

# 2021

Alliance 2015

towards the eradication of poverty

## GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX

KENYA POLICY BRIEF

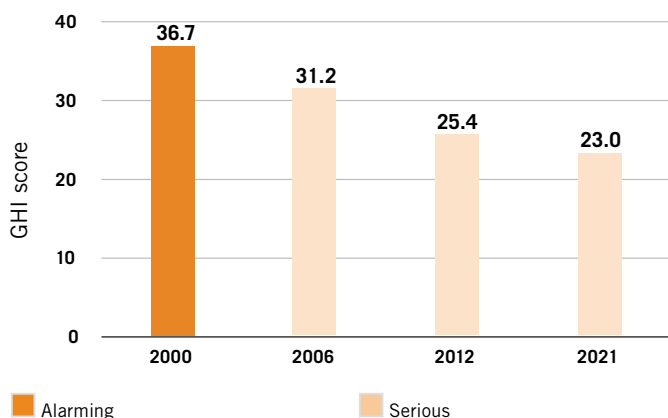
June 2022



## Kenya in the 2021 GHI

In the 2021 Global Hunger Index report, Kenya ranks 87<sup>th</sup> out of 116 countries with sufficient data to calculate GHI scores. With a score of 23.0, Kenya has a level of hunger that is *serious*.

### KENYA'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.

Kenya has made important progress against hunger in the past two decades. Since 2000, the country's GHI score has declined by 13.7 points – a percentage decrease of 37%, representing a significant improvement from *alarming* to *serious*. Most of that improvement, however, occurred between 2000 and 2012. Since 2012 Kenya's GHI score has fallen by only 2.4 points, showing that its progress in the fight against hunger has slowed.

Although Kenya's GHI score of 23.0 exceeds the world average, it is lower than average for Africa South of the Sahara and third-lowest in East Africa.

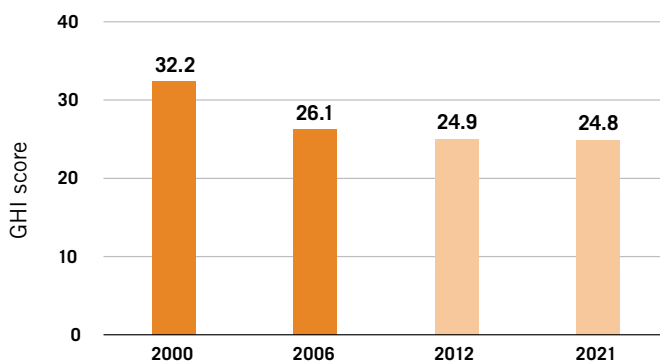
What explains Kenya's high GHI score? Each year, Kenya's GHI score depends on its recent performance in four indicators:

- undernourishment – the share of the population who do not get enough calories
- child wasting – the share of children under five who are too thin for their height
- child stunting – the share of children under five who are too short for their age
- child mortality – the share of children who die before their fifth birthday

These four indicators reflect the overall trend in Kenya's GHI scores. Undernourishment, at 24.8%, is considered medium, and this rate has hardly changed since 2012. This means that one-quarter of Kenyans do not consume enough calories to live a healthy and productive life. Child wasting, an indicator of acute malnutrition, has steadily declined and reached the low rate of 4.8%.

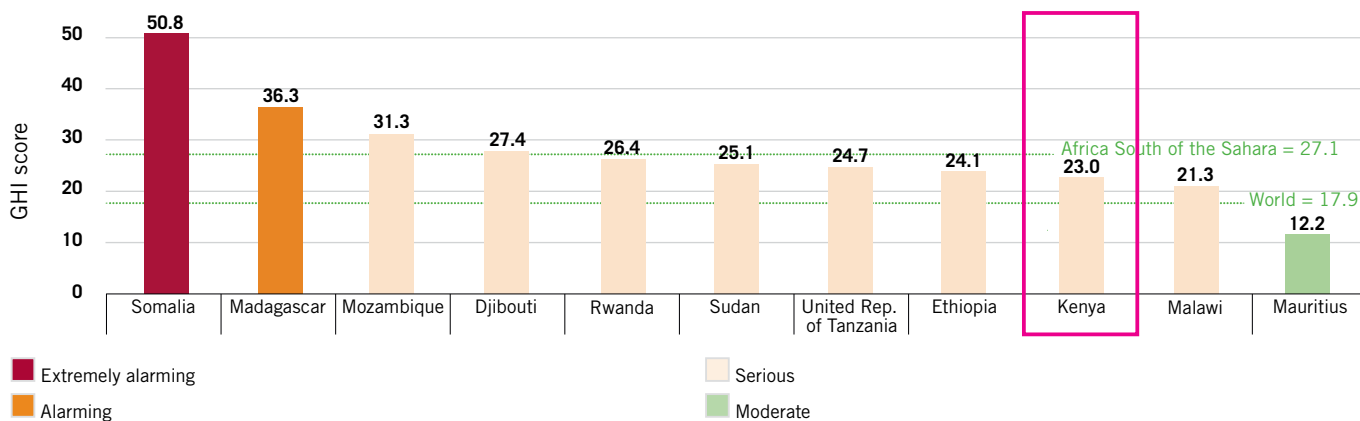
At 25.0%, child stunting, which reflects chronic malnutrition, is considered high. Though it fell sharply between 2000 and 2012, it has stagnated since then. Child mortality is at 4.3%, considered medium, after a slowing decline.

### UNDERNOURISHMENT IN KENYA, 2000–2021 (%)



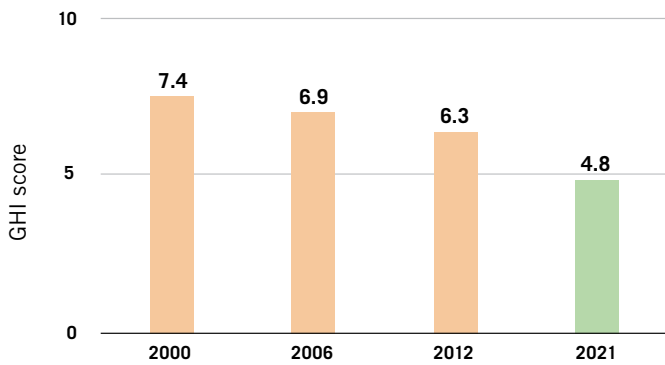
Source: 2021 Global Hunger Index authors. Note: Data for the GHI score for 2000 are from 2000–2002; for 2006, from 2005–2007; for 2012, from 2011–2013; for 2021, from 2018–2020.

### GHI SCORES FOR EAST AFRICA, 2021



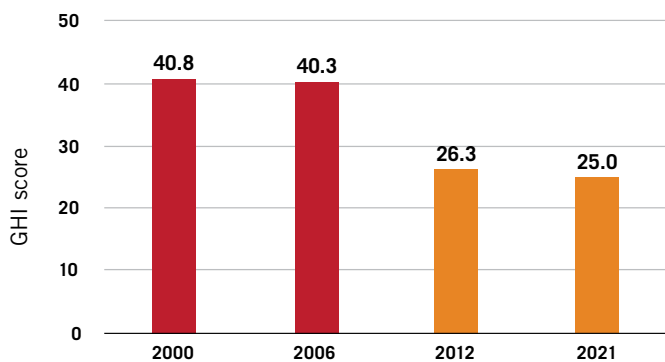
Source: 2021 Global Hunger Index authors. Note: Burundi, Comoros, Eritrea, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are in the East Africa subregion but are not shown, owing to insufficient data for the calculation of GHI scores. Existing data and Provisional indicator values for these countries were 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.

### CHILD WASTING IN KENYA, 2000–2021 (%)



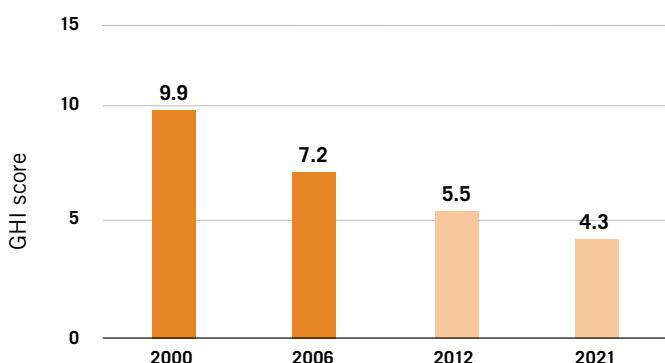
Source: 2021 Global Hunger Index authors. Note: Data for the GHI score for 2000 are from 1998–2002; for 2006, from 2004–2008; for 2012, from 2010–2014; and for 2021, from 2016–2020.

### CHILD STUNTING IN KENYA, 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.

### CHILD MORTALITY IN KENYA, 2000–2021 (%)



Source: 2021 Global Hunger Index authors.



National averages for the relevant indicators point to the scale of the issue, but hunger and undernutrition vary widely by region and county in Kenya. Much of the rural population living in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) of northern Kenya is highly vulnerable to food insecurity. Child stunting, for example, is highest in Kitui and West Pokot, whereas child wasting is highest in Turkana and Marsabit. Overall, the people who are most vulnerable to hunger are children and women.

### The Challenge: A Toxic Cocktail of Conflict, Climate Change, and COVID-19

As the 2021 GHI shows, globally and in Kenya, progress toward Zero Hunger by 2030 is slowing, driven by multiple crises, such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, and increasingly severe and protracted violent conflicts.

Kenyans are particularly vulnerable to climate change. Seventy percent of Kenyans earn all or part of their income from agriculture, and most farmers rely on rainfed farming. Over the past three years, rains have failed, been delayed, or been below average, leading to massive crop failures. Pastoralists are highly resilient and self-reliant, but climate change and the consequent inconsistent rainfall patterns have also led to huge losses of livestock in their communities. As a result of the ongoing drought, more than 2.8 million Kenyans in the country's 23 counties in arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) go to bed hungry.

At the same time, measures taken to control the spread of COVID-19 in urban areas jeopardize the incomes, and in turn the food security, of poor urban households. In December 2021, at least one in five urban households was in food crisis.

Conflict is also a factor. Competition over increasingly scarce rangelands and water is leading to civil strife and loss of life – a situation that overlaps with and exacerbates hunger. Internal and cross-border displacement is common owing to both drought and conflict over natural resources, creating additional hardships for affected populations.

### The Way Forward: Getting to Zero Hunger

The Kenyan government has recently made several important commitments to advance food security and nutrition. At the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit, it reinforced its aspiration to achieve Zero Hunger by 2030. Three months later, at the Nutrition for Growth Summit, it pledged to continue implementing its multisectoral country action plan on child wasting, which is aligned with planned outcomes in health, food, social protection, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) systems. But are these efforts enough in the face of current headwinds?

In the short term, it is crucial for government, donors, and development partners to work collectively to provide coordinated humanitarian assistance to those at risk of starvation. This assistance will not only save lives but also ensure that those communities can build back in a sustainable and resilient way. Increased public investment in social security and targeted social safety nets would help vulnerable groups to absorb shocks and avoid falling into crisis.

Nutrition-sensitive social protection programs should be directed to the most vulnerable, such as children, to boost their life chances by ensuring their food security and nutrition.

In the longer term, national and county governments must prioritize policies and programs that increase productivity, food security, nutrition, and the resilience of small-scale farmers and pastoralists. This will include investments in a shift toward climate-smart agriculture and water management, a timely flow of funds for basic services to counties, and investment in drought and famine early action mechanisms, as described in the Ending Drought Emergencies Framework. Farmers need support to secure access to land, water, seeds, information, agricultural inputs, financing, extension services, and transport. Government should also introduce insurance schemes to help protect farmers from catastrophic losses.

The challenges posed by the risk of violent conflict, climate change, extreme weather events, economic shocks, and the lingering consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic will surely continue. To bolster community resilience, therefore, we must transform food systems 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.

Fundamentally, all actions must put vulnerable communities, including women and children, at the center of food systems and policies and must be anchored in human rights and meaningful participation.

