

February 3, 2021

Food Insecurity in Global Perspective

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Global food insecurity prior to COVID19

In **1948**, the UN recognized the right to food as a fundamental human right.

In **2015**, world leaders declared their commitment to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030.

As of **2019**:

- **820 million** chronically hungry
- **2 billion** cannot access safe, sufficient, and nutritious food
- More than **1 in 5 children** under 5 years of age suffering from stunting
- Food insecurity stagnant or **increasing** in every region except Europe and North America



Global food insecurity during COVID19

COVID19 has severely exacerbated the worldwide hunger situation, and will continue to do so unless the world acts.

- Upwards of **132 million** people are estimated to have been newly plunged into *acute* hunger during 2020 – an increase of 82% over 2019.
- **One out of every 33** people will require humanitarian aid to meet their basic nutritional needs in 2021 – an increase of 40% over 2020.

The world is facing
“multiple famines of biblical proportions”
-- World Food Programme

The crisis is especially dire in conflict situations

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**conflict-affected
countries**

are now facing an elevated risk of famine. They are Burkina Faso, Nigeria (north-east), South Sudan and Yemen.

8 out of 10

**of the world's main
food crises**

are fueled by conflict and insecurity.

60%

**of the world's food
insecure**

live in countries affected by conflict.

**More than
half**

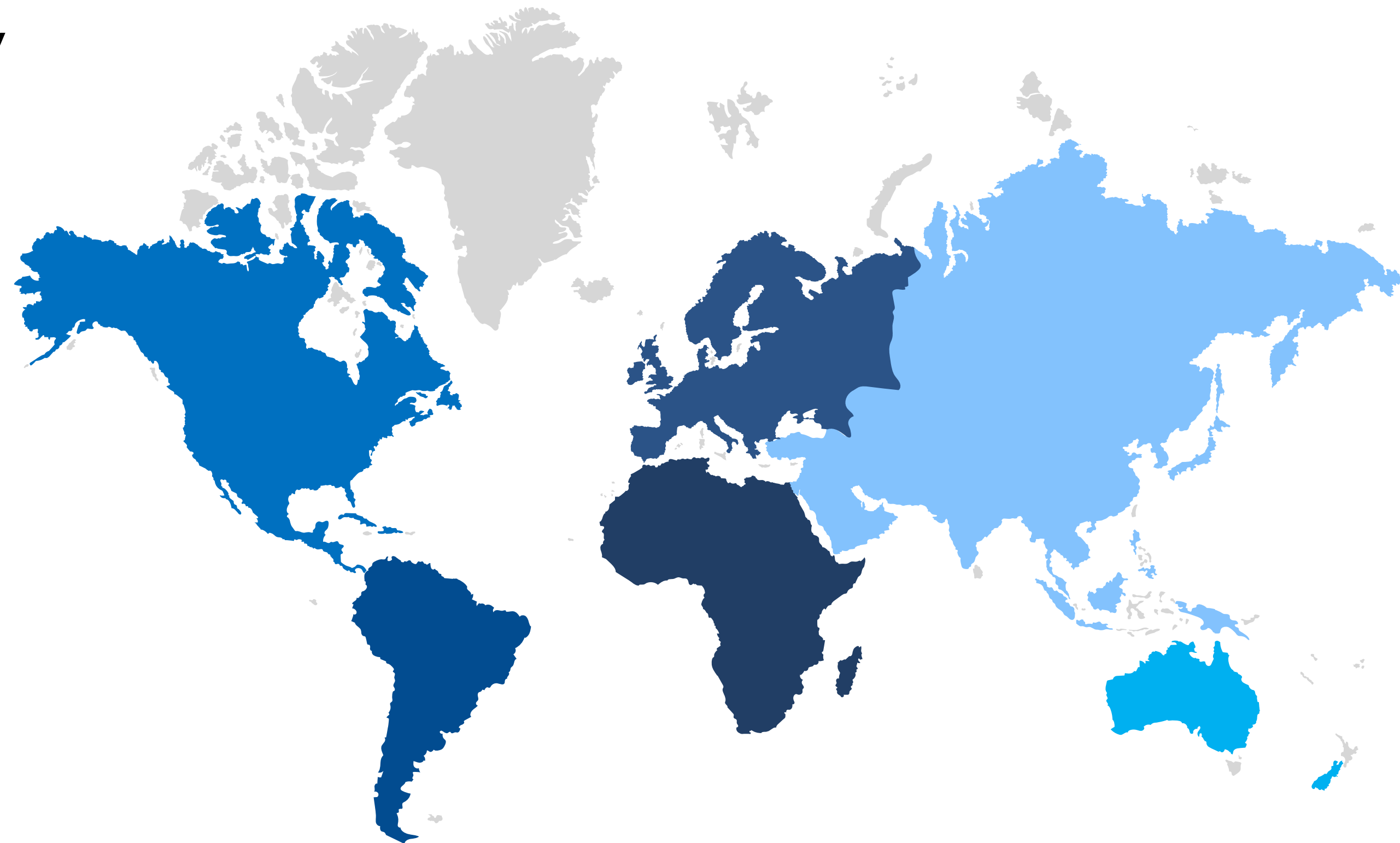
**of those experiencing
severe food insecurity**

live in conflict settings.

But hunger is an issue of global concern

Countries of all income levels are struggling with rising food insecurity

- Several high-income countries already had notably high levels of food insecurity
- As in other countries, the pandemic has made the hunger situation in high-income countries significantly worse
- Similarly, hunger is surging in middle-income countries such as Brazil, India, and South Africa



Maldistribution, not scarcity

Worldwide, the challenge is not chiefly one of scarcity - humanity produces more than enough food to feed itself well - but of maldistribution: systems of economic inequality and social injustice have turned nutritious food into a commodity that too many can neither afford, nor afford to do without.



"India's Poor Starve as Wheat Rots" – New York Times (2002)

"We have ample global food stocks to feed everybody" – WFP (2020)

What drives maldistribution? Inequality and social injustice

Among the factors driving the hunger-inequality nexus today are:

- Disproportionate impacts of climate change and environmental degradation
- Mega-corporate concentration in the global food system
- Inequitable food and agricultural policies in high-income countries
- Dependence on imports even among food-exporting developing countries
- Inadequate social protection at national level
- Increasing food prices coupled with stagnant or plummeting incomes among the poor
- Discrimination against vulnerable groups

Gender-based exclusion in food systems

- Women and girls represent roughly 70% of chronically hungry people in Africa.
- Rural women account for nearly half the agricultural workforce in developing countries; while they play crucial roles in household food security, they also face discrimination and limited bargaining power.
- Female household heads suffer labor market discrimination, trapping them in informal, casual employment, as well as pay inequity. They generally spend a larger share of their wages on food than male heads of household, making them particularly vulnerable to food price shocks.



Not just a humanitarian problem

These channels of maldistribution do not add up only to a humanitarian crisis. They also create acute political risks.

For instance, food price spikes are among the most critical indicators, historically, for conflict and social unrest.

Food prices are soaring just as incomes are plummeting

- **World** food prices have hit a six-year high
- Food prices in **Syria** have surged by 240 percent
- In the **US**, food prices have seen their sharpest increase in 50 years
- Food prices in **China** jumped 11% in August compared to the year prior
- The price of rice in **Nigeria** increased by 30%



If food insecurity is mainly a problem of distributive equity, policies that address inequality can – must – help address it.

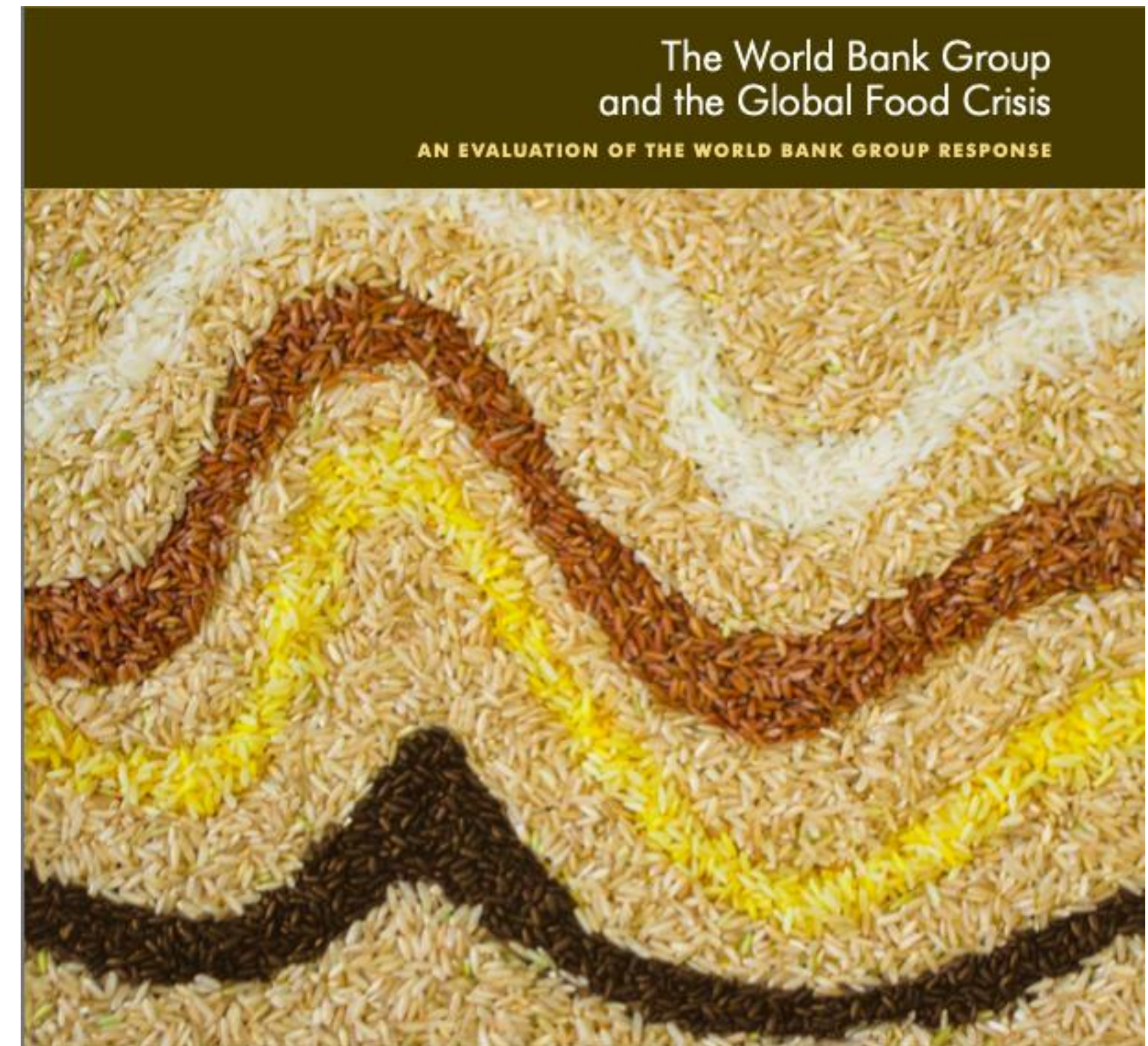
Lessons from prior food crises

Responses must be both global and local

A shift is needed away from approaches that focus predominately on the supply side

Success depends on social policies that treat food as a right, not (just) a commodity

Vulnerable groups require special attention



Promising policies and practices from around the globe

- **Ethiopia's** Productive Safety Net Program
- The Food Acquisition Program in **Brazil**
- Addressing “food deserts” in the **USA**
- **China's** “green channels”
- Agroecology in the **Sahel**
- Protecting migrant agricultural workers in **Europe**



Source: [The Borgen Project](#)

Thank You!
