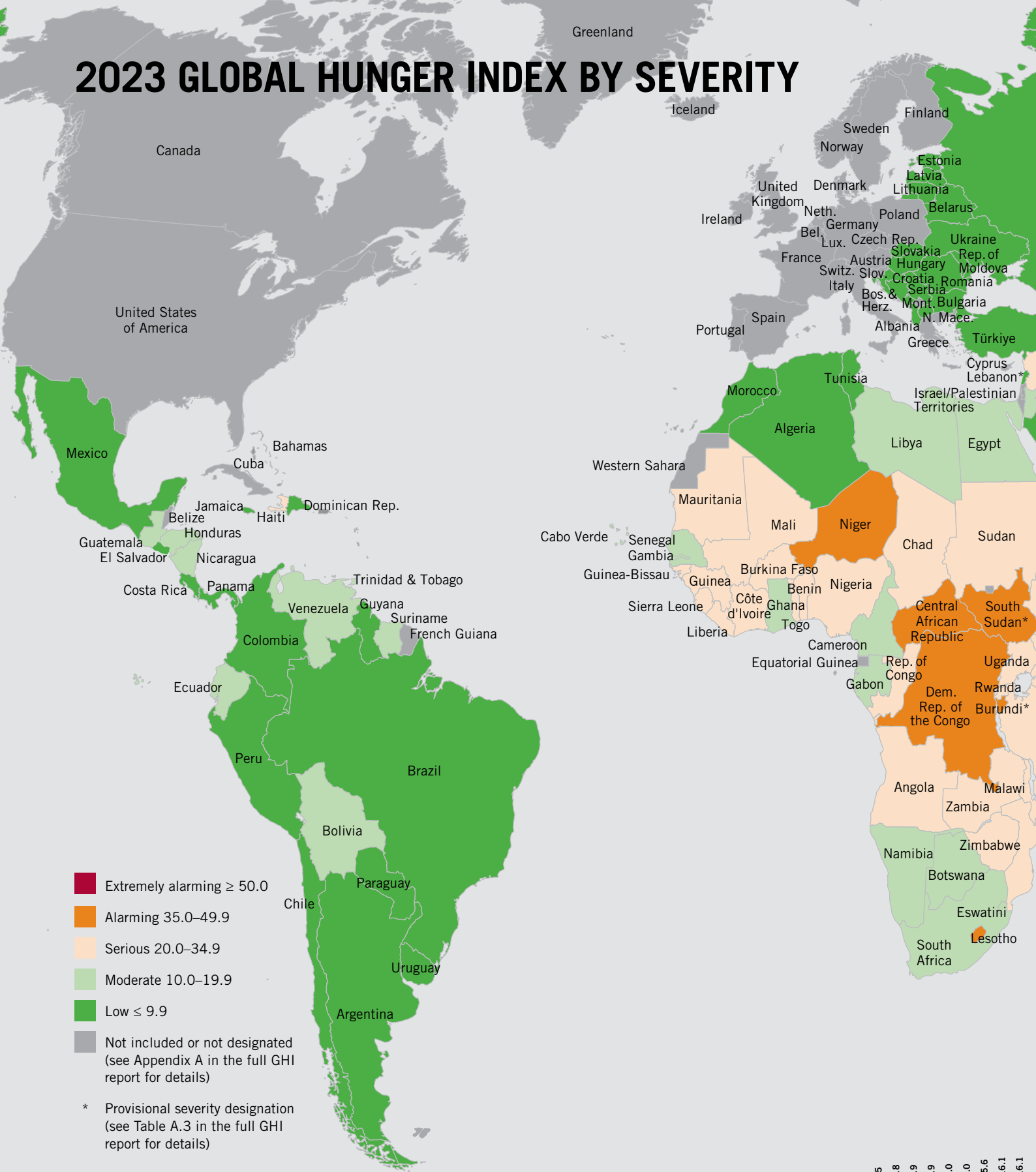
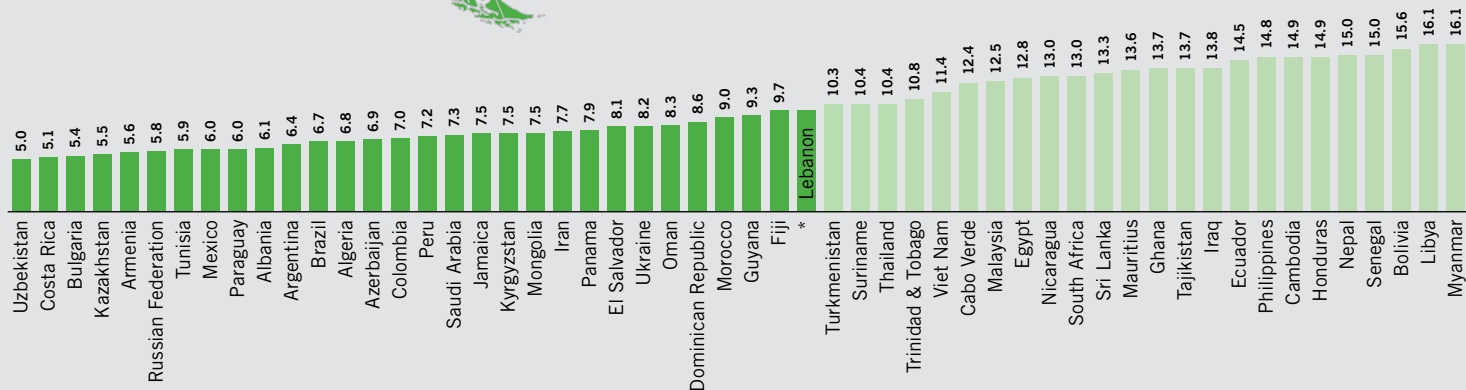


Source: Authors.

Note: These tallies reflect the 125 countries for which GHI scores were calculated based on 2018–2022 data and the 5 countries that were assigned GHI designations on a provisional basis (1 as *low*, 1 as *moderate*, and 3 as *alarming*).

2023 GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX BY SEVERITY

- Extremely alarming ≥ 50.0
- Alarming 35.0–49.9
- Serious 20.0–34.9
- Moderate 10.0–19.9
- Low ≤ 9.9
- Not included or not designated
(see Appendix A in the full GHI report for details)
- * Provisional severity designation
(see Table A.3 in the full GHI report for details)





Source: Authors.

Note: For the 2023 GHI, data on the proportion of undernourished are for 2020–2022; data on child stunting and wasting are for the latest year in the period 2018–2022 for which data are available; and data on child mortality are for 2021. GHI scores were not calculated for countries for which data were not available and for countries that did not meet the GHI inclusion criteria; see Appendix A for details.

The boundaries, names, and designations used on the map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of Welthungerhilfe (WHH) or Concern Worldwide concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries.

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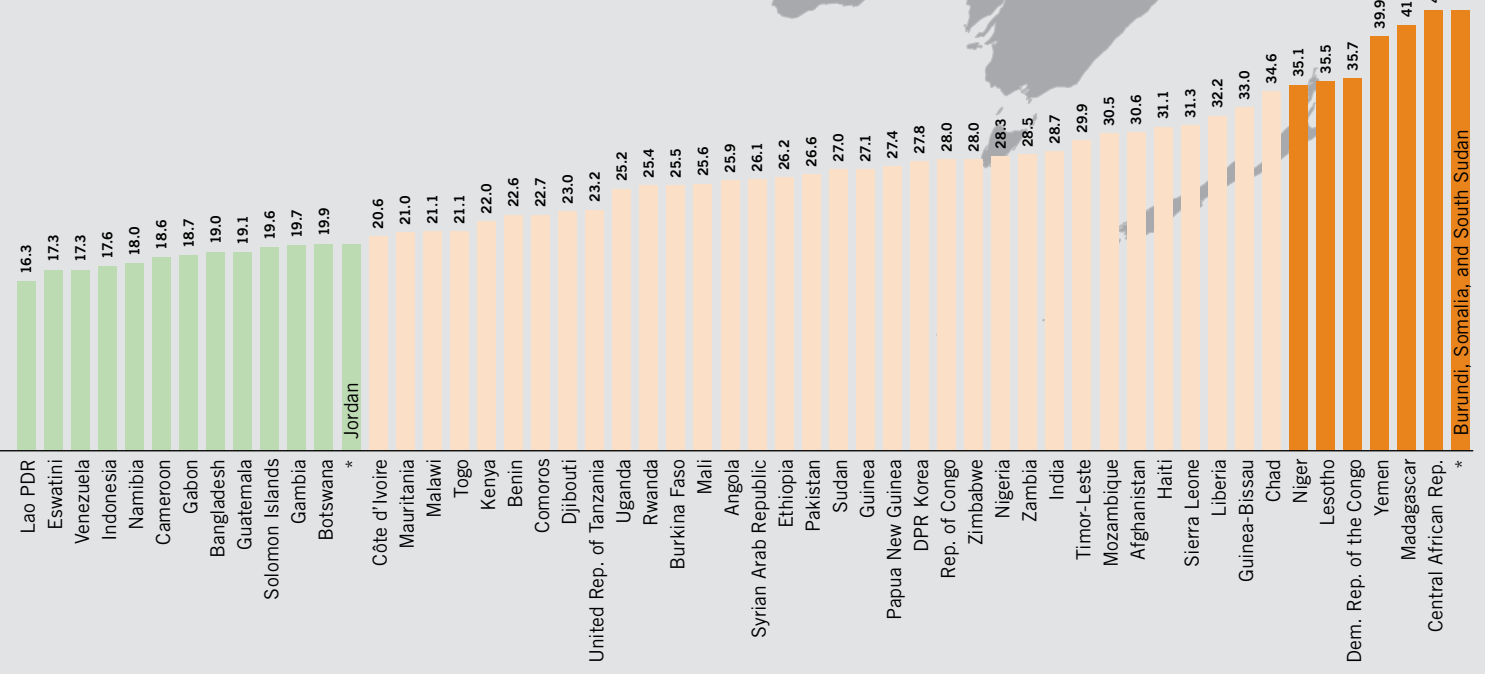


TABLE 1.1 GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX SCORES BY 2023 GHI RANK

Note: As always, rankings and index scores from this table cannot be accurately compared to rankings and index scores from previous reports (see Appendix A in the full GHI report).

Rank ¹	Country	2000	2008	2015	2023	Rank ¹	Country	2000	2008	2015	2023
2023 GHI scores less than 5, collectively ranked 1–20 ²	Belarus	<5	<5	<5	<5	69	Senegal	34.3	21.8	18.0	15.0
	Bosnia & Herzegovina	9.4	6.5	5.3	<5	71	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	27.6	22.1	14.7	15.6
	Chile	<5	<5	<5	<5	72	Libya	16.6	12.8	18.5	16.1
	China	13.4	7.1	<5	<5	72	Myanmar	40.2	29.7	17.3	16.1
	Croatia	<5	<5	<5	<5	74	Lao PDR	44.3	30.4	21.8	16.3
	Estonia	<5	<5	<5	<5	75	Eswatini	24.7	25.0	19.3	17.3
	Georgia	12.1	6.6	<5	<5	75	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	14.6	8.8	11.1	17.3
	Hungary	6.7	5.6	5.0	<5	77	Indonesia	26.0	28.5	21.9	17.6
	Kuwait	<5	<5	<5	<5	78	Namibia	26.4	29.2	22.2	18.0
	Latvia	<5	<5	<5	<5	79	Cameroon	36.0	29.0	20.7	18.6
	Lithuania	7.6	5.1	<5	<5	80	Gabon	21.0	20.2	17.3	18.7
	Moldova (Republic of)	18.6	17.0	<5	<5	81	Bangladesh	33.8	30.6	26.2	19.0
	Montenegro	—	5.2	<5	<5	82	Guatemala	28.6	24.0	20.6	19.1
	North Macedonia	7.5	5.3	5.3	<5	83	Solomon Islands	20.2	18.2	23.4	19.6
	Romania	7.9	5.8	5.1	<5	84	Gambia	29.2	24.9	24.3	19.7
	Serbia	—	5.8	<5	<5	85	Botswana	27.2	26.8	22.2	19.9
	Slovakia	7.2	5.7	5.7	<5	*	Jordan	—	—	—	10–19.9*
Türkiye	10.1	5.7	<5	<5	86	Côte d'Ivoire	32.5	36.0	22.1	20.6	
United Arab Emirates	<5	6.8	5.6	<5	87	Mauritania	30.5	18.8	22.4	21.0	
Uruguay	7.6	5.3	<5	<5	88	Malawi	43.1	29.2	22.9	21.1	
21	Uzbekistan	24.2	14.9	5.9	5.0	88	Togo	38.2	29.6	25.7	21.1
22	Costa Rica	6.9	<5	<5	5.1	90	Kenya	36.7	29.5	22.5	22.0
23	Bulgaria	8.6	7.7	7.3	5.4	91	Benin	33.9	26.4	23.3	22.6
24	Kazakhstan	11.3	11.0	5.7	5.5	92	Comoros	38.2	30.4	24.0	22.7
25	Armenia	19.2	11.7	6.3	5.6	93	Djibouti	44.4	33.9	29.6	23.0
26	Russian Federation	10.2	5.8	6.3	5.8	94	Tanzania (United Rep. of)	40.7	30.2	24.6	23.2
27	Tunisia	10.3	7.4	6.4	5.9	95	Uganda	35.0	29.0	27.8	25.2
28	Mexico	10.2	9.9	6.7	6.0	96	Rwanda	49.7	33.1	28.3	25.4
28	Paraguay	11.8	10.1	5.1	6.0	97	Burkina Faso	45.0	33.7	28.0	25.5
30	Albania	16.4	15.5	8.8	6.1	98	Mali	41.9	32.2	27.1	25.6
31	Argentina	6.8	5.5	5.3	6.4	99	Angola	64.9	42.9	25.7	25.9
32	Brazil	11.7	6.8	5.4	6.7	100	Syrian Arab Republic	13.9	16.2	23.9	26.1
33	Algeria	14.7	11.1	8.5	6.8	101	Ethiopia	53.3	40.5	26.5	26.2
34	Azerbaijan	24.9	15.0	9.3	6.9	102	Pakistan	36.7	31.3	28.8	26.6
35	Colombia	11.0	10.2	7.5	7.0	103	Sudan	—	—	28.5	27.0
36	Peru	20.6	14.0	7.7	7.2	104	Guinea	40.2	29.3	28.4	27.1
37	Saudi Arabia	12.3	10.6	9.1	7.3	105	Papua New Guinea	33.5	32.9	28.5	27.4
38	Jamaica	8.5	8.6	8.6	7.5	106	DPR Korea	39.5	30.4	24.8	27.8
38	Kyrgyzstan	17.5	12.9	9.1	7.5	107	Congo (Republic of)	34.6	32.4	26.2	28.0
38	Mongolia	29.9	16.7	7.4	7.5	107	Zimbabwe	35.5	30.7	27.6	28.0
41	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	13.7	8.8	7.7	7.7	109	Nigeria	39.9	31.2	27.8	28.3
42	Panama	18.6	13.0	8.7	7.9	110	Zambia	53.2	44.9	33.2	28.5
43	El Salvador	14.7	12.0	9.8	8.1	111	India	38.4	35.5	29.2	28.7
44	Ukraine	13.0	7.1	7.1	8.2	112	Timor-Leste	—	46.5	35.9	29.9
45	Oman	14.8	11.2	11.2	8.3	113	Mozambique	48.2	35.6	37.0	30.5
46	Dominican Republic	15.1	13.9	9.4	8.6	114	Afghanistan	49.6	36.5	30.4	30.6
47	Morocco	15.8	12.2	9.1	9.0	115	Haiti	40.3	40.2	30.1	31.1
48	Guyana	17.2	15.1	11.3	9.3	116	Sierra Leone	57.4	45.4	32.8	31.3
49	Fiji	9.3	8.6	10.4	9.7	117	Liberia	48.0	36.4	32.9	32.2
*	Lebanon	—	—	—	0–9.9*	118	Guinea-Bissau	37.7	29.6	33.3	33.0
50	Turkmenistan	20.3	14.5	11.4	10.3	119	Chad	50.6	49.9	40.1	34.6
51	Suriname	15.1	11.0	10.6	10.4	120	Niger	53.3	39.5	35.2	35.1
51	Thailand	18.7	12.2	9.4	10.4	121	Lesotho	32.5	27.8	30.6	35.5
53	Trinidad & Tobago	11.0	10.7	10.7	10.8	122	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	46.3	40.2	36.4	35.7
54	Viet Nam	26.1	20.1	14.5	11.4	123	Yemen	41.4	37.8	42.1	39.9
55	Cabo Verde	15.7	12.4	14.6	12.4	124	Madagascar	42.4	36.6	38.9	41.0
56	Malaysia	15.4	13.7	12.0	12.5	125	Central African Republic	48.2	43.7	44.0	42.3
57	Egypt	16.4	16.9	15.2	12.8	*	Somalia	63.6	59.2	—	35–49.9*
58	Nicaragua	22.3	17.5	14.6	13.0	*	Burundi and South Sudan	—	—	—	35–49.9*
58	South Africa	18.0	16.8	13.9	13.0						
60	Sri Lanka	21.7	17.6	17.1	13.3						
61	Mauritius	15.4	13.9	13.5	13.6						
62	Ghana	28.5	22.2	15.7	13.7						
62	Tajikistan	40.1	29.9	16.9	13.7						
64	Iraq	23.6	20.3	16.5	13.8						
65	Ecuador	19.7	18.1	11.7	14.5						
66	Philippines	25.0	19.1	18.3	14.8						
67	Cambodia	41.4	25.6	19.0	14.9						
67	Honduras	22.0	19.2	15.0	14.9						
69	Nepal	37.2	29.0	21.3	15.0						

■ = low ■ = moderate ■ = serious ■ = alarming ■ = extremely alarming
 Note: For the 2023 GHI report, data were assessed for 136 countries. Out of these, there were sufficient data to calculate 2023 GHI scores for and rank 125 countries (by way of comparison, 121 countries were ranked in the 2022 report).
¹ Ranked according to 2023 GHI scores. Countries that have identical 2023 scores are given the same ranking (for example, Mexico and Paraguay are both ranked 28th).
² The 20 countries with 2023 GHI scores of less than 5 are not assigned individual ranks, but rather are collectively ranked 1–20. Differences between their scores are minimal.
 — = Data are not available or not presented. Some countries did not exist in their present borders in the given year or reference period.
 * For 11 countries, individual scores could not be calculated and ranks could not be determined owing to lack of data. Where possible, these countries were provisionally designated by severity: 1 as *low*, 1 as *moderate*, and 3 as *alarming*. For 6 countries, provisional designations could not be established (see Table A.3 in Appendix A in the full GHI report).

BEYOND 2030: YOUTH, FOOD SYSTEMS, AND A FUTURE OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Guest essay by **Wendy Geza and Mendy Ndlovu**

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Young people are emerging into adulthood in a context of unequal and unsustainable food systems that fail to deliver food and nutrition security and are highly vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. Youth not only suffer from the failures of current food systems but stand to inherit these troubled food systems and their looming challenges.

Current Food Systems Are Largely Failing Youth

The current global youth population, at 1.2 billion, is the largest in history. These youth are in line to inherit food systems that are failing on multiple fronts. At the most basic level, current food systems are not providing all people with sufficient nutritious food. Approximately 735 million people were affected by hunger in 2022, and more than 3.1 billion could not afford nutritionally rich diets. While global hunger figures do not report specifically on hunger among youth, we know food insecurity and undernutrition are highest and most persistent in South Asia and Africa South of the Sahara, which are also home to the largest share of the youth population. Gender also plays a role in youth's experiences of hunger and undernutrition: women and girls make up about 60 percent of severely hungry people globally.

At the same time, for many young people farming is considered "an occupation of last resort and low productivity." They have little interest in agricultural activities because of a lack of support, innovation, and education and a perception that agriculture does not offer opportunities for prosperity or self-realization.

The Loss of Food Sovereignty Weakens Food Systems

We, as young people in our 20s, see the lack of food sovereignty as one of the greatest weaknesses of current food systems. The concept of food sovereignty draws attention to four critical factors: people and their rights, the quality of food produced, cultural aspects, and environmental well-being. The loss of food sovereignty, particularly in the world's low- and middle-income countries, has been hastened by several major factors, including colonialism, poor governance, the intensive capitalization of food systems, the widespread growth of monocultures in agriculture, and some of the negative outcomes of the Green Revolution. As a result, indigenous and local farming and knowledge systems are under widespread threat.

The consequent lack of food sovereignty has contributed to multiple challenges, including widespread food and nutrition insecurity and adverse health outcomes. Although food-security-specific interventions, such as the promotion of major high-yield food crops, pushed down global hunger between 1990 and 2017, both the share and the number of hungry people have stagnated or risen since then. This reversal underscores the urgent need for a new direction in food systems transformation.

Locally resilient, diverse, innovative, and less input-intensive smallholder farming systems may—if they are supported, promoted, and extended—constitute a sustainable solution to current food and nutrition challenges and a path out of poverty and hunger for vulnerable populations. Youth, as the inheritors of injustice, have the potential to drive these innovations.

Empowering Youth by Driving toward Food Sovereignty

There is a long way to go to ensure the meaningful participation of young people in policy processes that can influence food systems and promote food sovereignty. A recent increased focus on young voices in policy dialogues has not necessarily translated into meaningful impact, as youth participation in actual decision-making remains superficial and limited.

Leaders at all levels have a moral and economic imperative to tap into young people's energy, creativity, and dynamism to transform food systems. Youth can help advance the shift toward food sovereignty and the progressive realization of the right to food in several ways. They can innovate to transform food systems to align with their local context and deliver improved nutrition and food security. They can help reinstate diverse indigenous and traditional cropping systems that are currently under threat and cultivate indigenous and neglected crops to create more resilient, context-specific food systems.

In addition, leaders must pursue, and youth must demand, investments in sectors that can improve young people's well-being, including health, education, skills development, and social connectivity. High-quality education and training not only enable youth to become more productive and employable but serve as foundations for personal development and well-being, help fight poverty and unemployment, promote equality, and positively influence individuals' lives while benefiting society.

To build such food systems and engage youth for generations to come, leaders at all levels should ensure that the direction and targets of policy go further than 2030 to look toward 2050 and beyond. As they embark on this long-term pathway, they must engage youth in policy-making to promote inclusivity, equity, and sustainability. At the same time, young people must seize opportunities to participate in food systems governance, advocate for social justice, promote gender equity, protect every human's right to food and food sovereignty, spur climate change action, and integrate their perspectives into policy to enable just, sustainable food systems for all.

Note: The views expressed in the guest essay are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of Welthungerhilfe (WHH) or Concern Worldwide.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The world is confronting overlapping crises that are exacerbating social and economic inequalities and reversing progress against hunger. Large demographic groups such as women and youth are carrying the burden of these crises but are underrepresented in policy discussions and decisions on food systems that affect them.

These recommendations highlight the interest of youth in shaping their future as well as their right to do so. Generational and gender justice must underpin equitable, sustainable, and resilient food systems that fulfill the right to adequate food for current and future generations.

1 Put the right to food for all at the heart of food systems transformation.

- The right to food must be central to food systems policies, programs, and governance processes. It should be enshrined in national law and supported by accountability mechanisms. People need to be able to define their own food systems so they can realize their right to food in ways that are socially, culturally, and ecologically appropriate within their own local context.
- Youth must play a central role in making decisions that affect them. Policy- and decision-making on all governance levels needs to meaningfully reflect diverse youth voices.
- Young people's participation in designing, implementing, and monitoring food systems policies and programs should be expanded to reflect the size of their demographic cohort, to incorporate their long-term perspective, and to tap into their creativity and dynamism.

2 Invest in young people's capacities to be leaders in food systems transformation.

- To engage in food systems, youth need greater access to education and training, skills development, and tailored capacity building related to agriculture and other food system activities. Therefore, additional resources should be invested in the relevant curricula, teachers, and training institutions.
- Investments in the health and nutrition status of youth, especially young women, are critical to the well-being of the future population. These investments, both financial and political, should include support for affordable, locally sourced, healthy foods. Governments need to provide young people with nutrition edu-

cation and employ tax and regulatory policies to support healthy diets and discourage the consumption of ultra-processed food.

- Governments must improve young people's access to productive resources. Reforms to land and property rights are needed to enable young people to profitably and sustainably engage in farming. Context-appropriate, youth-sensitive credit and financial services should be introduced to provide youth with opportunities to save and borrow. Policies and programs should also seek to boost young people's access to agricultural inputs for participation in the food system.
- Social and economic programs should incorporate gender equity in order to remove barriers to education and employment for young women and to help reduce their burden of unpaid care work.

3 Invest in sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems to ensure they offer viable and attractive livelihoods to young people.

- Governments must support and diversify agricultural production that integrates indigenous and traditional knowledge as well as modern technologies, mechanization, and irrigation to make farming more profitable and less laborious. This may include enhancing equitable access to digital tools, such as weather forecasts and financial, advisory, and market services.
- Governments and donors should invest in diversified rural economies to improve social well-being, strengthen service delivery, and promote youth inclusion. Enterprise policies should enable social innovations and encourage investments in the creation of non-agricultural jobs within food systems. By investing in local and regional markets as well as pre- and postharvest activities such as processing, storage, marketing, and transport, governments can help localize and transform food systems at all levels.
- Governments must improve employment conditions and ensure fair wages within food systems so young people will see agriculture and food systems as sectors where they can profitably earn their livelihoods and build their careers.
- Current food systems policies and investments are failing to address the intergenerational cycle of hunger in many parts of the world. Solutions should embrace a long-term perspective that extends beyond 2030 and reflects young people's aspirations for a just, sustainable, and food- and nutrition-secure future.

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A Peer-Reviewed Publication

The editorial deadline for this publication was August 31, 2023. The deadlines for the data used in the calculation of the GHI scores were earlier.

The boundaries, names, and designations used on the map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of Welthungerhilfe (WHH) or Concern Worldwide concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries.

Photo credit: Melanie (age 18) works in a plant that processes pepper and ginger in Farafangana, Madagascar. Many of the plant employees are single mothers, and this employment provides them with a stable income to feed their children. Laura Thiesbrummel/Welthungerhilfe, 2018.

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