



Forum: Sustainable Development Goals 2

Issue: Measures to combat the issue of malnourishment in impoverished areas

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“Poverty is like punishment for a crime you didn't commit.” - Eli Khamarov

Introduction

Food is a basic necessity in life and everyone needs to consume the right amount in the right proportions to lead healthy lives. However, this is a major difficulty for people who do not have access to enough food, or enough proportion of each nutrient, which can lead to several health issues such as underweight or kwashiorkor. This issue is significantly more prevalent in impoverished areas, where the production of food is made inefficient or strenuous.

The term impoverished area is quite vague and could refer to a widespread of circumstances. The primary situation this would refer to are countries that are facing poverty and difficulties in getting out of it. This would lead to the issue of malnourishment as they would not be able to feed the entire population due to the inability to import or produce enough goods, which can be caused by insufficient capital and/or difficulties in agriculture. However, impoverished areas could also refer to countries that are famine or facing difficulties in agriculture in general due to the lack of arable land. This also includes countries that are currently in war or have been negatively impacted due to warfare in the past, leading to lands that are barren and destroyed which means that it would be unsuitable for growing crops or farming, thus completely removing its possibilities of producing their own food. A country with a lack of capital to feed its population due to poverty and is burdened further by being deprived of its capabilities of agriculture will definitely suffer dealing with the issue of malnourishment, which is the case in some countries of the world today, such as Somalia and Yemen.

The issue of malnourishment has been prevalent for decades and centuries, access to food has been declining continuously for countless years. Unfortunately, the rate of decline is not stagnant, it will continue to rise should countries refrain from taking specific notable measures to address this issue. Despite countless attempts to solve this issue have been taken since the issue has been declared a worldwide concern, and the fact that countries and organisations have been combating this issue non-stop for centuries, this issue is still prevalent in today's society.



Over 9 million people die of hunger and its related diseases each year, although it may not seem much in comparison to the population of the world, there are still a shocking 821 million people in the world that do not have access to enough food to lead healthy, normal lives.

Definition of Key Terms

Impoverished Areas

Countries that have been struck by poverty and have made no progress or are unable to get out of poverty. These circumstances originate either from a bad stagnant economic state or due to bad health, which refers to having land that has been degraded due to erosion, pollution or the effects of warfare.

Malnourishment

The lack of proper nutrition, which can be caused by eating insufficient amounts, eating the wrong proportions of nutrition or being unable to use the food that one does eat due to medical reasons.

Arable Land

Land that is capable of being ploughed or cultivated and can be used to grow crops or used for agriculture.

Famine

Scarcity of food in a region, typically due to external, uncontrollable influence such as weather or the destruction of crops.

Agriculture

The science or practice of farming, including the cultivation of the soil for growing of crops and the rearing of animals to provide food and other products.

Erosion

The geological process in which earthen materials are worn away and transported by natural forces such as wind or water. In agriculture, soil erosion refers to the wearing away of a field's topsoil and thus turning it incapable of growing crops.



Agricultural Pollution

Pollution that refers to the use of farming practice that creates biotic or abiotic byproducts which can contaminate or degrade the environment and surrounding ecosystems.

Background Information

The issue of malnourishment has existed since the beginning of time. The inevitable issue of hunger was sure to be faced when the population was increasing while the number of food remains limited. Being hungry and facing malnourishment isn't just the issue of missing a simple meal. It is an issue that over 821 million people face and suffer from, and not to mention that millions more are starting to become affected as well due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hunger is an alarming cycle that goes through generations to generations. People and families suffer from this issue perilously, they struggle through chronic hunger and malnourishment consistently without the proper nutrition to go about with each day. Diseases such as marasmus and kwashiorkor are not uncommon. Their minds and bodies would not be working as they should which affects their activities and prevents them from being able to work at its best at things like work or school, further restricting them from the hopes of escaping this cycle. Furthermore, these people are burdened with recurring diseases, developmental disabilities and low productivity, in which they would have to waste all their energy and efforts throughout the day just to be able to find food for themselves or to provide for a family.

Even developed countries face this issue— in fact, they face this issue the most— but the possibilities for them to combat this issue are higher than those of the chances that countries living in poverty and famine have to solve the issue. This is because the multiple root causes are all integral and each contributes massively to the issue of malnourishment. It is important to address each cause completely in order to actually bring about real change and to tackle the issue as a whole.

Famine

“You think of the dust bowl of the 1930s in North America and then you realise we are moving towards that situation if we don't do something,” said Duncan Cameron, professor of plant and soil biology at the University of Sheffield.

The production of food depends on natural resources such as agriculture, and when there are barely any resources to use, the problem of food shortage appears to the spotlight. Food essentially becomes more scarce and the demand for food is only increasing as the population rises, thus it is only coherent for prices to rise accordingly. The population will find it difficult to access food, and would eventually lead to the consumption of insufficient amounts of food. This leads to health issues such as malnutrition which people will suffer from and could even prove fatal.



Famine is when there is a shortage of food due to uncontrollable reasons, such as bad weather or the lack of arable land– or land that can be used for agriculture. This leads to the population not being able to produce their own food and provide for themselves, which makes this more problematic even further as these countries would generally also be facing poverty, thus the inability to import food for the entire population.

To put the scale of this issue into perspective, one-third of the entire Earth’s arable land has been degraded in the past 40 years alone due to the increase in erosion and pollution. Not only is this a problem with regards to the environment being damaged, but this also raises several major concerns and consequences as the global demand for food is only rising as we speak.

Rank	Country	Agricultural land (% of land area)
1	Suriname	0.53 %
2	Greenland	0.57 %
3	Singapore	0.95 %
4	Bahamas	1.40 %
5	Faroe Islands	2.15 %
6	Papua New Guinea	2.63 %
7	Norway	2.70 %
8	Brunei Darussalam	2.73 %
9	Seychelles	3.25 %
10	Egypt	3.78 %

Countries with the least number of arable land for agriculture.

Sourced from: <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-least-agricultural-countries-in-the-world.html>

Food wastage

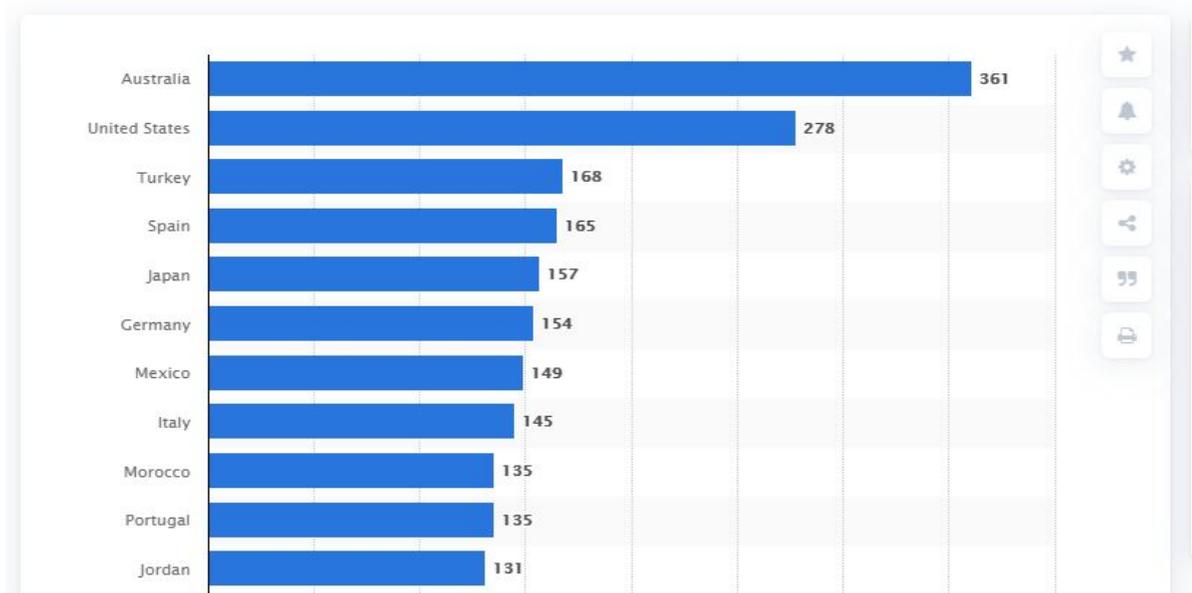
There is enough food produced in the world to feed half more than the entire world population, yet hunger is a prevalent issue in today’s society. This is because almost one-third of the food being produced is wasted completely. That’s almost 1.3 billion tonnes of food wasted, where it could have been transported and provided to feed the hungry.



Food waste is not just the issue of people throwing away their meals if they are not finished by them. It involves a wider range of causes: Terrible hygiene or sanitation could lead to the rotting and thus being thrown away. The issue of cross-contamination is also prevalent in the wastage of food, issues such as farm animals being contaminated with diseases could take place and thus it would only be imperative to take action on these animals, which can lead to a huge waste of food. Even temperature and humidity must sometimes be controlled for food to be maintained, such as for milk or any other dairy products which are prone to spoiling in certain conditions. All these small little situations, in which some are uncontrollable, all add up to the wasting of food.

The ironic part is that most of the food being wasted is in the more developed countries. This is of major concern as food is mostly distributed in developed countries yet they are the ones that waste the most food in the world. The effect of this is that there would be people from both the developed country and other countries that suffer from hunger. Almost around 13% of the population of each developed country face hunger in general.

Per capita food waste of selected countries worldwide in 2017 *(in kilograms per year)*



Countries that waste the most food.

Sourced from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/933059/per-capita-food-waste-of-selected-countries/>

How hunger affects lives

People facing hunger are prone to be trapped in a cycle of hunger. This is the cycle of people living in poverty struggling to gain and provide safe, nutritious food for themselves or their families as well. As they grow hungrier over time, they would become more vulnerable to diseases which would lead to them being in a weak state. If this continues then this would cause them to go and do their work in a



low productive state, working inefficiently and may not even have enough strength to perform laborious work.

Their situation with limited income will also lead to the limitation of their capabilities to send their children to education, they may be unable to afford to send their children(s) school. Therefore people will often ask their children to help support the family by taking part in work as well. This can lead to them suffering even further should they put more effort and energy into working to support their families. Even children that are fortunate enough to be sent to school may still be in a low productive state due to malnourishment and so may not always be able to learn to the fullest in school. This ultimately leads to the difficulties in finding a job due to the limited job opportunities opened by their lack of education, thus leading another generation to this perilous cycle of hunger.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Somalia

Currently going through the worst drought of the century, the people of Somalia suffer through this and face the combination of the different conflicts of extreme poverty, inflated food prices and horrible drought, leading to over 11 million people in Somalia left in desperate need and horrible states. The Secretary-General of the UN has officially declared famine in some parts of Somalia and stated that the spread of this is to be expected.

Countless numbers of civilians have to go through the pain of seeing family members die due to famine continuously, one by one. Individuals and families have to walk over 140 kilometres through a harsh journey for help at UN displacement camps, however, only around 30% of these people would survive through the journey. People are starting to lose hope in their survival through this famine.

Even those who manage to endure the pain of the trek will also face disappointment, there is still not enough aid provided to the Somalians. Medical attention is required, yet there is a lack of medical supplies and resources for doctors to tend to everyone. Doctors are losing hope as much as the suffering people do. It was expected that around \$1.6 billion is required to fund the aid provided to the Somalian people. As of now, the UN has managed to receive just about half of the necessary budget obtained from international donors.

Yemen

With a civil war rampaging the entire nation, the people of Yemen have to go through the horrors of war whilst struggling with a major famine at the same time. This already struggling low-income country was torn by the war and reign is divided between two political powers; the Northern region is controlled by the separatist forces of the Houthis, who are backed up by Iran, and the remaining regions are



controlled by the Saudi-coalition which is supported by the United States of America (USA). The war has led to the destruction of infrastructure, housing, healthcare and countless other essentials of the country. This has inevitably led to the prevention of the spread of aid from other nations or organizations, food that has been brought to Yemen have been blocked by blockades and the destruction of infrastructure.

Over 80% of the population of Yemen is currently in dire need of help, over 24 million people require humanitarian aid, and so UNICEF has officially described the situation in Yemen as “the largest humanitarian crisis in the world”. In 2018 alone, more than a shocking number of 85,000 children have died due to the famine. They have even been facing an unspoken issue of cholera as this happens, in which a more appalling disease has broken out, COVID-19. The issue of famine and the combination of the outbreak of the diseases have led to the destruction of the country’s state of health. Water systems have been shared amongst millions which have essentially led to a faster spread of the diseases, and not to mention that sanitization systems have also been destroyed by the civil war.

Australia

Australia is currently the leading country with most food wasted annually, almost \$20 billion each year is lost due to food waste. Around 4 million tonnes of food ends up in a landfill each year and almost 40% of household bins are filled with food. In Australia, nearly four million people suffer from food insecurity annually, and around one million of these people are children. This is over 15% of the population. To address this, the Australian government has implemented the National Food Waste Strategy; the implementation of the strategy took place in November 2018 and aims to reduce food waste by 50%.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)

The UNOCHA is a UN-based organization discovered in 1991 and is responsible for aiding countries with humanitarian crises. They aim to support countries that are facing difficult times by helping with their financing and advocacy. UNOCHA bring together diverse humanitarian actors or organizations in order to discuss and come up with coherent and pragmatic solutions or actions to tackle emergencies or general humanitarian crises. They also help in spreading awareness of unspoken issues by researching them and submitting annual reports for the public to see and be informed about. An example country that the UNOCHA has been assisting is Yemen, in which they have dedicated a massive sum of \$1.3 billion to help Yemen’s citizens go through the famine they are currently facing. They are also creating annual reports on this case since the start of the conflict in 2014, allowing the public and other organizations to be aware of the current situation in Yemen.

African Agricultural Fund

This private equity fund has made a large positive impact on food insecurity in impoverished areas, specifically aiding in the agriculture and food production in the region of Africa. Their investments



enhance and thereby contribute significantly to the growth of the businesses owned by African farmers and to subsequently reduce poverty. They approach this issue with the current technology available and updated knowledge, allowing them to combat the issue in a modernised and industrialised method, helping the businesses and financial situations of the farmers more efficiently. The organisation has managed to make a large positive impact on the issue of food insecurity within Africa, for they have seen an increased annual net weightage and production of food by around 30% as of recently. This organization's portfolio companies have also managed to produce a total of 648,000 tonnes of agricultural and other food-related outputs over the last year.

Action Against Hunger

This non-profit organization has been working in an attempt to help people around the world suffering from hunger thus saving the lives of children and their families for over 40 years. The organization tries to teach people worldwide to become more independent and informs them about how to provide for themselves. Their goal is to save the lives of malnourished children primarily, and they have been able to serve and help over 17 million people in 46 countries.

Not only are they just combatting this issue by helping feed people and children directly and continuously, but they are also aiming to tackle the underlying root causes of the issue as a whole, as to eradicate the issue as a whole to ensure that the future generations will not face the same issue and suffer as well.

Due to their 40 years of doing this, they have been able to achieve significant change and have been able to expand to other countries as time passes. They have also gained operational experience and knowledge through this, and so they have been able to operate at the best possible and most efficient methods to tackle the issue. AAH has also made contributions to developing revolutionary nutrition products and field testing treatment protocols that have become international best practice.

World Health Organization

The main purpose of WHO is to direct and coordinate international health. Other than directly feeding people around the world, they have also made a notable change by also reminding people of how crucial it is to intake the right amount and proportion of each nutrient. Malnutrition is not only the problem of not taking enough food but also taking it in the wrong amounts which leads to further health issues developing. This means that even if a miracle happens and every single being in the world have access to enough food, it would not be guaranteed that we are free from malnutrition, people will still eat in the wrong proportions and health issues such as obesity, kwashiorkor or marasmus will still prevail despite the issue of food insecurity being eradicated. People will still need to be educated on proper nutrition intake and this is extremely expensive and time-consuming.



Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
7th April 1948	The World Health Organisation was founded to achieve the highest possible of health, including facing the issue of malnourishment.
31st August 1964	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) was established to help people facing hunger.
16th November 1974	Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition.
3rd January 1976	The United Nations General Assembly adopts the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights treaty.
January 1979	Action Against Hunger was founded to combat world hunger.
September 2000	The Millenium Development Goals were established, with the first goal is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
1st January 2016	The Sustainable Development Goals were established, launching the second goal that aims for zero hunger.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 2: Zero Hunger
- Second International Conference on Nutrition, 19-21st November 2014
- Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition, 16 November 1974, **(A/RES/3180)**
- World Food Programme, 2 August 1961, **(A/RES/1714)**

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Due to the massive impact this issue has on the world's population, it was imperative that action was taken by the countries' governments, the United Nations and countless organizations. Despite the issue being still prevalent up to this day, it should not be neglected that the previous attempts to solve this issue were actually a large leap in humanity, we should not state that the failed attempts were meaningless nor was zero progress made. Millions of people have been freed from this vicious cycle, over half the population of people living in poverty have been aided and given the chance to get a job and provide for themselves. It can be said for certain that the previous attempts to address this issue



have made great progress and lives have definitely been freed from the suffering brought by this perilous issue. However, we are still far from solving the issue as a whole.

Humanity has been trying to combat this issue since the discovery of the issue, such as the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the distribution of food stamps (SNAP). Of course, the following are not all the previous attempts to solve the issue at hand, there were simply too many attempts taken and thus only the most effective and important ones are discussed below.

Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

The first MDG was implemented to combat world hunger and extreme poverty reduction. It had three main goals: to halve the proportion of people whose daily income is less than \$1.25, to achieve full and productive employment, as well as decent work for all, including young people and women, to halve the proportion of individuals suffering from hunger in the period between 1990 and 2015. This was implemented for 25 years and the world has concluded that it was, unfortunately, a failure. However, even though it failed to meet the goals and expectation of the MDG, we should not forsake the considerable progress that it has made towards addressing the issue.

In 1990, the number of people living in poverty worldwide was around 1.9 billion whereas, in 2015, this number has dropped significantly to a shocking 830 million people. This was about a 50% reduction in the number of people living in extreme poverty in the world. The proportion of undernourished people in the world have also made a drastic change. In 1990, the percentage of malnourished people was 23.3% and in 2015 it reached around 12.9%. This remarkable decrease, despite failing to meet its actual goal, has definitely made an outstanding positive impact on the world and the efforts put into this should not be forgotten.

Advancement in fertiliser

Another attempt made towards this issue was the implementation of the proper use of fertilisers and the development of new, more effective and efficient fertilisers. Fertiliser is an integral part of agriculture and the growth of plants. Using fertilisers properly or developing better fertilisers by manipulating the properties can essentially maximise the yield of farmer's crops. This is also a key factor and plays a major role in aiding to tackle the issue of food insecurity. Without the use of fertilisers, natural soil will be degraded and nutrients will eventually be depleted, leading to malnutrition within plants which can alter and limit the growth of the crops. This can lead to crops being deprived of its nutrients and lead to unhealthy crops or disrupted growth. Several companies are taking part in the fertiliser industry, with certain companies reaching the state of being able to develop fertilisers that increase crops yield by about 20%. Although the agriculture industry in certain countries is declining, the technology or biotechnology industry is starting to take part in and intervene with certain aspects of agriculture. This is for an attempt to use technology and science in order to help farmers maximise yield



and for increased environmental sustainability, which would also help the agriculture industry and the production of food.

Possible Solutions

This issue has been prevalent since forever and there have been countless attempts to solve this issue. Despite the issue still prevailing and countless lives are still suffering and lost, we should not neglect the fact that major progress has been made throughout the decades of hunger rampaging over the world. Of course, it would not be easy to address this issue, nor is there a guarantee that there will be a time where not a single soul will have to face hunger. But the progress being made is significant enough that there is hope for zero hunger.

Although multiple possible solutions have been thought of and proposed by organisations and governments to be implemented to solve hunger in impoverished areas, it is important to come up with pragmatic solutions rather than impractical ones. It is unnecessary and inadvisable to compile a long list of ineffective, short-term solutions rather than a smaller list of solutions that are more realistic and likely to actually work. This, therefore, limits and narrows down the list of likely solutions to this issue.

Genetically Modified crops

One way to tackle this issue could be by implementing the use of genetically modified crops (GM crops) globally. This is the process of modifying the DNA of crops through scientific methods of genetic engineering in order to get beneficial characteristics to the crops such as improved yields, enhanced nutritional value, longer shelf life, and resistance to drought, frost, or insect pests. This would essentially boost the growth of crops and increase the yield of crops which would make agriculture more efficient and thus more food can be produced.

However, research and development for this are still relatively new and it could be really expensive and time-consuming to develop a GM crop to be used globally. Furthermore, developing GM crops would be meaningless for impoverished areas as they are unable to grow crops as it is. GM crops would only benefit the current agriculture industry by boosting their productivity. To add on, the ideas of genetic modifying and engineering are relatively disliked, especially in Europe. This hinders the investments being made into researching and development of GM crops.

Reducing food waste

Another way to address this issue could be to reduce food waste globally so that more food can be transported to poorer areas that are unable to produce their own food. Food waste is a crucial factor in why there are people with no access to food. As stated previously, there is actually enough food produced in the world to feed 50% more than the population of Earth itself, but this is not the case primarily due to the wasting of food. The 1.3 billion tonnes of food wasted annually could have been used



to feed those that are starving due to the lack of access to food because of their environment being impoverished.

Reducing food waste can be done through multiple methods such as shopping smart and realistically. Only buy food that you will eat, do not buy more than that as this is one major cause of food waste. Another method is by not over-serving food, especially in restaurants, this may be hard and limiting businesses, but this is the right step to bring about real change.

Guiding Questions

1. Has your delegation positively/negatively impacted the issue?
2. If yes, how has your delegation done so?
3. What can your delegation do to turn negative impacts to positive ones?
4. How would your delegation encourage other countries to make positive impacts?
5. How would your delegation improve these positive contributions?
6. Which countries/organisations have had an upper hand in this case?
7. Do your delegations have any solution to propose?
8. Have your delegation attempted to solve the issue in the past?

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Appendix or Appendices

- I. <https://www.mercycorps.org/blog/quick-facts-global-hunger#hunger-affect>
Contains important information regards poverty and hunger.
- II. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/jun/08/eight-ways-solve-world-hunger>
Discussed different ways this issue can be tackled.