



**INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE**  
*sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty*

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Countries with a History of Conflict Rank Poorly on New Global Hunger Index**

**Washington, DC**—According to the Global Hunger Index, developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), of the 12 countries with the highest levels of hunger, nine were affected by civil wars or violent conflicts. The 10 countries that scored the worst are all in Sub-Saharan Africa, but South Asia is also a hotspot of undernutrition.

IFPRI released the figures, based on an innovative and enhanced approach for measuring hunger and undernutrition in developing and transitional countries, for World Food Day on October 16.

“This index provides a particularly comprehensive measure of global hunger because it ranks countries on three leading indicators and combines them into one,” explained Doris Wiesmann, the IFPRI researcher who developed the Global Hunger Index. “Alone, each indicator has limitations, but put together, they give us a much more complete picture of the state of hunger around the world.”

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The three indicators are: child malnutrition, child mortality, and estimates of the proportion of people who are calorie deficient.

“By combining these indicators, the index considers the food supply situation of the total population *and* takes into account the special vulnerability of children to nutritional deprivation. It also reflects the most tragic consequence of undernutrition, which is death,” said Marie Ruel, director of IFPRI’s Food Consumption and Nutrition Division.

The Global Hunger Index has been calculated for 1981, 1992, 1997, and 2003. The latest round ranks 97 developing countries and 22 countries in transition. The index does not include highly industrialized countries, as well some developing countries where data is not available, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia.

Because the index ranks countries for four different years, it also measures progress over time. For example, the index indicates that scores have improved in South Asia and in most other parts of Asia since 1981, despite the fact that many countries in this region still have high levels of hunger.

Several countries, such as Botswana and Namibia, do worse than expected on the index, relative to their level of development, or gross national income per capita.

“Another value of the index is to demonstrate which countries have not been able to use their available economic resources effectively in reducing undernutrition,” Wiesmann noted. “High income inequality is one of the factors that causes countries to have higher levels of hunger and undernutrition than would be expected based on the gross national income per capita. Countries with high HIV infection rates also scored poorly on the index relative to their level of economic development, highlighting the links between AIDS and hunger.”

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While many of the lowest ranked countries are in Africa, there is a great deal of variation on the continent. Ghana, for example, has made considerable progress toward reducing hunger, as has Mozambique, which is recovering from civil war. But in other African countries that experienced long-lasting conflicts and instability, such as Liberia and Burundi, hunger has considerably increased during the last two decades.

“By developing the Global Hunger Index, we hope to mobilize the political will to speed up urgently needed progress in the fight against hunger in those countries that rank the worst,” said Joachim von Braun, IFPRI director general. “Both governments and civil society need to focus investments on meeting basic needs in sectors such as agriculture, food, health, and education.”

“Thanks to the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, hunger and poverty have climbed to the top of the global development agenda, with the target of cutting hunger in half by 2015,” von Braun added. “But we cannot be satisfied merely to cut it in half. Hunger must be eradicated completely.”

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*The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI is one of 15 centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, an alliance of 64 governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations. Please visit our website at [www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org).*