

2021

Alliance 2015

towards the eradication of poverty

GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX

LIBERIA POLICY BRIEF

AFRICAN YEAR OF NUTRITION:
THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP FOR A FOOD AND NUTRITION-SECURE LIBERIA

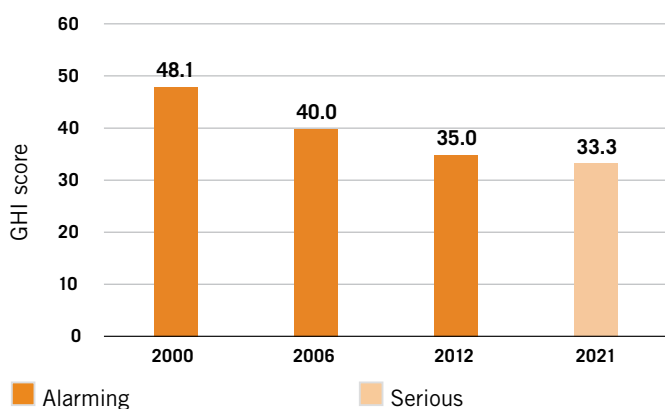
June 2022



Liberia in the 2021 GHI

In the 2021 GHI, Liberia ranks 110th out of the 116 countries with sufficient data to calculate GHI scores. With a score of 33.3, Liberia has a level of hunger that is *serious*.

LIBERIA'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.

Liberia has made important progress against hunger in the past two decades. Since 2000, the country's GHI score has declined by 14.8 points – a percentage decrease of 30.8%, representing a significant improvement from alarming to serious. Most of that improvement, however, occurred between 2000 and 2012. Since 2012 Liberia's progress in the fight against hunger has slowed or even stalled.

Liberia's GHI score of 33.3 is higher than average for the world and for Africa South of the Sahara and is the worst in West Africa.

Hon. Jeanine Cooper, Minister of Agriculture, at the GHI launch in Montorvia on 7th April 2022

"The scaling up of nutrition coordination we welcome. We welcome the partnership with all of the NGOs, with UNICEF, with WHO, with FAO, with WFP, in attacking the root causes of our problems with hunger, malnutrition, food insecurity, and all of its attendant ills."

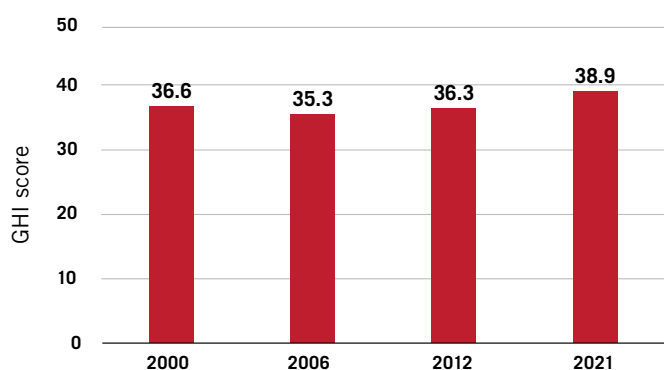
What explains the country's high GHI score? Each year, Liberia's GHI score depends on its recent performance in four indicators:

- 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

Undernourishment in Liberia, at 38.9%, is considered very high. This means that the country's overall food supply is inadequate. Worryingly, the rate has been increasing since 2006. Child wasting in Liberia is low and decreasing – an important success that reflects reductions in acute undernutrition.

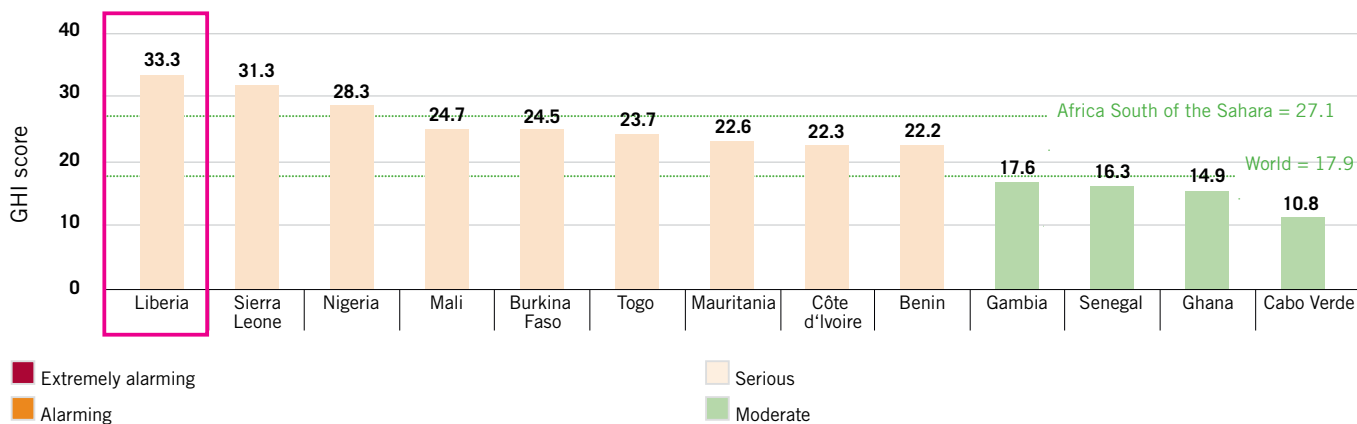
Child stunting, however, which reflects chronic undernutrition, is high. After a strong decline between 1998 and 2014, stunting has fallen only marginally. The pattern is similar for child mortality.

UNDERNOURISHMENT IN LIBERIA, 2000–2021 (%)



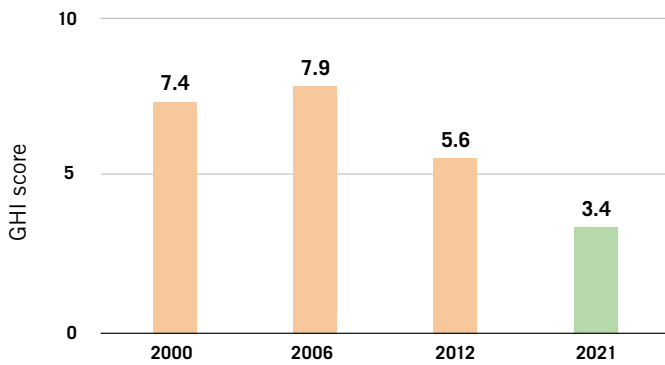
Source: 2021 Global Hunger Index authors. Note: Data for the GHI score for 2000 are from 2000–2002; for 2006, from 2005–2007; for 2012, from 2011–2013; and for 2021, from 2018–2020.

GHI SCORES FOR WEST AFRICA, 2021



Source: 2021 Global Hunger Index authors. Note: Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Niger are in the West 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 GHI scores. See Box 1.3 regarding provisional designations of hunger severity for countries with incomplete data.

CHILD WASTING IN LIBERIA, 2000–2021 (%)

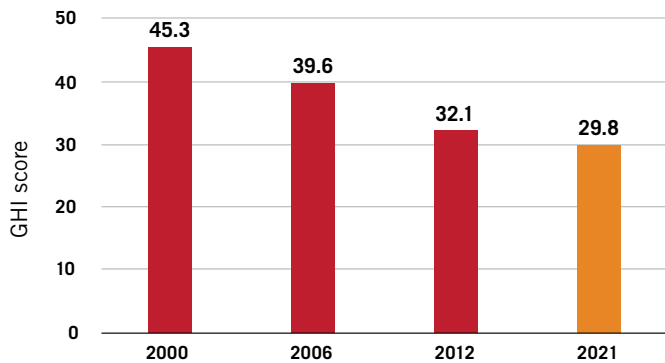


Source: 2021 Global Hunger Index authors. Note: Data for the GHI score for 2000 are from 1998–2002; for 2006, from 2004–2008; for 2012, from 2010–2014; and for 2021, from 2016–2020.

Hon. Dr Wilhelmina Jallah, Minister of Health, at the GHI launch in Montorvia on 7th April 2022

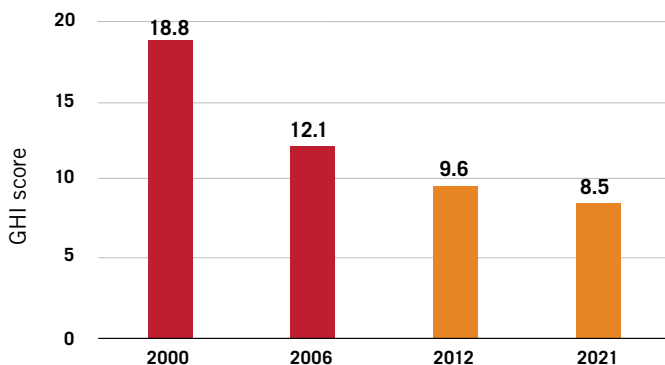
“It’s going to take teamwork so that we all use the resources that are available properly to make sure that we are empowering mothers, empowering farmers, empowering other individuals to make sure that food is in abundance here, because of where we sit as one of the greenest countries in Africa.”

CHILD STUNTING IN LIBERIA, 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 LIBERIA, 2000–2021 (%)



Source: 2021 Global Hunger Index authors.



Lessons from Work on the Ground: The Experience of Concern and Welthungerhilfe

Arising out of their work in Liberia, Concern and Welthungerhilfe have identified lessons in three key areas where progress could have a significant impact.

Expand rural financing to meet demand: The work of the EU-funded Prosperous Agriculture Road Map to Nutrition and Entrepreneurship, Reinforcing Sustainability programme (PARTNERS 1) has shown that demand for community savings and loan associations is high, pointing to the existence of a rural financing gap. As savings grow and the savings and loan associations thrive, they are attracting widespread interest from community leaders and being duplicated in some places. There is scope to build larger-scale rural financing institutions and to exploit technology-based finance tools, as other African countries have done.

Engage men and boys in gender-transformative approaches: Attention to the role of women in Liberia is crucial. Concern and WHH have trained eight Liberian NGOs on a gender-transformative approach, and evidence shows that this work has reduced violence, increased women’s decision-making on household spending, and started to shift perceptions of gender roles and attitudes. Liberian men are seeing the potential of women. There is more to be done so that men and boys engage with food and nutrition security, recognize women’s time as a cost of farming as a business, and see the endless potential of Liberian women in their own right.

Design sustainable programs to support farmers and small businesses: Concern and WHH are working to design sustainable programs to help overcome some of the main challenges faced by Liberian farmers. One aspect of this work has involved supporting fragile local seed markets. Concern and WHH are also eager to introduce new and better varieties of seeds, but the seed market in Liberia is largely informal, and farmers struggle to access a sufficient variety of seeds to grow a nutrient adequate diet without NGO support. Formal accreditation of seed quality would help address quality problems, and more robust markets for seeds would improve availability and access.

¹ The PARTNERS programme, funded by the European Union, seeks to improve food and nutrition security and increase income and resilience against shocks in the rural areas of Liberia. It is being implemented across seven counties: Bomi, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Kru, Margibi, Rivercess, and Sinoe.

Provision of machinery and infrastructure can help reduce the heavy labor and time demands faced by Liberians, especially women. For example, the PARTNERS program has provided funding for gari processing machines that produce gari flour from cassava. These machines, when they are functioning, can make it easier to process cassava, improve the quality of the finished product, and help women sell gari for a higher price. The Liberia WASH consortium, of which Concern is a member, has also helped develop wells to provide access to clean water and cut the time required to seek water.

These efforts to introduce infrastructure have generated several important lessons. Community management of infrastructure has had mixed results, access is not always equal or well managed, operations and maintenance are challenging, and the supply chain for spare parts and qualified service delivery are largely not available. One promising approach is co-contribution: the community contributes to the cost of the infrastructure, expectations are clear and managed, and business plans are set for all operations and maintenance. Overall, there is much more to be done to strengthen service delivery, supply chains, and the enabling environment for small businesses.

The Way Forward: Coordinated Action and Targeted Investments

Multiple donors, development agencies, government ministries, and civil society actors have a stake in food and nutrition security in Liberia, but they often work separately rather than jointly. More effective multisectoral coordination at national and county levels is vital. Leadership on food and nutrition security from the government will help drive action, though any approach to increasing coordination must ensure that community voices are at the table.

The Scaling Up Nutrition movement is a good example. The structure for this important tool of coordination exists, but to exercise ambitious leadership in driving progress on nutrition in Liberia, it requires more financial and human resources, an active and well-functioning secretariat, and more active participation from the government, donors, civil society, and business.

The year 2022 – the Africa Year of Nutrition – represents a window of opportunity to chart a course toward reducing hunger and promoting food and nutrition security in Liberia. Several large food- and nutrition-security programs and agricultural development programs are coming to an end in 2022, including the PARTNERS program. As these programs draw to a close, many food- and nutrition-security donors in Liberia are consultatively planning the next 5–10 years of programs. These efforts present an opportunity to learn and strategize jointly on how best to coordinate programming and investments to move toward achieving Zero Hunger.

To achieve this goal, Concern and Welthungerhilfe, as part of Alliance2015, envision the following approach:

- Collaborating on joint initiatives at local, national, European, and international levels, building on our strengths.
- Transforming food systems by facilitating local and national-level dialogues based on evidence generated from programming.
- Sharing learning and resources for improved efficiency and impact.

With coordination across stakeholders, we can plan for success for the next decade, follow the lead of government priorities, maximize the use of limited donor funds, and deliver sustainable gender-transformative programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As planning for strategies and programs for the coming years takes place, the government, donors, development agencies, civil society groups, and stakeholders should consider the following policy approaches:

- 1 EXPAND RURAL FINANCING THROUGH COMMUNITY SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS OR OTHER MECHANISMS.**
- 2 STIMULATE PRIVATE AGRI-BUSINESS BY STRENGTHENING SERVICE DELIVERY, SUPPLY CHAINS, MARKETS FOR INPUTS AND PRODUCTS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE.**
- 3 PROMOTE GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES THAT ENABLE WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION-MAKING AND REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.**
- 4 FOCUS ON IMPROVING THE DOMESTIC PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF NUTRITIOUS FOODS.**
- 5 WORK TO ESTABLISH MULTISECTOR COORDINATION FOR FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY, SUPPORTED BY A VIBRANT SCALING UP NUTRITION MOVEMENT LED BY GOVERNMENT AND SUPPORTED BY PARTNERS, IN ORDER TO DELIVER IMPROVED NUTRITION OUTCOMES FOR VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES.**

Gerda Verburg, Coordinator SUN Movement, at the GHI launch in Montorvia on 7th April 2022

“Often there is a lot of coordination on paper, but in reality it is sometimes difficult even in collaboration between departments... I know from experience that the will is there but the reality is sometimes more complicated. In some of the countries of the SUN movement we have seen that coordinating things in the national development planning commission will not only bring the right players around the table, but also do the costing and the budgeting and make sure that the minister of finance is really making a commitment on behalf of the government. Then donors and other investors can align behind this.”

