

## Living on an Empty Stomach

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There are many people experiencing continuous hunger right now. This is not the type of hungry where a child craves a snack; it's the type of hungry where the person has not eaten in days. The level of hunger has grown internationally at an alarming rate in recent years: in 2015, there were about 785 million people going hungry, and in 2018, it had already risen to 822 million. At this exact moment, there are more than *870 million people* who are hungry. For those of us who can simply buy a bagel at the deli or drive to the supermarket, this number may seem alarmingly high. So why exactly are so many people without food?

A core reason that so many people are hungry is because of their country's poor political situation. A shocking 98% of starving people live in developing third-world countries, which is the case for the malnourished people of Burundi and Eritrea. Nearly *half* of Burundi's ten million citizens can't financially support themselves and over a third of them are unemployed. In Burundi, because of the ongoing civil war, the country must import more food than they export their own agriculture. This causes the food prices to become way higher than affordable, and since almost half the country is poor, it causes many people to go without food.

In Eritrea, since the Eritrean-Ethiopian War (1998-2000) is still recent, they are not focused on using their arable land for agriculture. During this war, many Eritreans were forced to abandon their homes and try to escape for their lives, so many skilled workers are no longer in

Eritrea. The lack of laborers and the land that is untouched for farming causes a short supply of food that citizens cannot afford. As of now, over 65% of Eritreans are classified as malnourished.

Another reason that people starve is because of their country's poor climate. When the rivers trickle dry and the sky produces no rain, there will come a drought that leaves the people unable to grow crops or even to drink water. This is the case for Afghanistan. In 2018, Afghanistan had so little precipitation that their crop harvest that year was over 60% lower than the average of their last 5 years. In Zimbabwe, it was the opposite: flooding from Cyclone Idai washed away and drowned crops, also causing a poor harvest. The country lost over 900,000 metric tons of harvest and left over three million people without food on their tables.

However, despite these awful circumstances, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization has been taking steps to assist the people affected by starvation. Through innovations like Food Powder and cricket farming, more food will become available around the world. When these technologies are utilized to their fullest, eventually, there will be enough food to go around for all the hungry people who have been living on an empty stomach.

### References

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