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Mid-term Review of Achieving the World Food Summit Target 1990 - 2003

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Abstract

This report provides a mid-term review of the progress in hunger reduction that has been achieved since the 1996 World Food Summit (WFS). The progress has been assessed using two indicators: the absolute number of undernourished people (adopted by FAO) and the proportion of undernourished people (adopted by UNDP). The WFS sets the hunger target as reducing the absolute number of undernourished people to half its level in 1990-92 by 2015. On the other hand, the Millennium Development Goal 1 sets the hunger target as reducing the proportion of undernourished people to half its level in 1990-92 by 2015. The key observation is that, independent of the indicator adopted, progress has been slow and uneven across regions. Factors behind hunger are complex and need to be addressed simultaneously at both national and household levels. Overall economic growth and increased agricultural productivity play a crucial role in the reduction of the number and the proportion of undernourished people.

Key words: World Food Summit Plan of Action, Millennium Development Goal, food security, hunger, poverty

1. Introduction

The 1996 World Food Summit (WFS), under Commitment 7, Objective 7.3(h), recommended that governments in partnership with relevant international organizations and all actors of civil society, “By 2006, undertake, in the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and within available resources, a major broad-based progress assessment of the implementation of the WFS Plan of Action and a mid-term review of achieving the WFS target of reducing the number of undernourished people to half its present level no later than 2015 [6].”¹ The Summit underlined that the assessment and review should be in the context of a special forum of a regular session CFS.

In line with the Summit’s recommendation and that of the 31st session of the CFS, this report provides a mid-term review of the progress toward the WFS target [6, 10]. The report further assesses the progress toward the MDG 1 hunger target (henceforth the MDG target) of reducing the proportion of undernourished people to half its level in 1990-92 by 2015. The report is organized in six sections. Following the Introduction, section 2 gives an overview of progress at the global and regional levels. Section 3 draws lessons from past experiences of countries in combating hunger and poverty. Section 4 identifies key regional challenges to be addressed in the years to come. The key findings from the analysis carried out are summarized in section 5. Lastly, section 6 proposes an agenda to meet the WFS target.

2. Progress toward the WFS and MDG targets

2.1. Progress at the global level

From 1990-92 to 2001-03, large increase has been achieved in global food production but the absolute number of hungry people on a regular basis remains stubbornly high due mostly to deep poverty and low purchasing power in large parts of the world. As indicated in Table 1, food availability in the developing world recorded modest improvement, with daily per capita calorie supply up from about 2,518 to about 2,610 during the period concerned. This is much higher than the developing world average of minimum daily intake of about 1,850 calories required for human survival. The growth of food availability across regions also showed considerable progress, ranging from 3% in sub-Saharan Africa to 5% in Latin America and the Caribbean. With 2,184 calories per day in 2001-03, Africa continues to have the lowest calorie supply among other regions. With 3,074 calories per day, Near East and North Africa had abundant food to feed its population. The group of transition countries was not an exception to the trend across the developing world, with plenty of food available on one hand and rising poverty and income inequality on the other.

Reduction in the absolute number of undernourished people in the developing world does not reflect the improvement in food availability achieved during the last decade. As of 2001-03, of 854 million undernourished across the globe, 820 million were in developing countries, 9 million in industrialized and 25 million in transition countries. The

¹ The 1996 Summit has taken the number of undernourished people in 1990-92 as a base.

developing world reduced hunger by only 3 million during the last decade, far less than the reduction of approximately 206 million expected in 2001-03 if the WFS target of cutting the number of hungry by half is to be achieved by 2015. To meet the WFS target, about 5% reduction is required in the number of hungry people each year (Table 2). With respect to the reduction in the proportion of undernourished, the developing world has achieved modest progress, with a decline from 20% to 17% during the last decade. An annual 4% reduction is needed to reach the MDG target (Table 3).

Progress across regions has been uneven regarding the WFS target as well as the MDG target. The Asia-Pacific and Latin America-Caribbean regions have achieved significant reduction in the number of undernourished people. Especially encouraging is the success of the Asia-Pacific region in view of its rising population. Looking ahead, most indicators paint a favorable prospect for Asia, provided that the region's ample physical, human and natural resources are utilized effectively. High incomes and ample resources are also expected to help Latin America achieve the WFS target. For these regions to reach the WFS target, about 5% annual reduction is required (Table 2). On the other hand, Sub-Saharan Africa, Near East and North Africa, and transition countries faced setbacks in their battle against hunger. Africa needs massive resource mobilization, and Near East and North Africa should strengthen its ability to use its abundant oil resources for stable food supply. Transition economies should address rising poverty and income inequality. Without multiple pro-poor programs such as education, training, food for work alike, chances are slim for these regions to achieve the rate of reduction (i.e., 6% in Africa, 8% in Near East and North Africa and 5.6% in transition countries) required to meet the WFS target (Table 2). Figure 1 demonstrates the distribution of sub-regions with respect to their progress toward the WFS target by their prevalence of undernourishment in 2001-03. As seen from the figure, progress and setbacks vary across sub-regions: there are successful sub-regions within regions where hunger worsened or vice versa.

With the goal of reducing the absolute number of undernourished people to half by 2015, the Summit sets a more ambitious target than the MDG target. Hence, as Table 4 indicates, all the countries that were on-track toward the WFS target were also on-track with respect to the progress toward the MDG target. Similarly, except 2 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, all other countries across the developing world that were progressing toward the WFS objective were also progressing toward the MDG objective.

2.2. Progress at the regional level

Asia and the Pacific

Despite rising populations, food availability in the Asia-Pacific region has increased significantly over the last decade, up from 2,396 in 1990-92 to 2,503 calorie/day/per person in 2001-03 (Table 1). The increase can largely be attributed to the increase in cereal imports due to the declining international prices of cereal crops and more stable world rice markets because of the re-emergence of market oriented exporting nations, including Thailand and Viet Nam. Corresponding reduction in the number of hungry people has also been significant. Of 18 countries included in the analysis, 10 reduced

hunger by about 62 million. China, Vietnam and Thailand together account for the large majority of reductions. In another 8 countries including Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Korea and Bangladesh, food security worsened, with an increase by about 16 million. If current trends continue, Vietnam and Myanmar will meet the WFS target. The situation in China, Indonesia and Thailand will improve but is likely to be short of the target if current trends continue in the next 13 years. In India and the Philippines, however, efforts are to be scaled up considerably to reach the WFS target. The region needs an annual 5% reduction in the number of hungry people to reach the WFS target (Table 2).

A fairly large number of countries in the region face setbacks in food access due to low per capita incomes and highly skewed income distribution [1, 19]. Thailand, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, the Philippines and India among others achieved good progress in food availability but faced 20% or higher rate of prevalence in 2001-03. Democratic People's Republic of Korea is by far the most vulnerable to food insecurity, where the prevalence jumped from 18% to 35% during the last decade. According to WFP, almost 70% of the 23.3 million country's population was dependent on cereal distribution through the public distribution system in 2003. The outlook is also uncertain for Lao, Cambodia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, where under-nourishment rates vary between 20% and 35%.

Asia and the Pacific have also recorded considerable progress in reducing the proportion of undernourished people, with a decline from 20% in 1990-92 to 16% in 2001-03 (Table 3). Southeast Asia has done exceptionally well and is on-track with respect to the MDG target, while the remaining two sub-regions reduced the prevalence extensively.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Food availability in Latin America and the Caribbean improved at a moderate rate, with an increase from 2,592 calories in 1990-92 to 2,720 calories/day/per person in 2001-03 (Table 1). The current calorie level is significantly higher than the minimum calories required for a healthy diet. The region has experienced a slight change in the diet pattern since 1990-92. Cereals' share declined 1% point from 38 to 37%, while higher value protein commodities' share increased 2% points from 18 to 20%. The largest growth (10% over 11 years) in food availability has taken place in the Caribbean, followed by 8% in South America.

Reduction in the number (proportion) of hungry people does not reflect the modest progress in food availability due to highly skewed income distribution and low per capita incomes within individual countries [19, 24]. During the last decade, the number of hungry people declined by only 7 million, from 59 million in 1990-92 to 52 million in 2001-03. An annual reduction of about 4% is required to reach the WFS target by 2015. At the sub-regional level, South America has been most successful, followed by the Caribbean. In the remaining 2 sub-regions, the situation worsened over the period concerned. Half of the 24 countries examined experienced good progress in reducing the number of undernourished, while the remaining countries faced setbacks in the fight against hunger (Table 4).

Furthermore, the region witnessed a decline in the proportion of undernourished from 13% to 10% during the last decade. An annual 3% reduction is required to reach the MDG target (Table 3). South America, the Caribbean and North America all recorded good progress, whereas the situation was especially critical in Central America, where the prevalence jumped from 17% to 20% over the period concerned.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Food availability in Sub-Saharan Africa slightly improved during the last decade, up from 2,123 calories in 1990-92 to 2,184 calories per capita in 2001-03. On the basis of the internationally set minimum daily intake of 1,824 calories per capita, the region as a whole had enough food to support its population (Table 1), but a significant number of countries in Africa do not have enough food and income inequality and extreme poverty makes the situation even worse [23]. During the past decade, many countries received external food assistance due to natural and human made disasters, including Somalia, Malawi, Niger, Kenya, and Zimbabwe. At the sub-regional level, East Africa is the only sub-region where food availability regressed to 1,980 calorie per day, which is barely higher than the minimum required daily intake for a healthy life.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the most food insecure region across the developing world. The absolute number of undernourished people increased about 22% over the last decade, from 169 million in 1990-92 to 206 million in 2001-03.² The region needs an annual 6% reduction in the number of hungry people to meet the WFS target (Table 2). An equally unpleasant picture emerged across sub-regions of Africa. Central, East and Southern Africa showed further deterioration, while with about 1 million reduction West Africa demonstrated that with concerted efforts, trends can be reversed elsewhere in Africa. Despite the overall negative trend, of the 39 countries examined, Ghana has already achieved the WFS target and another 13 countries reduced hungry at varying amounts (Table 4). Countries that reduced hunger are scattered everywhere in the region. For example, Ghana and Guinea stand out in West Africa; Chad and Congo in Central Africa; Lesotho and Malawi in Southern Africa, and Ethiopia in East Africa.

Africa's share in the world hunger increased from 21% in 1990-92 to 25% in 2001-03 but the share within the region declined from 35% to 32% during the last decade due to rising populations across the region. Compared to other regions, Africa has the highest prevalence, and meeting the MDG target requires an annual reduction of about 5% (Table 3).

Near East and North Africa

Near East and North Africa is the least food insecure region compared to all other regions in the developing world. The region has enough food to feed its population, with daily supply of 3,074 calories per capita in 2001-03 (Table 1). However, the highly skewed

² Ethiopia and Eritrea were excluded due to the lack of data for 1990-92. Available data start from 1993-95 in which Eritrea had 2.2 million and Ethiopia 38.2 million hungry people. The numbers changed to 2.9 million and 31.5 million by 2001-03, respectively.

income distribution within countries impedes access to this abundant food. The number of hungry people increased from 25 million in 1990-92 to 38 million in 2001-03 - a 50% rise. The region needs an annual 8% reduction to reach the WFS target by 2015 (Table 2).

Among the 14 countries examined, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates were on-track, while Syria and Egypt showed moderate progress with respect to both targets. In the remaining 10 countries, the food security situation got worse (Table 3). The situation in Yemen needs special attention, as during the last decade the number of hungry people increased by almost 70% and the prevalence increased from 34% to 37% of the population. Yemen has also been hit by 54% increase in its population that reached at 19 million in 2001-03. As of 2001-03, except Yemen, all the countries in the region had abundant calories, ranging from 2,680 in Jordan to 3,350 calories in Egypt, to support their populations.

Transition countries

Over the last decade, food availability in transition countries increased by 5%, up from 2,808 to 2,948 calories per capita, which is far above the developing world average of 2,610 calories per capita (Table 1). This suggests that food availability has not been a problem in the region, but rising income inequality and low incomes hamper access to food. Poverty, especially in rural areas, is a major setback facing the region [26]. According to the World Bank data, the number of people with less than \$1 a day increased from 2 million in 1990 to 10 million by 2002, or from 0.5% to 3.6% of population. Although poverty is much lower than that in most other developing regions, a number of countries had exceptionally high rates; for example, 22% in Moldova and 19% in Uzbekistan.

Transition countries are scattered over a wide geographical area. Of the 27 countries examined, 12 belong to the Commonwealth of Independent States which had the largest number (about 21 million) of undernourished in 2001-03 and needs to reduce it by 6% each year to meet the WFS target. The Baltic States, including 3 countries showed good performance in reducing hunger and already reached the target. In Central and Eastern Europe, 5 countries already achieved the WFS target. A similar pattern also emerged across the 3 sub-regions with respect to the progress toward the MDG target.

The food security situation in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is especially critical. Tajikistan had a very low calorie supply in 2001-03 and its prevalence of undernourishment increased from 22% in 1993-95 to 61% in 2001-03. In Uzbekistan, however, the problem is not food availability but poor access to the existing food. The number of hungry people in the country more than doubled during the last 10 years and the prevalence jumped from 8% to 26% in 2001-03.

3. Lessons learnt from past experience in combating hunger

The review at national level reflects three groups of countries: (i) countries on-track toward the WFS target, i.e., a significant dent has been made in reducing the number of

undernourished people; (ii) countries in progress toward the WFS target, i.e., the number of undernourished is in decline; and (iii) countries facing setbacks in the progress toward the WFS target, i.e., the number of undernourished remains unchanged or is increasing. The following are the key policy lessons learned from past experiences of the three groups of countries.

- *Peace, stability and good governance facilitate the development of a favorable policy environment for economic growth and food security*³

One of the major lessons to emerge from the last decade was that peace, economic and political stability, and good governance have been critical in facilitating the creation of favorable policy environments for growth and food security [26]. Peru's superior progress in reducing hunger followed from macro-economic reforms of the early 1990s and subsequent political stability. Inflation declined tremendously and per capita GDP significantly grew from 2,040 USD in 1990 to 2,231 USD in 2003 (or about 10% increase since 1990). From the early 1990s to the early 2000s, following reforms of land transaction and entitlement procedures, agriculture value added per worker increased by 4% annually (reached at 1,734 USD in 2001-03); agricultural production, by 5%; and the share of agriculture in the economy, by 11% in 2001-03. These economic gains fostered synergies between food security stakeholders and boosted links between the agriculture, environment and health sectors to ensure adequate food supplies, as well as access to and utilization of this food.

Ghana represents another success model in which the macro-economic reforms of the late 1980s and the subsequent improvement in agricultural performance paved the way for extraordinary reduction in hunger. Flexible exchange rate system was adopted, tariffs lowered, fiscal discipline improved, and the banking system liberalized. The agricultural sector was also reformed, with the privatization of state farms, the reduction of subsidies on production inputs and the removal of commodity price controls. The benefits of these reforms emerged only after the mid-1990s, with an average 5% growth of agricultural value added. Improvement in food security was immediate as more than two-thirds of the population was making living out of agricultural activities.

In Mozambique, political stability has played a major role in revitalizing the economy, and the launching of liberalization policies in the early 1990s fostered macro-economic stability. Poverty declined and food security showed progress, thanks to 62% growth in per capita income from 149 \$ in 1990-92 to 243 \$ in 2001-03. The success came in spite of low income. However, Mozambique's high dependence on aid inflows for most of their domestic investment risks the future of food security. Prospects rely on its ability to diffuse regional political polarization and inequalities in social development. At present, most provinces in the Central region support the opposition political group, as opposed to those in the Northern and Southern regions supporting the ruling political party. Moreover, the Central region is most highly affected by HIV/AIDS (69% of the death

³ Governance, a composite index developed by the World Bank, measures the quality of contract enforcement, the competence of the bureaucracy, the quality of public service delivery, the extent of political, civil and human rights, the likelihood of crimes and violence.

cases), while the Southern region receives most of the development aid and international development projects.

Some efforts have been less effective in fostering environments conducive to growth and food security. In Tajikistan, the debilitating effects of civil war during 1992-97 still persist even 6 years after. The country is highly dependent on external assistance, and in 2001-03 it was the top recipient of ODA. Guatemala is another example where much delayed land reform and political instability attached to it hamper the development of conditions favourable to food security. Still other example is Bangladesh, where positive changes were not immediate from good macro-economic performance, and there is the need to embed hunger and poverty concerns in the macroeconomic policies. Despite an impressive macro-economic performance, deep poverty and high vulnerability to recurring shocks led to the disappointing deterioration in the food security situation.

- *Economic growth supplemented by specific pro-poor measures contributes to success in food security.*

The review underlines that in countries that have made progress in reducing hunger and poverty, the main driving force of their success has been accelerated economic growth sustained over a long period of time. The accelerated growth accompanied with specific measures to address the needs of the poor has made it possible to reduce hunger and poverty. A case study on Chile, by the World Bank, for instance, showed that, following the adoption and implementation of “growth with equity strategy”, the incidence of poverty in the country was reduced from 40% in 1990 to 20% in 2000, and, the number of undernourished from 1.1 million to 0.6 million during the same period. As a consequence of high income growth and active redistributive policies, extreme income disparity between the top 20% and the lowest 20% of the population was also reduced nearly by one-half.

China’s dramatic success in reducing poverty and hunger [see 26] was also a result of rapid GDP growth of 9.4% per year during 1979-2003, triggered not only by the structural changes that included shifts from central planning to market based economic system but also by a broad economic and social development strategy with specific programmes aimed at improving the wellbeing of the poor. In particular, in the rural areas of the country, where the majority of the poor and undernourished lived, fast growth was realized with institutional reforms and changes in landholding, production, distribution and procurement prices.

- *Economic reforms strengthening safety nets and public service institutions improve access to food.*

Although the world was successful in raising global food production over the last decade and reduced the price of wheat and rice globally, production gains did not automatically translate into comparable reduction in the number of hungry people due mainly to wide income disparity among income groups within countries, and the poor and food insecure could not necessarily access and afford the food available. Therefore, governments

attempted to improve public services (health, education and environment) and introduce safety nets as important part of extensive macroeconomic reforms. For many low-income countries, Viet Nam provides a model of success, which has already achieved the WFS and MDG targets of halving hunger and poverty by 2015 [2, 25, 37]. The country moved away from being a net cereal importer to a net exporter. Per person food availability jumped to 2,580 calories, an 18% increase since 1990-92. Land distribution and liberalization of input-output markets comprised the pillars of this exceptional increase. The reforms boosted production by 5% and trade share of GDP by 5%, and led to the growth of GDP per capita by 8% annually. Increasing food availability was not the end of food security efforts, and thereafter public service institutions were strengthened for the poor and food insecure to have easy access to available food.

Brazil, too, has been successful in hunger reduction, with a decline from 18.5 to 14.4 million people during the last decade. With a per capita income of \$3,544 and an average energy intake of 3,060 calories per day in 2001-03, Brazil has an adequate food supply. However, the country faces setbacks in the poor's access to food due to highly skewed income and land distribution. Consequently, the government launched the Zero-Hunger program in December 2002 aimed to supplement food access to roughly 50 million people within 4 years; and the safety net program "Bolsa Familia" in 2003.

Peru's social safety net programs were implemented in the wake of economic shocks in the early 1990s. National poverty reduction efforts gained momentum after the launching of economic stabilization and structural reform program in 1993. More resources were devoted to pro-poor programs, with nearly doubled spending on poverty reduction programs between 1994 and 1997. In 1997 and 1998 Peru allocated 20% of its public expenditures to basic social services. Furthermore, legal reforms were instituted to strengthen programs to promote basic education and health care and food security for children and other groups at risk. The National Fund for Social Development was set up to implement the country's first explicit national poverty program, focusing on social infrastructure and productive activities. Later, it started the National Food Program to deliver school meals and set up soup kitchens in rural areas and marginal urban areas.

- *Investment in agriculture and rural development is essential for food security.*

Achieving substantial reduction in hunger requires concrete steps be taken to promote agriculture and rural development. Three fourths of the poor live in rural areas and derive the basis for their livelihoods from agriculture or from rural activities which depend on the agricultural sector. In most circumstances the main cause of food insecurity is low purchasing power and low agricultural productivity. Accordingly, initiatives were taken to foster investment in agricultural and rural development, agricultural technology development and agricultural trade infrastructure. Such initiatives have been found effective [26].

In China, for example, a large rise in domestic food production has been driven by investments in irrigation, land reclamation and its road network, the development of high-yielding seed varieties and improved farming practices, the improvement in farmers'

production incentives and efforts to expand export-oriented manufacturing in urban centers in view of China's accession in 2001 to the WTO. All these investments rejuvenated the entire economy and led to significant improvements in agricultural production, agricultural productivity per worker, trade share of GDP, per capita income growth during the last decade. That per person daily energy supply has risen from 2,710 calories in 1990-92 to 2,940 calories in 2001-03 represents a combination of improvements in these economic indicators. At present, the government is addressing food insecurity through investments in infrastructure; the provision of social protection to unemployed former state-sector workers, and a poverty reduction strategy for rural areas. There are also opportunities for further improvements through greater liberalization of agricultural markets, better targeting of rural anti-poverty programs, and the strengthening of urban safety nets.

- *Economic growth that originates in agriculture and rural sectors plays a critical role in enhancing food security.*

Evidence also reveals that in countries where agriculture remains an important sector of the economy and where agriculture growth was higher, reduction in poverty and hunger was more evident. In China, for instance, once the poverty reduction effects of the early rural reforms (landholding, production, distribution and procurement prices) were realized, overall poverty reduction slowed down and even reversed in some years coinciding with the stagnation in the rural economy, and the growth of per capita income drastically declined from 12 percent in the period 1978-85 to 2 percent in 1986 -93 [32]. To lift up the rural people who failed to take advantage of the earlier growth effects, the Government initiated in 1994 the "National Poverty Reduction Plan", focussing on officially designated "poor" counties. Agricultural GDP growth in those counties averaged 7.5% per year, compared to the national average of 7% [32]. Similarly, in India the prevalence of hunger decreased sharply during the 1980s as a consequence of growth of the agricultural sector, though the national economy relatively stagnated. In the second half of the 1990s, with the slow down of agricultural growth, hunger reduction slowed down, despite the overall growth in GDP was taking off.

- *Trade has consistently been an engine of growth. Hence, significant improvement in food security should be expected if supply constraints facing the developing world are addressed by governments in partnership with the international community.*

The analysis indicates that successful countries increasingly opened up their economies during the last decade, reflected by their large trade share of GDP. Increasing exports improved foreign currency reserves and created resources for food imports in difficult times. With the removal of barriers to trade and the creation of an open rules-based global trading system, trade's contribution to hunger reduction will even be larger than it is now. In order for countries facing setbacks in hunger reduction to take advantage of the open trading system, supply constraints should be addressed, including lack of resources for technology transfer, poor trade capacity and competitiveness. External assistance to low-income resource poor countries in this respect would greatly help improve their food security situation.

4. Challenges to accelerate growth and achieve the WFS and MDG targets

Countries have their own specific challenges, but some broad regional challenges indicate the key areas to be addressed to combat hunger and poverty.

Asia and the Pacific

- *Improve natural resources management for sustainable food production*

Domestic food production in Asia and the Pacific will be undermined if soil nutrient depletion, soil erosion and environmental degradation, which are now taking place in the cradle of the original Green Revolution, are not addressed in time. There are also growing sustainability problems in many intensive production systems due to excessive use of cheap, subsidized nitrogen fertilizer. Increasing demand for water, 90% of which is presently consumed in agriculture, and declining investment in agricultural research further risk the future potential for food production. Further increases in China's grain output are by no means ensured due to irrigation water constraints. Genetically superior crop, pasture, and tree varieties has the potential to improve food security. Viet Nam, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and others have already made major investments in modern biotechnology [1].

- *Increase incomes and purchasing power of the poor*

The region's food availability reached 2,478 calories per day in 2001-03, a 6% jump from 2,334 calories in 1990-92, because of earlier investments in human development and agriculture. At the national level, countries have enough food and high income growth (regional average 33% per capita GDP growth), but unfortunately highly skewed income distribution, reflected by Gini coefficient of 38%, hampered the translation of this abundant food into comparable improvement in hunger reduction in Asia. Similarly, increased food production or imports will not ensure food security in South Asia and East Asia, where poverty is deep and widespread. In India, for example, there is enough food, yet the number of undernourished is high because of low purchasing power.

- *Improve emergency preparedness and risk management capacity, public health systems and conflict resolution mechanisms*

During the last decade Asia severely suffered from natural disasters, while encountering modest setbacks from HIV/AIDS and conflicts. In Asia, many farmers, fishers, and foresters are exceedingly vulnerable to floods, droughts, and cyclones as well as less frequent events such as earthquakes and tsunamis. In the period 1994-2003, 669,000 people died from natural disasters, nearly three quarters of which were in Eastern and Southern Asia. With thousands of lives lost in December 2004, the Asian Tsunami also revealed major gaps in national and regional emergency preparedness. In Bangladesh about 10 million people live in close proximity to the major rivers in very erosion- and flood-prone conditions. Regarding infectious diseases, HIV/AIDS rates in Asia are well below those of Africa, and the differences are even more marked when population levels

of Asian countries are taken into account. However, countries should strengthen their disease monitoring and prevention systems. In large countries like Indonesia, China and India, high rates approaching 3% are concentrated in specific locations, and Cambodia has already reached the highest infection rate of 3%. Large-scale conflicts from 1994 to 2003 took a heavy toll of human lives in Western and Southern Asia. Currently, countries such as India and Indonesia are subject to localized conflicts, but Nepal faces conflicts widespread across the entire country.

Latin America and the Caribbean

- *Improve access to food*

The region has enough food to feed its population, with daily 2,720 calories per capita in 2001-03. Yet, due to highly skewed income distribution and widespread poverty, the poor cannot obtain enough to eat. Income inequality is extreme, with a Gini coefficient of 51%, the highest compared to other regions in the developing world [24, 26]. Economic growth challenges remain particularly in Central American and some Caribbean countries. Growth seems the only pathway to food security in the region, given the region's large amounts of staple food imports and high debt services as well as high dependency of the lower income countries on the world market commodity price changes.

- *Improve health and basic public services*

In Latin America, urban poverty is on the rise, which induces nutrition and health problems different from those facing rural areas. Similar to higher income industrialized countries, urban food security problems largely relate to malnutrition. Overcrowding and inadequate access to basic services represent other aspects of urban food insecurity problems. Most recent data indicate that only 68% of urban population in the region have access to clean water and 43% have waste discharge services.

- *Strengthen emergency preparedness*

Frequent natural shocks, including El Nino and heavy floods, caused large damages, especially in some of the region's highly vulnerable, low income countries. For example, El Nino brought drought to Haiti and the Dominican Republic and heavy floods to Ecuador and Peru in 1997 and 1998. Several hurricanes destroyed crops and infrastructure and led to the deterioration of food production and its wide distribution in many countries in 1998.

Sub-Saharan Africa

- *Invest in natural resources, agricultural and rural development*

Small farm households, accounting for a large majority of undernourished people in Africa, face extreme soil nutrient depletion, unreliable water supply, poor access to fertilizer and new technologies [18, 21]. The situation may get worse unless investments are made in soil conservation, water quality, agro-forestry, and technology diffusion.

Especially in tropical parts of Africa, the Sahel and the dry sub-humid and semiarid tropics and subtropics, inadequate investment impedes food production potentials. Adoption of high-yielding corn varieties in a few countries such as Kenya and Zimbabwe was a milestone in increasing yields, but regional adoption rates remain low. Farm production in Africa also suffers from low mechanization, with 1.2 tractors per 1000 hectares land, several-fold less than 12.5 for Latin America and 8.6 for Asia.

Agricultural input and output markets in many countries in Africa are either not in place or not working efficiently [21]. To promote the development of these markets, there is the need for the investment in rural transport, storage and energy infrastructure, provision of affordable agricultural credit, and access to weather and price information. A good sign in this respect is that rural markets for seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs gradually emerge through partnerships among communities, traders and companies. For example, in rural areas of Malawi, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Kenya, poor farmers' access to knowledge intensive inputs are improving. Investment in market development will not only bring efficiency in production but also reduce post-harvest losses.

- *Increase incomes and purchasing power of the poor*

During the last decade, Sub-Saharan Africa experienced the largest increase in poverty. Based on “the 1\$ per day indicator”, the poverty increased from 227 million in 1990 to 303 million in 2002 [26]. By 2015 it is projected to reach 336 million or 38.4% of the projected population. This means that the poverty in Africa will surpass that in South Asia, which has had the largest number of poor people throughout the past two decades [21, 23]. With Gini coefficient of 48%, the region has the second highest income inequality in the world [24].

- *Improve public health services and strengthen conflict-resolution systems*

Specific shocks, including diseases, armed conflicts, natural disasters, or political, social and economic disruptions, account for a significant proportion of global hunger. HIV/AIDS is rampant and spreading in Africa. It has a devastating effect on smallholder agriculture, reducing crop diversity, area cropped, labor-intensive activities and increasing the selling of agricultural assets [21]. Studies in the literature further estimate that HIV/AIDS reduces economic growth by 2-4%. Armed conflicts continue to flare up and create food emergencies in countries, including Angola, Burundi, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone [23]. With the resolution of long-standing conflicts in Mozambique, Angola, and Chad, economic activities were resumed and agricultural output has responded positively.

Near East and North Africa

- *Invest in agricultural and rural development*

On average, the contribution of agriculture to GDP is about 16%, despite the fact that more than one-third of economically active population is engaged in agriculture. During the last decade the region experienced a 10% decrease in agricultural GDP. This reflects

the agricultural sector's low productivity and the poor integration of rural people in the rest of the economy. Several constraints contribute to this, including a fragile land base and declining soil fertility, limited water resources, unequal land distribution and insecurity of land tenure, low public-sector investment in rural infrastructure. Poor diffusion of improved crop varieties, limited application of water-saving technologies, and limited investment in research further constrain agricultural productivity. Volatile climate and rainfall add to these setbacks. Most agricultural land is irrigated, and drought often results in severe production shortfalls compared to potential production in the region. For example, Morocco had shortfalls in the grain production (ranging from 40 to 60%) during 7 years of drought that lasted between 1990 and 2003.

Undoubtedly, investment in rural infrastructure is vital for food security across the world [18]. However, such investment should especially be scaled up in Near East and North Africa. With very little access to roads, safe water, sanitation, and with a shortage of schools and clinics, poor rural people miss opportunities to improve their human capital and are unable to engage in rewarding economic activities. Poverty continues to be mainly a rural phenomenon; 60-70% of the poor lives in rural areas and, depending on the poverty line used, about 40-60% of the rural population is considered poor. One worrying trend is the worsening of poverty trends and income inequality in many countries. The region is characterized by political instability and poor governance, and by the serious gender inequalities.

To varying degrees, all countries, except Turkey, are dependent on food imports. Half of their staple food is imported, and hence the capacity to generate foreign exchange would be the key for future food security. Oil is the main source of foreign exchange inflow, making food security very sensitive to changes in the global oil market. Altering the dependency on oil resources seems unlikely in near future given the region's low investment in manufacturing sectors and non-oil merchandise exports.

Transition countries

- *Create employment opportunities and address rising income inequality*

War, political and economic instability, prolonged drought, poor rural infrastructure, lack of effective agricultural and food policies, breakdown of social safety nets and poverty exacerbated food insecurity in the transition region. Expectedly, countries with abundant resource endowments and stable economies did well in reducing hunger, including Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Macedonia, Croatia, Georgia, Armenia and Russia.

Rising income inequality is another setback facing the region. Unemployment in the CIS countries, even in urban areas, remains high and enhancing a stable and supportive policy environment for employment generation has been very difficult. The prevalence of poverty substantially increased in many countries, especially in those countries that still implement inadequate safety net programs of the 1990s.

5. The key findings from the analysis

The Mid-Term review on the progress in reducing world hunger shows that progress at the global level has been slow and short of what is needed to achieve both the WFS and the MDG targets. Meeting these targets requires 5% and 4% reductions each year, respectively. Progress at the regional level has been uneven. Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean have shown significant progress in reducing hunger in terms of both targets. On the contrary, there has been little or no progress in sub-Saharan Africa, Near East-North Africa, and transition economies.

The analysis of this Mid-Term review underlines the following key results concerning the main factors that contributed to or that hampered progress toward the WFS target.

The main factors that contributed to progress

- Effective governance, low credit risks and high income growth contribute to the development of an enabling environment for food security. The group of countries that were on-track with respect to the WFS performed significantly better in all these indicators than the group of countries that faced setbacks.
- Income growth is necessary but not sufficient to reduce poverty and hunger. This is reflected by the observation that deep poverty and hunger still persist in some countries that experienced high growth during the last decade, including India and Bangladesh. Corollary to this is that, in the short run, success in hunger reduction can be achieved even with low income, as has been the case in Ghana and Lesotho.
- Effective public institutions and successful sequencing of policy reforms help reduce food insecurity. For sustainable food security, poverty and vulnerability concerns should be embedded in macro-economic policy reforms.
- Special education and health programs targeting the poor and food insecure help improve their productivity, while reduced income inequality can enhance their purchasing power. To this end, targeted programs and income distribution policy comprise critical elements of food security strategies.
- The group of countries that were on-track experienced higher trade share of GDP than the “setback” group. Although applicable to all developing countries, especially the group of “setback” economies should enhance their supply constraints. External assistance can be instrumental in supporting these countries.
- During the last decade, per capita Official Development Assistance significantly increased in the group of “on-track” countries, but it showed a large decline among the “setback” countries.

The main factors that hampered progress

- Growth of global food production has been much more than enough to meet the growth of demand for food resulting from rising populations and incomes. However,

the translation of the abundant food into hunger reduction has been slow due mainly to wide income disparity among income groups within countries.

- Political and economic instability, lack of effective agricultural and food policies, breakdown of social safety nets, poor rural infrastructure, and poverty exacerbated food insecurity in transition countries. At present, rising income inequality represents the key obstacle to food security.
- In Asia and the Pacific, rising irrigation water scarcity hamper progress in food security, as the poor and food insecure remain heavily dependent on own production of cereals for food. Soil nutrient depletion, soil erosion, environmental degradation, highly skewed income distribution and deep poverty threaten prospects for food security in the region.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, high income inequality remains to be the key obstacle to food security [19]. Poverty is widespread both in rural and urban areas. Growing urban poverty, overcrowding and inadequate access to basic services aggravate urban food insecurity.
- In Sub-Saharan Africa, inadequate food supply, highly skewed income distribution, poor market development and rural infrastructure as well as frequent armed conflicts and rampant HIV/AIDS impede food security. Small-scale, resource-poor farm households face extreme depletion of soil nutrient, unreliable water supply, poor access to new technologies and fertilizer. Poverty remains pervasive in the region.
- In Near East and North Africa, highly skewed purchasing power constrains the poor's access to abundant food. The region is highly dependent on food imports and its ability to generate foreign exchange remains key for food security. Low investment and poor market infrastructure undermine the role of agriculture in food security.

6. The way forward

It is easily within the capacity of the global society to eradicate hunger and poverty. Tackling problems of hunger and low growth calls for a twin-track approach that, on the one hand, promotes private investment through a favourable policy environment to accelerate overall economic growth and, on the other, focuses on the needs of the poor not only on their immediate nutritional needs but also on programmes and projects aimed at enhancing the productivity and income of small farmers. To date, lessons learnt from past experience in combating hunger suggest that substantial and sustainable hunger and poverty reduction can be achieved if governments and/or the international development community take actions:

- *To ensure peace, stability and a committed political leadership for economic growth and food security*

Experiences of countries that were on-track in terms of the WFS target suggest that peace, stability, a committed political leadership, effective governance, and low credit risks all

facilitate the creation of favourable policy environments that are necessary for growth. In their absence, public investment to develop institutions and physical infrastructure dwindles and the existing resources are wasted in unproductive activities, while the private sector both domestic and foreign is unwilling to undertake investment particularly of a long-term nature. Under such conditions, economic growth and reduction of poverty and hunger become virtually an impossible task.

- *To promote investment in agriculture and rural development*

About three fourths of the poor in developing countries live in rural areas and make living out of agriculture directly or indirectly. Economic growth that originates in agriculture and rural economy can therefore have a particularly strong impact on poverty and hunger reduction. Yet, actual public expenditures for agriculture and rural development in the developing world do not reflect the importance of the sector to their national economies. There is the need for increasing public investment in market infrastructure, institutions and agricultural research to stimulate private investment, agricultural production and resource conservation. Evidence shows that in the group of countries where undernourishment is most widespread, the share of government spending devoted to agriculture falls far short of what is needed.

- *To enhance productivity, especially of small-holder agriculture*

In view of rising irrigation water scarcity, water pollution, soil nutrient depletion, land erosion, and labor scarcity due to HIV/AIDS and malaria, enhancing food security in the rural areas demands productivity improvement in small-holder agriculture. The strategy to achieve productivity-induced agricultural growth should aim to promote sustainable use of natural resources, rural infrastructure, and the functioning of markets.

The abovementioned scarcities make it necessary to develop technologies which enable sustainable intensification, productivity increases, resistance to pests and stress tolerance. Gaps in basic infrastructure, seed and input markets, and extension systems very often hamper smallholders' access to these technologies. Biotechnologies, for example, can potentially contribute to fulfilling some production needs and to the need for improving the nutritional content of crops and livestock products. But, currently, most countries do not have the necessary institutional and physical basis to provide adequate safeguards for biotechnology development and application. Public action is needed to create effective demand for research and develop ways to access to these technologies.

- *To promote trade under the right conditions*

Trade offers great opportunities for the poor and food insecure. The Doha development agenda explicitly recognizes this by granting developing countries special and differential treatment. However, in the absence of basic market infrastructure, technology, institutions and domestic policy reforms, trade liberalization will undermine the agricultural sector with long term negative consequences for poverty and food security. Developing country supply-constraints will also undermine agriculture particularly in markets where access depends on increasingly strict sanitary and phytosanitary standards. To overcome these

possible setbacks, low income countries should be granted more external assistance to overcome their supply-side production barriers. This is a viable option in view of the continuing distortions on world markets.

- *To substantially increase the effectiveness and level of official development assistance*

Official development assistance (ODA) plays an important role in supplementing resources of developing countries for enhancing growth and reducing poverty and hunger. It becomes much more effective in recipient countries with home-grown appropriate development policies, reforms and implementation strategies, as nationally designed and owned strategies reflect the specific needs and priorities of the country and give the sense of country ownership. On the other hand, ODA needs to be substantially increased at least until 2010 to support the fight against hunger, particularly in low-income countries.

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Table 1: Daily energy supply (kcal/day/person), average by region

	1990-92	2001-03	Minimum DES required	Percentage change (%): 1990-92 to 2001-03
DEVELOPING WORLD	2518	2610	1850	4.1
Asia and the Pacific	2396	2503	1838	4.5
Latin America & Caribbean	2592	2720	1868	4.9
Sub-Saharan Africa	2123	2184	1824	2.9
Near East and North Africa	2962	3074	1888	3.8
Transition countries (*)	2808	2948	1974	5.0

Source: DES from FAO and minimum DES required are from WHO. (*) The initial period is 1993-95

Table 2: Number of undernourished people (mil)

	# of undernourished		WFS	Net	WFS	Distance to WFS	Ave. annual	Current
	1990-92	2001-03	ratio(2)	change(3)	target(4)	target (5)	rate of change	status
DEVELOPING WORLD	823.19	820.19	0.99	-3.0	411.6	-408.6	-5.2	Progressing
ASIA – PACIFIC	569.74	523.99	0.92	-45.7	284.9	-239.1	-4.6	Progressing
East As, incl. China	198.68	159.51	0.80	-39.2	99.3	-60.2	-3.6	Progressing
East As, excl China	5.1318	9.4612	1.84	4.3	2.6	-6.9	-9.6	Setback
Southeast Asia	80.02	65.27	0.82	-14.8	40.0	-25.3	-3.7	Progressing
South As, incl. India	290.40	298.50	1.03	8.1	145.2	-153.3	-5.4	Setback
South As, excl. India	75.5647	86.5146	1.14	10.9	37.8	-48.7	-6.2	Setback
LATIN AMERICA-CARIBBEAN	59.35	52.43	0.88	-6.9	29.7	-22.8	-4.3	Progressing
North America	4.63	5.07	1.10	0.4	2.3	-2.8	-5.9	Setback
Central America	5.02	7.37	1.47	2.3	2.5	-4.9	-8.0	Setback
The Caribbean	7.72	6.74	0.87	-1.0	3.9	-2.9	-4.2	Progressing
South America	41.99	33.25	0.79	-8.7	21.0	-12.3	-3.5	Progressing
NEAR EAST NORTH AFRICA	25.03	37.56	1.50	12.5	12.5	-25.0	-8.1	Setback
Near East	19.63	31.58	1.61	11.9	9.8	-21.8	-8.6	Setback
North Africa	5.40	5.99	1.11	0.6	2.7	-3.3	-5.9	Setback
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA	168.98	206.18	1.22	37.2	91.8	-114.4	-6.0	Setback
Central Africa	22.66	46.79	2.06	24.1	11.3	-35.5	-10.3	Setback
East Africa	75.08	86.91	1.16	11.8	37.5	-49.4	-6.3	Setback
Southern Africa	34.06	35.99	1.06	1.9	17.0	-19.0	-5.6	Setback
West Afr, incl Nigeria	37.18	36.49	0.98	-0.7	18.6	-17.9	-5.1	Progressing
West Afr, excl Nigeria	25.3947	25.0122	0.98	-0.4	12.7	-12.3	-5.1	Progressing
TRANSITION COUNTRIES (1)	23.43	24.72	1.06	1.3	11.7	-13.0	-5.6	Setback
CIS	19.15	20.76	1.08	1.6	9.6	-11.2	-5.8	Setback
Baltic States	0.37	0.13	0.36	-0.2	0.2	0.1	2.5	On-track
Eastern Europe	3.92	3.83	0.98	-0.1	2.0	-1.9	-5.0	Progressing

(1) The initial period is 1993-95

(2) WFS ratio = (the number of undernourished in 2001-03 divided by the number in 1990-92)

(3) Net change = (the number of undernourished in 2001-03 minus the number in 1990-92)

(4) WFS target = (number of undernourished 1990-92 divided by 2)

(5) Distance to WFS target = (Net change minus WFS target)

Table 3: Proportion of undernourished people (%)

	% of undernourished		MDG	Net	MDG	Distance to MDG	Ave. annual	Current
	1990-92	2001-03	ratio(2)	change(3)	target(4)	target (5)	rate of change	status
DEVELOPING WORLD	20	17	0.83	-3	10	-7.0	-4.0	Progressing
ASIA – PACIFIC	20	16	0.79	-4	10	-6.0	-3.6	Progressing
East As, incl. China	16	12	0.73	-4	8	-4.0	-3.1	On-track
East As, excl China	8	13	1.63	5	4	-9.0	-8.7	Setback
Southeast Asia	18	12	0.68	-6	9	-3.0	-2.2	On-track
South As, incl. India	26	22	0.83	-4	13	-9.0	-4.0	Progressing
South As, excl. India	29	26	0.90	-3	14.5	-11.5	-4.4	Progressing
LATIN AMERICA- CARIBBEAN	13	10	0.74	-3	6.5	-3.5	-3.3	On-track
North America	5	5	0.91	0	2.5	-2.5	-5.2	Progressing
Central America	17	20	1.12	3	8.5	-11.5	-6.4	Setback
The Caribbean	27	21	0.78	-6	13.5	-7.5	-3.3	Progressing
South America	14	9	0.67	-5	7	-2.0	-1.9	On-track
NEAR EAST NORTH AFRICA	8	9	1.19	1	4	-5.0	-6.0	Setback
Near East	10	12	1.25	2	5	-7.0	-6.5	Setback
North Africa	4	4	0.91	0	2	-2.0	-5.2	Progressing
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA	35	32	0.92	-3	17.5	-14.5	-4.5	Progressing
Central Africa	36	56	1.56	20	18	-38.0	-8.4	Setback
East Africa	45	39	0.87	-6	22.5	-16.5	-4.1	Progressing
Southern Africa	48	39	0.82	-9	24	-15.0	-3.7	Progressing
West Afr, incl Nigeria	21	15	0.73	-6	10.5	-4.5	-2.7	On-track
West Afr, excl Nigeria	29	22	0.76	-7	14.5	-7.5	-3.2	On-track
TRANSITION COUNTRIES (1)	6	6	1.07	0	3	-3.0	-5.2	Setback
CIS	7	7	1.10	0	3.5	-3.5	-5.2	Setback
Baltic States	5	2	0.39	-3	2.5	0.5	1.7	On-track
Eastern Europe	3	3	0.98	0	1.5	-1.5	-5.2	Progressing

(1) The initial period is 1993-95 (2) MDG ratio = (the proportion of undernourished in 2001-03 divided by the number in 1990-92)

(3) Net change = (the proportion of undernourished in 2001-03 minus the proportion in 1990-92)

(4) MDG target = (the proportion of undernourished in 1990-92 divided by 2) (5) Distance to MDG target = (Net change minus MDG target)

Table 4: Regional distribution of countries by progress toward the WFS and MDG targets

	Asia-Pacific	Latin America-Caribbean	Sub-Saharan Africa	Near East-North Africa	Developing world	Transition countries
On-track toward the WFS target	2	7	2	2	13	13
Progressing toward the WFS target	8	5	13	2	28	2
Setback in progress toward the WFS target	8	12	24	10	54	12
Total	18	24	39	14	95	27
On-track toward the MDG target	8	10	17	3	38	13
Progressing toward the MDG target	9	9	11	4	33	3
Setback in progress toward the MDG target	1	5	11	7	24	11
Total	18	24	39	14	95	27

The developing world includes 4 regions: Asia, Latin America, Africa and Near East-North Africa.

Figure 1: Progress and setback across sub-regions

