



HUNGER Q&A



Hunger: What is the issue?

Hunger and malnutrition are still the number one risks to health worldwide, greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. Over one billion people go to bed hungry every night; that's one out of every six people in the world. Almost a third of children in developing countries are either underweight or suffer from stunted growth, and under-nourishment plays a part in more than half of all child deaths. Millions of people across the world survive for weeks or months on end on one small meal a day – which can be as little as one potato.

Hunger is one of the most basic indicators of extreme poverty. Chronic hunger affects all areas of development: diseases are more common and more fatal, mothers are unable to breastfeed, children do not attend school and families fail to earn an income.

Without tackling hunger, we can never hope to see people living in some of the world's poorest countries lift themselves out of poverty and reach their potential.



Why in our world of plenty, are people still suffering from hunger?

Despite achievements in reducing chronic hunger during the 1980s and early 1990s, the number of people affected by hunger has been growing steadily. Conflict, war, poverty, natural disasters and over-exploitation of the environment all result in people going hungry. Climate change is now an additional substantial contributor to world hunger. Its effects are being felt by vulnerable people in developing countries. Farmers we work with in Africa, Asia and Latin America tell us that the weather is getting hotter, the rains are less predictable, and they are finding it difficult to know when to plant their crops. An increase in hurricanes and landslides in Latin America means that crops are being washed away, and houses and livelihoods destroyed, making it even more difficult for families to have a sustainable source of food and/or money to buy food. In East Africa, successive poor rainy seasons have meant droughts and failed crops, leading to wide scale food emergencies in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. The global food crisis and the resulting higher food prices have meant that buying food is not an option for many families when their crops fail.

An increase in the demand for biofuels, made from sugar cane crops, further means that many rural farmers and their families in Latin America have been thrown off their land to make way for sugar cane production. Without their own land to farm for food, these rural families are forced to subsist on the edges of the plantations, with many going hungry as a result.



Who is affected most by hunger?

People living in low-income rural areas in developing countries make up around three quarters of the world's undernourished population. Urban hunger, especially in slum areas, is also increasing. Global hunger is worst in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Around 60% of those affected by chronic hunger are women.

What is SCIAF doing?

Helping families to gain a secure source of food is one of SCIAF's three main areas of work – we call it livelihoods. Livelihoods is an umbrella term for a whole host of activities all geared towards making hunger gone – for good. We work with farmers to help them grow more and better crops by giving them agricultural training so they get the most out of their land; we provide others with vocational skills to get a job and earn an income so that they can buy food and provide for themselves. Without water, it is impossible to grow food, so we enable communities to have access to water for crops and drinking. We provide seeds and tools, and animals like goats, pigs and chickens, to help generate an income and a source of nutrition. We also work with vulnerable families living in areas affected by extreme weather to find ways of growing food, even if droughts, floods or hurricanes come.



Ethiopia has some of the worst levels of hunger in the world. In the drought-prone region of Tigray, many families know what it is like to survive on one small meal a day. In Tirhas' village (in pink jumper, left), we helped to build rainwater storage tanks, so that when the precious rain comes, it is stored and not lost. Concrete irrigation systems, also built with SCIAF's help, ensure that the water reaches the fields and irrigates crops. We have worked with Tirhas and her family to develop their agricultural skills, so that they now rotate crops and grow a wider variety. We helped them to work out the true price of their new crops, so that they get a good price when they sell the surplus at market. With a better diet, and breakfast, lunch and dinner, the family are now less susceptible to disease, feel healthier, and have extra income to buy essentials like school books, oil and clothing.

“We were very hungry before. Now we have an irrigation system and we have water. We can grow crops and we have breakfast, lunch and dinner. We have a better life.” – Gebreselassie, Tirhas' father.



What can I do?

By supporting SCIAF, your donations will help more people like Gebreselassie and Tirhas to improve their access to food and look forward to brighter futures where they can fulfil their potential. Your money will go towards creating a lasting source of food for families, enabling them to have a sustainable and more secure future and to stand on their own two feet. Hunger and poverty are political as well as moral issues. By campaigning with SCIAF on unfair trade rules, climate change and poverty, you will help to challenge the root causes of hunger and poverty and call upon those in power to make the decisions that will change the lives of millions across the world.

Statistics and Sources: SCIAF, SCIAF's partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America, World Food Programme, UK Department for International Development, Save the Children, the Food and Agriculture Organisation.



SCIAF, 19 Park Circus, Glasgow G3 6BE.



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