

# Global hunger relief back-tracking, especially in war zones



Germany's **Welthungerhilfe** (World Hunger Relief) aid organization published the Global Hunger Index (GHI) in Berlin Thursday, warning that gains made since 2000 have gone into reverse, with 821 million people, many of them children, undernourished.

Zero hunger by 2030 is one of 17 UN-agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Data from 119 countries, including child stunting, was used to calculate the placing of each nation on the GHI scale.

"Without political solutions the battle [against hunger] will not be won," Welthungerhilfe President Bärbel Dieckmann said, adding that the African Union, the UN and the EU were primarily responsible, not non-governmental organizations.

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Data on undernourishment, child wasting, stunting and mortality, which last decade showed average improvements, began receding early last year, she said.

"And this is mainly due to war zones: where there are armed conflicts and some areas that are suffering massively from the consequences of climate change," Dieckmann told DW, referring to Yemen and Syria as examples of war-induced food shortages and refugee exodus.

## Hunger double in war zones

Hunger was twice as prevalent in war-torn countries, she concluded. Drought in eastern Africa, once at 10-yearly intervals, now struck every two years. Corruption and poor governance were also factors.

Worst-placed on the GHI hunger severity index was the Central African Republic – where inter-militia conflict lingers despite a French-led UN intervention – followed by Madagascar, Chad, Zambia and war-torn Yemen.

Sixteen nations exhibiting no improvements and even regressive trends were identified in the data sets from 2016 and 2017 analyzed by the International Food Policy Research Institute, the Irish entity Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe, which is based in Bonn alongside numerous UN agencies including its climate secretariat.

Strong improvements in tackling hunger were, however, recorded in Angola, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Myanmar, said the authors of the GHI report.

Child mortality and undernourishment due to insufficient calorific intake prevailed in Africa south of the Sahara. South Asia exhibited stunting and wasting among children under five, in part due to lack of essential vitamins and minerals, the report concluded.

## **Planet prolific enough, says minister**

Gerd Müller, federal development aid minister and Bavarian conservative in Chancellor Angela Merkel's Cabinet, the resurgence in world hunger was a "scandal because our planet has the potential to feed all people."

Opposition parties in Germany's Bundestag parliament – the Greens, the ex-communist Left, and the FDP liberals – asserted that Merkel's government shared blame for hunger severity worldwide.

## **Example Rukban**

Thursday's report coincided with mounting hunger – and two child deaths due to lacking medical care – among 40,000 people stranded in a camp at Rukban in southeastern Syria near Jordan and close to a border triangle with Iraq.

Besieging Syrian government forces had recently cut off all roads used for aid deliveries to Rukban, said the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, adding that a rebel group had failed to leave the camp under a previous deal.

Relief workers said UN agencies were pressing Jordan – already burdened by past refugee influxes – to allow aid deliveries across its border to stave off suffering.

Real starvation "could explode," said the camp's civic affairs spokesman, Abu

Abdullah in a phone call to Reuters.

UNICEF regional director Geert Cappelaera said the lives of thousands of children at Rukban were at risk “especially when temperatures dip below freezing point in the harsh desert conditions.”

ipj/ng (dpa, AFP, KNA, epd, Reuters)

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