



969 MILLION PEOPLE LIVE
ON LESS THAN US\$1 A DAY

17% OF THOSE LIVE ON
LESS THAN US\$0.50 A DAY

The Vicious Circle of Hunger and Poverty

Poverty leads to undernutrition and food insecurity by limiting poor people's access to food. At the same time, because undernourished people are less productive and child malnutrition has severe, permanent consequences for physical and intellectual development, hunger can lead to or help entrench poverty. Thus poverty and hunger can become entwined in a vicious cycle, and levels and trends in these indicators can be expected to be similar. Indeed, the table on page 20 shows that countries with high levels of hunger are overwhelmingly low- or low-middle-income countries. All countries with extremely alarming levels of hunger are low-income countries. The only low-income country with a low level of hunger is the Kyrgyz Republic, and the only upper-middle-income country with a serious level of hunger is Botswana.

POVERTY IS HIGHEST IN AFRICA

Increases in the incomes of the poor may not, however, have immediate effects on all three GHI indicators. Incomes may have a more immediate impact on the proportion of people who are food-energy deficient, but the effects on child malnutrition and child mortality may take longer to unfold. Al-

so, how well increasing incomes translate into improved nutrition depends on investments in basic health and education services, sanitation, and safe water supply.

Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are not only the regions with the highest GHI scores, but also the ones with the highest poverty rates. The share of the total population living on less than US\$1 a day in 2004 was 41 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa and 31 percent in South Asia (Ahmed et al. 2007), yet the GHI scores for the two regions are nearly equal. The trends in poverty and hunger reduction in the two regions, however, are different in magnitude. South Asia's GHI and poverty rate reflect rapid progress since 1990 from very high levels, whereas in Sub-Saharan Africa the GHI has decreased much more slowly and poverty has been persistent.

Why are hunger and poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa so entrenched? It turns out that not all poverty is the same. IFPRI researchers have divided the population living on less than \$1 a day into three categories according to the depth of their poverty: (1) the subadjacent poor are those living on between \$0.75 and \$1 a day; (2) the medial poor are those living on between \$0.50 and \$0.75 a day; and (3) the ultra poor are those living on less than \$0.50 a day.

POVERTY: LIVING WITH LESS THAN ONE DOLLAR A DAY

Subadjacent poor	\$0.75 – \$1	485 million people
Medial poor	\$0.50 – \$0.75	323 million people
Ultra poor	less than \$0.50	162 million people

Source: Ahmed et al. 2007

COUNTRIES BY INCOME¹ AND GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX SEVERITY

GHI	≤ 4.9 (low)	5.0 to 9.9 (moderate)	10.0 to 19.9 (serious)	20.0 to 29.9 (alarming)	≥ 30.0 (extremely alarming)	
Low income	Kyrgyz Republic		Benin Côte d'Ivoire Gambia Ghana Kenya Mauritania Mongolia Myanmar* Nigeria North Korea* Senegal Timor-Leste Togo Uganda Uzbekistan Vietnam	Bangladesh Burkina Faso Cambodia Central African Republic Chad Comoros Guinea Guinea-Bissau Haiti India Lao PDR Madagascar Malawi Mali Mozambique Nepal Pakistan	Burundi Congo, Dem. Rep. Eritrea Ethiopia Liberia Niger Sierra Leone	
	Low-middle income	Belarus*	Albania	Armenia	Rwanda	
		Bosnia and Herzegovina	Algeria	Azerbaijan	Sudan*	
		Ecuador	China	Bolivia	Tajikistan	
		Egypt, Arab Rep.	Colombia	Cameroon	Tanzania	
		Iran, Islamic Rep.*	Cuba	Congo, Rep.	Yemen, Rep.	
		Jordan	El Salvador	Dominican Republic	Zambia	
		Macedonia	Fiji	Guatemala	Zimbabwe	
		Syrian Arab Republic	Guyana	Honduras		
		Tunisia	Jamaica	Indonesia	Angola	
		Ukraine	Moldova	Lesotho	Djibouti	
			Morocco	Namibia		
			Paraguay	Nicaragua		
		Peru	Philippines			
		Suriname	Sri Lanka			
	Thailand	Swaziland				
	Turkmenistan					
Upper-middle income	Argentina					
	Brazil					
	Bulgaria					
	Chile					
	Costa Rica					
	Croatia	Gabon	Botswana			
	Kazakhstan	Malaysia				
	Latvia	Mauritius				
	Lebanon	Panama				
	Libya*	South Africa				
	Lithuania	Venezuela, RB				
	Mexico					
	Romania					
	Russian Federation					
	Serbia and Montenegro					
Slovak Republic						
Turkey						
Uruguay						
High income	Estonia	Trinidad and Tobago				
	Kuwait					
	Saudi Arabia					

Note: For this 2008 GHI report, data on the proportion of undernourished are for 2002–2004, data on child mortality are for 2006, and data on child malnutrition are for the latest year in the period 2001–2006 for which data are available.
For countries marked with an asterisk, the underlying data are unreliable.

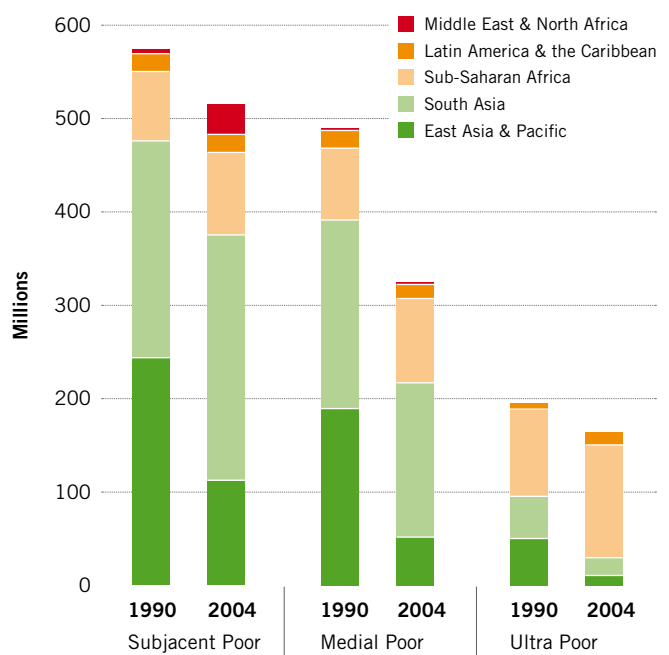
¹ World Bank categorization



The poorest of the poor often live in rural areas. They neither have access to education, agricultural extension services or urgently needed health care. During bad weather many villages can only be reached with difficulty because there are no streets.

Of the 969 million poor people in the developing world in 2004, 162 million were ultra poor, 323 million were medial poor, and 485 million were subjacent poor. The ultra poor are overwhelmingly concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is the only region in the world in which there are more ultra poor than medial or subjacent poor. In contrast, most of Asia's poor live just below the dollar-a-day line; only a small minority of people are ultra poor. Between 1990 and 2004, the number of subjacent poor in South Asia actually increased, but at the same time, there was a significant decrease in the number of medial and ultra poor. Sub-Saharan Africa, in contrast, experienced increases in the number of poor people in each category, particularly in ultra poverty. The ultra poor often live in remote rural areas; are more likely to be ethnic minorities; and have less education, fewer assets, and less access to markets than better-off people. Their extreme poverty makes it next to impossible for them to climb out of poverty: they find themselves unable to invest in assets and in educating their children; they have little access to credit; and hunger and malnutrition reduce their productivity. Extreme poverty thus becomes a trap in which poverty begets poverty and hunger begets hunger. Sub-Saharan Africa has large numbers of people in this situation.

SUBJACENT, MEDIAL, AND ULTRA POVERTY BY REGION, 1990 AND 2004



Source: Ahmed et al. 2007