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## GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX

ETHIOPIA POLICY BRIEF

April 2022



## Key Messages

- > **According to the 2021 Global Hunger Index (GHI) report, the state of chronic food insecurity and malnutrition in Ethiopia as measured by the GHI is categorized as serious.** With a GHI score of 24.1, Ethiopia ranks 90th out of the 116 countries with sufficient data to calculate GHI scores. Since 2000, Ethiopia's GHI score has decreased by 29.4 points—a decline of 55%. However, its GHI score is falling at an ever-slower rate, meaning that progress in the fight against chronic food insecurity and malnutrition is decelerating while levels of malnutrition continue to be high and concerning.
- > **Humanitarian assistance needs in Ethiopia in 2022 have increased to the highest level in recent years<sup>1</sup>**—nearly 40% higher than both 2021 and 2016, which followed the historic 2015 El Niño drought. Populations in Tigray, Afar, and Amhara affected by the conflict face an emergency level of acute food insecurity. Emergency outcomes are also expected in the worst-affected drought areas in the south and southeast (FEWS NET 2021c).
- > **In Ethiopia, key drivers of humanitarian needs include conflict, desert locust invasion, climatic shocks such as floods and droughts, COVID-19 impacts, declines in budgetary support, and the large national trade deficit driving high inflation and depreciation** (UNOCHA 2021b). These drivers hinder the availability of nutritious diets, with the result that 75% of households cannot afford a nutritious diet (Ministry of Health, EPHI, and WFP 2021). The secondary effects of the conflict in Ukraine will likely further increase the prices of staples and nutrient-dense foods and aggravate food and nutrition insecurity.
- > **Ethiopia loses about 16.5% of its GDP each year to the long-term effects of chronic malnutrition and stunting.** Costs associated with child undernutrition have been found to total 55.5 billion birr a year.
- > **In the face of these challenges, we must transform food systems in Ethiopia and globally to become sustainable and equitable.** Integrating a peace-building lens into the creation of resilient food systems, as well as a food security lens into peace building, can help advance both sustainable food and nutrition security and durable peace.

## How the Global Hunger Index is Calculated

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool for comprehensively measuring and tracking hunger at global, regional, and national levels. To capture the complex and multidimensional nature of hunger, the Index combines four indicators that reflect not only calorie availability, but also the quality and utilization of the food that people consume: (1) undernourishment (the share of the population with insufficient caloric intake); (2) child wasting (the share of children under age five who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute undernutrition); (3) child stunting (the share of children under age five who have low height for their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition); and (4) child mortality (the mortality rate of children under age five, partly reflecting the fatal mix of inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environments).

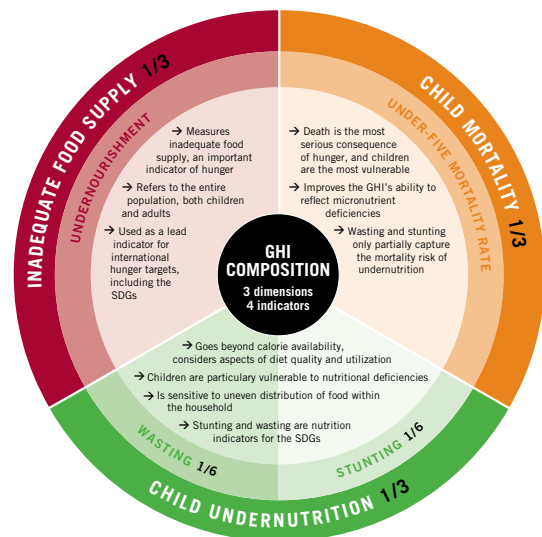
Based on the values of the four indicators, the GHI determines hunger on a 100-point scale, where 0 is the best possible score (no

hunger) and 100 is the worst. Each country's GHI score is classified by severity, from low to extremely alarming.

The GHI, which draws on data from the previous five years, is best suited to measure hunger over recent years and decades and is complemented by other tools, such as the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), that offer real-time assessments and short-term projections of hunger.<sup>2</sup>

For more information, see the full GHI report at [www.globalhungerindex.org](http://www.globalhungerindex.org)

## COMPOSITION OF THE GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX



Source: Wiesmann et al. (2015). Note: The values of each of the four component indicators are standardized. See the 2021 Global Hunger Index Appendix A for the complete GHI formula and Appendix B for the sources of data. SDGs = Sustainable Development Goals.

## Chronic food insecurity and malnutrition in Ethiopia: The context

Home to about 115 million people, Ethiopia is the second-most-populous country in Africa and has one of the region's fastest-growing economies (World Bank 2021). From 2008/2009 to 2018/2019, Ethiopia experienced strong, broad-based economic growth, averaging 9.8% a year, while the share of the population living below the national poverty line declined from 38% to 24% (World Bank 2020). The country's per capita income has risen by about 200% since 1990, and in the past decades life expectancy has increased by about 10 years and infant mortality has fallen by half (IMF 2020). Ethiopia is currently undertaking a home-grown economic reform. The government has developed a 10-point development plan designed to sustain economic growth and prosperity and ensure food and nutrition security for its citizens.

Agriculture is a key economic sector in Ethiopia, contributing more than a third of GDP and providing livelihoods for about three-quarters of the population (Woolfrey, Bizzotto Molina, and Ronceray 2021). Agricultural production is focused largely on carbohydrate-dense staples. As a consequence, the supply and availability of fresh, nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables are insufficient. Current levels of domestic production do not adequately meet the nutrient requirements of a growing population (Ministry of Health, EPHI, and WFP 2021).

<sup>1</sup> This statement is in relation to 2014–2022, the time frame for which FEWS NET has comparable national needs estimates. The highest recorded needs in this timeframe prior to this year were in 2016, following the El Niño drought.

<sup>2</sup> In this brief the term “chronic food insecurity and malnutrition” is used to reflect the aggregation of all four indicators that constitute the GHI.

Ethiopia loses about 16.5% of its GDP each year to the long-term effects of chronic malnutrition and stunting. Costs associated with child undernutrition have been found to total 55.5 billion birr a year (Ministry of Health, EPHI, and WFP 2013). While Ethiopia has made significant progress in addressing chronic food insecurity and malnutrition over the past decades, food and nutrition security remains severely affected by the combined effects of conflict, COVID-19, locust invasion, weather, and climate extremes (FAO and WFP 2021).

In 2021 Ethiopia experienced the largest annual increase in the number of people facing a food crisis or worse (FEWSNET 2021a).

The mid-year review of the Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan for 2021 showed that humanitarian partners were providing 12.8 million people with food assistance, 8 million of whom were receiving other types of assistance. In addition, 2 million people received non-food assistance only. Of those receiving such supports, 2.26 million people were internally displaced, 1.38 million were internally displaced people who were returnees and 11.19 million were non-displaced people (DRMC and OCHA 2021).

Furthermore, fighting that has spilled over from Tigray into the neighboring Amhara and Afar regions has constrained humanitarian assistance (UNOCHA 2021a). Between June and September 2021, conflict events were five times more frequent than during the same period in 2020, increasing fatalities (FEWS NET 2021a).

Macroeconomic conditions are also challenging. With the onset of COVID-19, growth in Ethiopia's real gross domestic product (GDP) slowed in 2019/2020 and again in 2020/21 (World Bank 2021). COVID 19 related containment measures have placed additional strain on already stressed livelihoods and income opportunities (Ethiopia Agriculture Sector 2020). Rising prices for starchy and nutrient-dense foods and declining purchasing power continue to affect people's access to food. Between June and September 2021, the national inflation rate rose from 24.5% to 34.8% (CSA 2021), driven primarily by food price inflation.

Cereals are the dominant staple foods in most parts of Ethiopia. On average every adult consumes 194 kg of cereals per year. Cereals comprise the most important source of calories, constituting 60.4% of the total calorie intake, out of which 84% is from maize, teff, sorghum and wheat. This proportion of calories derived from cereals is relatively high as compared to the average for the rest of Africa, which stands at 50% (Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis, WFP and CSA, 2019). Looking beyond food security, consideration must also be given to the nutritional value of people's food intake. In this respect, it is of concern that a nutritious diet—which would meet the necessary energy, protein, and micronutrient requirements—would be unaffordable for three out of four households (Ministry of Health, EPHI, and WFP 2021).

The current conflict between Russia and Ukraine further threatens global and Ethiopian food security, with disruptions in agricultural supply chains and food prices rising around the world. About 25% of Ethiopia's wheat imports come from Ukraine (FAO 2022).

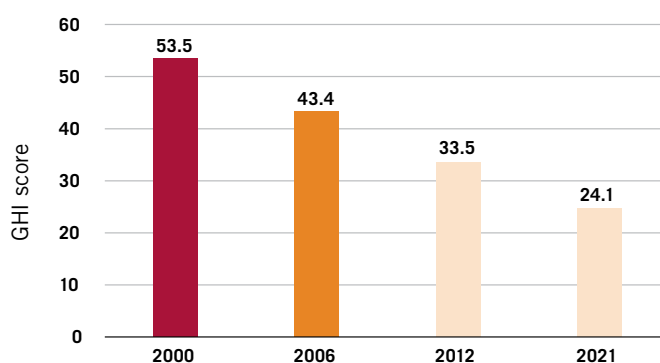
Humanitarian assistance needs in Ethiopia in 2022 have already increased to the highest level in recent years<sup>3</sup>—nearly 40% higher than both 2021 and 2016, which followed the historic 2015 El Niño drought.

<sup>3</sup> This statement is in relation to 2014–2022, the time frame for which FEWS NET has comparable national needs estimates. The highest recorded needs in this time frame prior to this year were in 2016, following the El Niño drought.

## In Ethiopia, chronic food insecurity and malnutrition remain serious

- > **With a score of 24.1, the state of chronic food insecurity and malnutrition in Ethiopia as measured by the GHI is categorized as serious.** Since 2000, the GHI score of Ethiopia has improved, falling by 29.4 points—a 55% change. Although the decline in the score is steady, it is falling at an ever-slower rate, meaning that progress in the fight against food insecurity and malnutrition is slowing.
- > **Ethiopia ranks 90th out of the 116 countries with sufficient data to calculate 2021 GHI scores.**
- > **All four underlying GHI indicators that make up Ethiopia's GHI score reflect the recent slowdown in progress:**
  - > **Undernourishment:** Ethiopia's 2018–2020 prevalence of undernourishment is 16.2%, which the GHI considers a medium level. Although the value had steadily decreased since the first reference period 2000–2002, it has increased again in recent years.
  - > **Child wasting:** At 6.8%, Ethiopia's level of wasting for children under five is considered medium. The rate decreased after 2006, with an uptick in 2016.
  - > **Child mortality:** Ethiopia's child mortality rate is 5.1% (medium) and decreasing (data from 2019). For the five-year period preceding the survey, the infant mortality rate was 47 deaths per 1,000 live births and the under-5 mortality rate was 59 deaths per 1,000 live births. This means that 1 in 17 children in Ethiopia die before reaching age 5. There has been a slight increase in neonatal mortality since 2016, from 29 to 33 deaths per 1,000 live births (EPHI, Federal Ministry of Health, and ICF 2021).
  - > **Child stunting:** At 36.8%, Ethiopia's child stunting rate is considered very high and represents the 15th-highest child stunting rate in the 2021 GHI. Child stunting has been steadily decreasing, but progress is slowing. In data captured in 2019, rates of child stunting vary widely within Ethiopia, ranging from 15% in Addis Ababa to 42% in Afar and Amhara and 48% in Tigray (EDHS 2019). These rates will have deteriorated since then given the conflict in these regions, but they give a sense of the levels in the past.

### ETHIOPIA'S GHI SCORES, 2000–2021

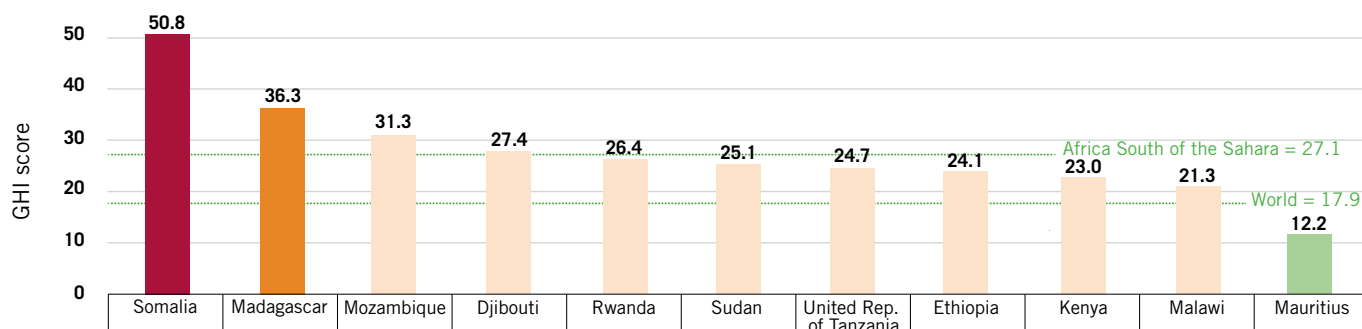


Source: 2021 Global Hunger Index authors. Note: Data for the GHI score for 2000 are from 1998–2002; for 2006, from 2004–2008; for 2012, from 2010–2014; and for 2021, from 2016–2020. In 2000, hunger was classified as *extremely alarming*; in 2006, *alarming*; and in 2012 and 2021, *serious*.

## Chronic food insecurity and malnutrition in Ethiopia, based on the country's 2021 GHI score, are below average for Africa South of the Sahara

Although Ethiopia's GHI score of 24.1 is relatively low compared with those of other countries in its region of East Africa, it exceeds the global average of 17.9.

### GHI SCORES FOR EAST AFRICA, 2021



Source: 2021 Global Hunger Index authors. Note: Burundi, Comoros, Eritrea, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are in the East Africa subregion but are not shown, owing to insufficient data for the calculation of GHI scores. Existing data and Provisional indicator values for these countries were included in the calculation of regional and global GHI scores. See Box 1.3 regarding provisional designations of hunger severity for countries with incomplete data.

## The need for more resilient food systems

To bolster community resilience in the face of challenges such as the risk of violent conflict as well as climate change, extreme weather events, and economic shocks, we must transform food systems to become more resilient, sustainable, and equitable. Integrating a peace-building lens into the creation of resilient food systems, as well as a food security lens into peace building, can help advance both sustainable food and nutrition security and durable peace.

The government of Ethiopia and its partners has produced a comprehensive Ethiopia food system road map following the government's commitments made at the 2021 United Nations Food System Summit in New York to transform the food system. Furthermore, during the 2021 Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit side event organized to mobilize government and development partners' commitment to the Seqota Declaration, the government and its development partners pledged to finance game-changing solutions aimed at ending chronic food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition.

The 2021 Global Hunger Index aims to provide data, analysis, and policy recommendations which can support the government of Ethiopia as it builds and delivers on those same commitments and pledges through 2022 and beyond.

### Data sources for Ethiopia

#### Prevalence of undernourishment

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). 2021. Data: Suite of Food Security Indicators. Accessed July 12, 2021. <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FS>.

#### Child mortality

UN IGME (UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation). 2020. "Child Mortality Estimates Info, Under-five Mortality Estimates." Accessed May 24, 2021. <http://www.childmortality.org>.

#### Child stunting and wasting

Central Statistical Authority and ORC Macro [for ICF International]. Various years. *Ethiopia Demographic and Health Surveys 2000, 2005, 2011, and 2016*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Calverton, MD, USA. Central Statistical Agency. 2014. *Ethiopia Mini Demographic and Health Survey 2014*. Addis Ababa. (Not used in the 2021 GHI.)

DRMC, OCHA. 2021. October. Mid-year Review of the Humanitarian Requirement Plan 2021.

EPHI (Ethiopian Public Health Institute), Federal Ministry of Health [Ethiopia], and ICF. 2021. *Ethiopia Mini Demographic and Health Survey 2019: Final Report*. Rockville, Maryland, USA.

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