



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by the Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 May 2017]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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## World Hunger and Poverty

Extreme poverty, absolute poverty, destitution, or penury, was originally defined by the United Nations in 1995 as "a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services, "extreme poverty" widely refers to earning below the international poverty line of \$1.25/day (in 2005 prices), set by the World Bank. This measure is the equivalent to earning \$1.00 a day in 1996 US prices, hence the widely-used expression, living on "less than a dollar a day. The clear majority of those in extreme poverty – 96% – reside in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, The West Indies, East Asia and the Pacific; nearly half live in India and China alone.

That may sound like a special case. Civil wars are obviously damaging, and not many countries suffer them. True, but a lot of others are trapped in persistent, pervasive lawlessness. The reports reckon that 1.5 billion people live in countries affected by political violence, organized crime, exceptionally high murder rates or low-intensity conflicts. All this falls short of civil war, but the effects can be as bad.

Many of these people are caught in cycles of violence. Almost all the 39 countries which have suffered civil wars since 2000 also had one in the previous three decades—something that was true of far fewer in the 1960s. Moreover, "lesser" forms of violence are worsening to a point where they can be more deadly than civil war itself. In Guatemala, more people are now being murdered each year (mostly by gangs) than were killed in the country's civil war in the 1980s.

The reduction of extreme poverty and hunger was the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG1), as set by 189 United Nations Member States in 2000. Specifically, MDG1 set a target of reducing the extreme poverty rate in half by 2015, a goal that was met 5 years ahead of schedule. This goal was created to end poverty in all its forms everywhere, and the international community, including the UN, the World Bank and the United States, has set a target of ending extreme poverty by 2030.

We often hear about people's desire to solve world hunger, or to be able to feed the world and help alleviate the suffering associated with it.

However, meaningful long-term alleviation to hunger is rooted in the alleviation of poverty, as poverty leads to hunger. World hunger is a terrible symptom of world poverty. If efforts are only directed at providing food, or improving food production or distribution, then the structural root causes that create hunger, poverty and dependency would still remain. And so while continuous effort, resources and energies are deployed to relieve hunger through these technical measures, the political causes require political solutions as well.

There are many inter-related issues causing hunger, which are related to economics and other factors that cause poverty. They include land rights and ownership, diversion of land use to non-productive use, increasing emphasis on export-oriented agriculture, inefficient agricultural practices, war, famine, drought, over-fishing, poor crop yields, etc. This section introduces some of these issues.

Solving world hunger in the conventional sense (of providing/growing more food etc) will not tackle poverty that leads to hunger in the first place. Further, there is a risk of continuing the poverty and dependency without realizing it, because the act of attempting to provide more food etc can appear so altruistic in motive. To solve world hunger in the long run, poverty alleviation is required.

The food scarcity part of the argument in the population debate is an interesting one -- people are hungry not because the population is growing so fast that food is becoming scarce, but because people cannot afford it. Food may be scarce, but it is international trade, economic policies and the control of land that have led to immense poverty and hunger and therefore less access to food, not food scarcity due to over population.

Getting to zero

Using the World Bank definition of \$1.25/day, as of September 2013, roughly 1.3 billion people remain in extreme poverty (or roughly 1 in 6 people) (of ~7.1 billion people in same time frame). Nearly half live in India and China, with more than 85% living in just 20 countries. Since the mid-1990s, there has been a steady decline in both the worldwide poverty rate and the total number of extreme poor. In 1990, the percentage of the global population living in extreme poverty was 43.1%, but in 2011, that percentage had dropped down to 20.6%.

The following facts about hunger and poverty reported by THE HUNGER PROJECT

#### World Population

+7 billion

#### World Hunger

795 million people – or one in nine people in the world – do not have enough to eat.

98% of the world's undernourished people live in developing countries.

Where is hunger the worst?

Asia: 525.6 million

Sub-Saharan Africa: 214 million

Latin America and the Caribbean: 37 million

#### Women and Children

60 percent of the world's hungry are women.

50 percent of pregnant women in developing countries lack proper maternal care, resulting in approximately 300,000 maternal deaths annually from childbirth.

1 out of 6 infants are born with a low birth weight in developing countries.

Nearly half of all deaths in children under 5 are attributable to under-nutrition. This translates into the unnecessary loss of about 3 million young lives a year.

Every 10 seconds, a child dies from hunger-related diseases.

#### HIV/AIDS and other Diseases

36.9 million people are living with HIV/AIDS.

50 percent of people living with HIV/AIDS are women.

88 percent of all children and 60 percent of all women living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa.

6.3 million children died in 2013 – 17,000 a day- mostly from preventable health issues such as malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia.

#### Poverty

About 896 million people in developing countries live on \$1.90 a day or less.

22,000 children die each day due to conditions of poverty.

#### Agriculture

70 percent of the world's poorest people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture and related activities for their livelihood.

50 percent of hungry people are farming families.

#### Water and sanitation

663 million people lack access to clean water.

2.4 billion people do not have adequate sanitation.

Each day, nearly 1,000 children die due to preventable water and sanitation-related diarrheal diseases.

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