



**GALMUN 2025**  
*in partnership with*  
*RETORIKA FOR MULTICULTURALISM*



**UNICEF**  
**Research Report**

*Food Security and Nutrition:  
Ensuring a Healthy Future for Children in Developing Countries.*

## **DEFINITIONS:**

**The right to food:** is a fundamental human right that entitles individuals to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food.<sup>1</sup>

**Food security:** is a concept that refers to the state in which all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. It's an outcome that can indicate whether or not the right to food is being realized effectively. There are four dimensions of food security: Availability, Access, Utilization and Stability.<sup>2</sup>

**The right to health:** is a fundamental human right. According to the Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO), it's defined as "The right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health."<sup>3</sup>

**Cost-of-living crisis:** when the cost of basic things needed for life is rising much faster than most people's incomes, with the result that most people have less money to spend on things that they need.<sup>4</sup>

**Turbulent economic and political climate:** refers to instability, unpredictability and rapid changes in both economic and political fields.

**Climate extremes:** events such as hurricanes, heat waves and floods. Though they are rare, they can have a huge impact within the areas where they take place.<sup>5</sup>

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1 *About the Right to Food and Human Rights.* Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2023, [www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-food/about-right-food-and-human-rights](http://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-food/about-right-food-and-human-rights).

2 *Food Security Update: What is Food Security?* World Bank, 2023, [www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update/what-is-food-security](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update/what-is-food-security).

3 *The Right to Health, Factsheet No. 31.* United Nations, p.5, 2008, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Factsheet31.pdf>.

4 *Cost of Living Crisis.* Cambridge Dictionary, [dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cost-of-living-crisis](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cost-of-living-crisis).

5 *Climate Extremes.* GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel, [www.geomar.de/en/fbl-me/climate-extremes](http://www.geomar.de/en/fbl-me/climate-extremes).

## **BACKGROUND:**

Food security and nutrition are complex multidimensional concepts that need a lot of effort and work to achieve because they do not neatly fit into sector-defined frameworks. In previous years, the intensity of food insecurity and malnutrition around the world has increased and has had a severe impact on children, particularly in developing countries. Several major factors led to this such as the turbulent economic and political climate since 2008, the consumption of unhealthy food environments, the lack of access to and unaffordability of healthy diets and more has contributed to worsening food insecurity.

We can recognize numerous factors that lead to food insecurity and malnutrition. The external factors include conflicts, pandemics, extreme climate conditions and other disrupting events that make it harder to maintain a stable supply of food. Internal factors can include low productivity, insufficient supply of nutritious food, exploitative food manufacturing practices (also known as “food fraud”) and more.

The Covid-19 pandemic that has caused much suffering around the globe has also left a long-lasting effect on the food security of millions around the globe. It has revealed the fragilities in agrifood systems and the inequalities in societies, driving increases in world hunger and severe food insecurity. Evidence from 2020 suggests that the number of people unable to afford a healthy diet around the world rose by 112 million to almost 3.1 billion, which reflects the impacts of rising consumer food prices during the pandemic. As a result of the high demand for food products and the desperation it entails, this naturally opened up more chances for food fraud and indeed there has been an increase in such instances since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The impacts of COVID-19 and rising costs of living had a severe effect on world populations, especially children as there was an increase in the number of children lacking essential nutrients. This, coupled with the increased lack of accessibility to health, nutrition, and other life-saving services, has increased the risk of children from suffering long-lasting effects on their health and development. In the 15 worst affected countries, more than 30 million children suffered from ‘wasting’, a medical term referring to suffering from high undernutrition. This poses a major threat to children’s lives and their long-term health and development.<sup>6</sup>

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6 *Urgent Action Needed as Acute Malnutrition Threatens the Lives of Millions of Vulnerable Children.* World Health Organization (WHO), 12 Jan. 2023, [www.who.int/news/item/12-01-2023-urgent-action-needed-as-acute-malnutrition-threatens-the-lives-of-millions-of-vulnerable-children](https://www.who.int/news/item/12-01-2023-urgent-action-needed-as-acute-malnutrition-threatens-the-lives-of-millions-of-vulnerable-children).

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Additionally, the war in Ukraine, which has been ongoing since 2022, disrupted supply chains and affected prices of grain, fertilizer and energy, which are critical resources the agriculture industry relies on for various operations such as: fertilizer production, water irrigation, manufacturing and packaging. These disruptions, coupled with frequent and extreme climate events resulted in further food price increases and setbacks in the supply chains, especially in low-income countries in the first half of 2022.

Food fraud, especially ones committed by multi-billion corporations, have also a detrimental effect on food security of children. According to a research conducted by Oxford University, the most successful global food companies are reliant on selling food and drinks that harm children's health.<sup>7</sup> As a result of the turbulent economic and political climate, big food corporations started engaging in food fraud, such as mislabeling and substitution of ingredients that can pose serious risks to consumers, especially those with allergies. Additionally, companies nowadays alter ingredients in products sold in developing countries for profit, even if it means sacrificing product quality or nutritional values.

An example of a huge food scandal is Nestle's Sugar Scandal (2024). It was revealed that the Swiss multinational corporation Nestle, that produces essential products such as baby formula and other nutritional products for children, has been adding sugar to their products sold in developing countries, but on the other hand doesn't add sugar to the same products sold in the Western hemisphere. Pediatricians and child nutrition experts criticize this double standard that is unjustifiable and problematic from ethical and public health perspectives.<sup>8</sup> This is because adding sugar in food for babies and young children contributes to many poor health outcomes as they develop, such as malnutrition and obesity, which increase the risk of chronic diseases, including heart disease and diabetes, ultimately leading to higher mortality rates. Nestle's motivation for doing so is due to sugar's highly addictive nature. As such, consuming highly sugared food products since early childhood would condition their palates to prefer sweetened foods and thus increasing demand (and therefore profits) while

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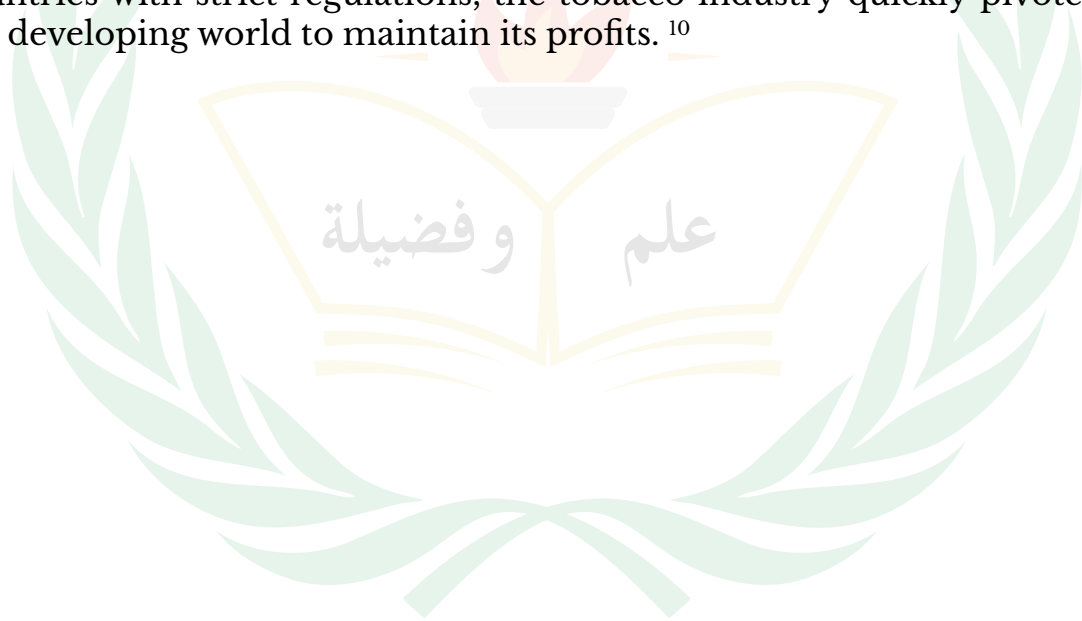
7 *Research Reveals Big Food Companies Rely on Profiting from Children's Health*. School Food Matters, [www.schoolfoodmatters.org/news-views/news/news-and-views/research-reveals-big-food-companies-rely-profiting-childrens-health#](http://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/news-views/news/news-and-views/research-reveals-big-food-companies-rely-profiting-childrens-health#).

8 Kritischer Konsum, "Nestlé: Sugar for Nestlé – Not All Babies Are Equal". *Public Eye*, 2024, [www.publiceye.ch/en/media-corner/press-releases/detail/sugar-for-nestle-not-all-babies-are-equal](http://www.publiceye.ch/en/media-corner/press-releases/detail/sugar-for-nestle-not-all-babies-are-equal).

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also negatively affecting the health of many.<sup>9</sup> The scandal has caused many to criticize this practice and the United Nations has emphasized its call for a ban on added sugar in products for babies and young children under three years of age.

Another example are the practices of soda companies such as Coca-Cola and PepsiCo, who despite making public pledges not to market their products to children, are clearly still targeting children through indirect marketing techniques like: cartoon characters, celebrities, campaigns and more. The soda industry has also turned to developing countries, where growing populations, growing incomes, and weaker regulations around marketing unhealthy products help maintain their profits. President of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, an NGO based in Washington DC specializing in monitoring practices that harm consumer health, has stated that the soda industry is using very similar strategies to those used by the tobacco industry in the past. When cigarette sales declined in developed countries with strict regulations, the tobacco industry quickly pivoted to the developing world to maintain its profits.<sup>10</sup>



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9 Kathrin Auwarter, Uncovering the Secrets of the Global Food Industry. *Harvard International Review*, 2024, [hir.harvard.edu/uncovering-the-secrets-of-the-global-food-industry/](http://hir.harvard.edu/uncovering-the-secrets-of-the-global-food-industry/).

10 CSPI: Center for Science in the Public Interest. Center for Science in the Public Interest, [www.cspinet.org/new/201602091.html](http://www.cspinet.org/new/201602091.html).

## TREATIES AND ORGANIZATIONS:

**United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF):** is a program of the United Nations devoted to aiding national efforts to improve Health, Nutrition, Education and general well being of children.<sup>11</sup>

**The International Food Security Treaty (IFST):** An international agreement aimed to end world hunger.<sup>12</sup>

**World Trade Organization (WTO):** is the major global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.

<sup>13</sup>**UN System Chief Executive Board for Coordination (UNSCEB):** its role is to strengthen the coherence and impact of the UN system.

**International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN):** an international network aiming to improve maternal and infant and young child health.<sup>14</sup>

**The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI):** is an independent, non-profit organization that envisions a healthy population with reduced impact of preventable diseases and an equitable food system that makes healthy, sustainable food accessible to all.<sup>15</sup>

**Save The Children:** an international non-governmental humanitarian organization to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn, and protection from harm.<sup>16</sup>

**The World Health Organization (WHO):** is the United Nations agency that connects nations, partners and people to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable.<sup>17</sup>

**World Health Assembly (WHA):** is the decision-making body of WHO.<sup>18</sup>

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11 *UNICEF*. Encyclopedia Britannica, [www.britannica.com/topic/UNICEF](http://www.britannica.com/topic/UNICEF).

12 *End Hunger by Law: Final Report*. Global Alliance for the Right to Food and Nutrition (GAJE), 8 May 2010, [resources.gaje.org/wp-content/uploads/gravity\\_forms/12/2011/06/Final%20-%20End%20Hunger%20By%20Law%20\\_EHTL\\_%205-8-10.pdf](http://resources.gaje.org/wp-content/uploads/gravity_forms/12/2011/06/Final%20-%20End%20Hunger%20By%20Law%20_EHTL_%205-8-10.pdf).

13 *The World Trade Organization*. World Trade Organization (WTO), [www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/thewto\\_e.htm#:~:text=The%20World%20Trade%20Organization%20](http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/thewto_e.htm#:~:text=The%20World%20Trade%20Organization%20).

14 *IBFAN*. International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), [www.ibfan.org/](http://www.ibfan.org/).

15 *CSPI: Center for Science in the Public Interest*. Center for Science in the Public Interest, [www.cspinet.org/#:~:text=CSPI%20is%20an%20independent%2C%20nonprofit,on%20nutrition%20and%20food%20safety](http://www.cspinet.org/#:~:text=CSPI%20is%20an%20independent%2C%20nonprofit,on%20nutrition%20and%20food%20safety).

16 *Save the Children*. Save the Children, [www.savethechildren.org/](http://www.savethechildren.org/).

17 *About WHO*. World Health Organization (WHO), [www.who.int/about](http://www.who.int/about).

18 *World Health Assembly*. World Health Organization (WHO), [www.who.int/about/governance/world-health-assembly](http://www.who.int/about/governance/world-health-assembly).

## **CURRENT SITUATION:**

It is estimated that between 713 and 757 million people around the world may have faced hunger in 2023.<sup>19</sup> This shows an increase of around 152 million people facing hunger in the world compared to 2019.<sup>20</sup> Children and women have been hit the hardest. There were over 36 million acutely malnourished children under age 5 across 32 countries in 2023.<sup>21</sup> As shown above, many factors contribute to this such as external disrupting factors, including the war in Ukraine and the aftereffects of Covid-19 pandemic on the world economy and supply-lines which lead to increased costs of food products. In addition, internal factors such as food fraud, making use of the increased demand in food products, have managed to produce and sell food that has a detrimental effect on the nutritional consumption of children around the world, especially in developing countries, thus putting their food security at risk rather than protecting it.

## **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

- How can the UNICEF committee ensure food security worldwide?
- What can be done to secure the supply lines of food products in the face of external factors?
- What measures can be taken to decrease hunger?
- What diplomatic efforts can the countries make in order to shield children from the food corporations changing ingredients?
- Does your country have food security? If not, what are the measures that are taken in order to solve this issue?
- What are your country's actions to stop multi-billion dollar food corporations from using misleading ingredients that harm children and people's health?
- How is public awareness being raised regarding food corporations using misleading ingredients and what steps are being taken to educate people about it?
- Is your country affected majorly by the Cost-Of-Living crisis? If yes, does it have programs and services that address this problem?

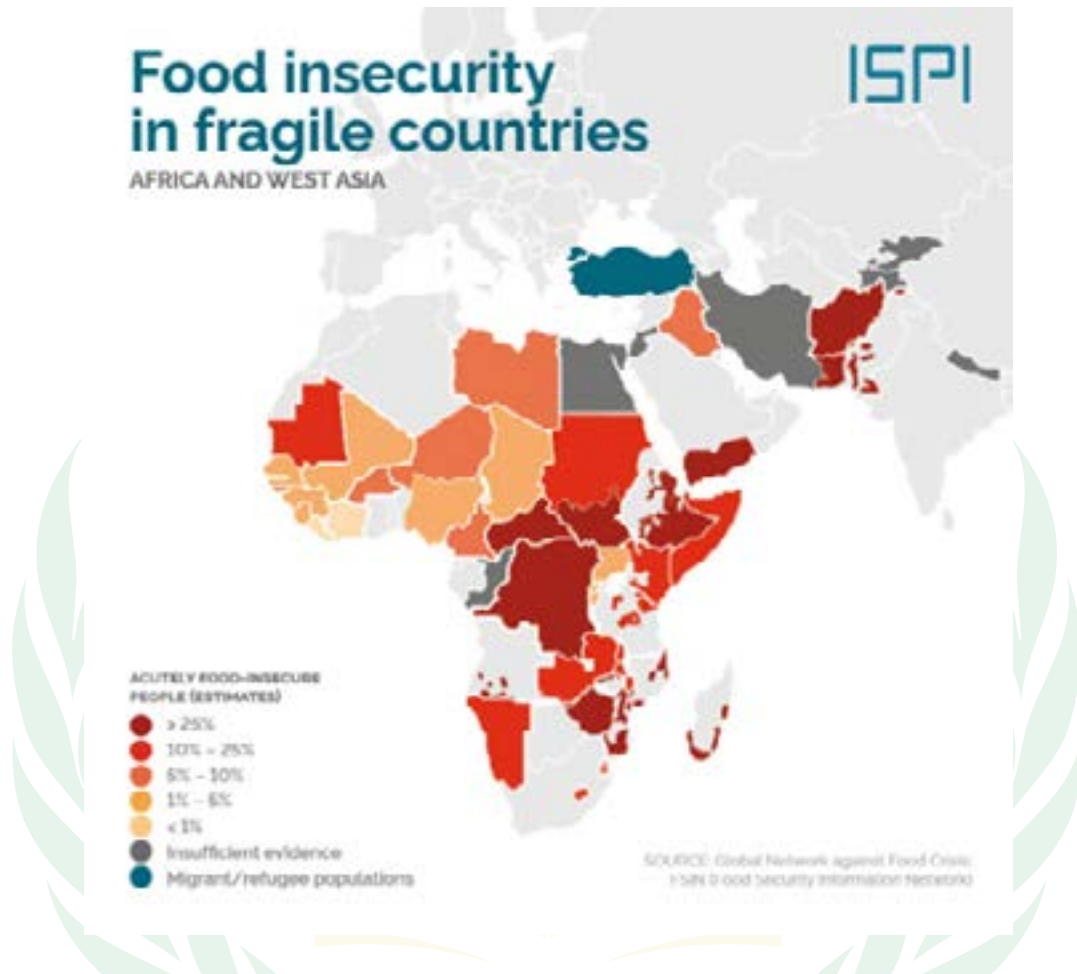
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19 *Uncovering the Secrets of the Global Food Industry*. Harvard International Review, [hir.harvard.edu/uncovering-the-secrets-of-the-global-food-industry/](http://hir.harvard.edu/uncovering-the-secrets-of-the-global-food-industry/).

20 *World Food Programme: Nutrition*. World Food Programme (WFP), [docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000140990/download/?\\_ga=2.34564769.1644605667.1730903838-1112037384.1730903836](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000140990/download/?_ga=2.34564769.1644605667.1730903838-1112037384.1730903836).

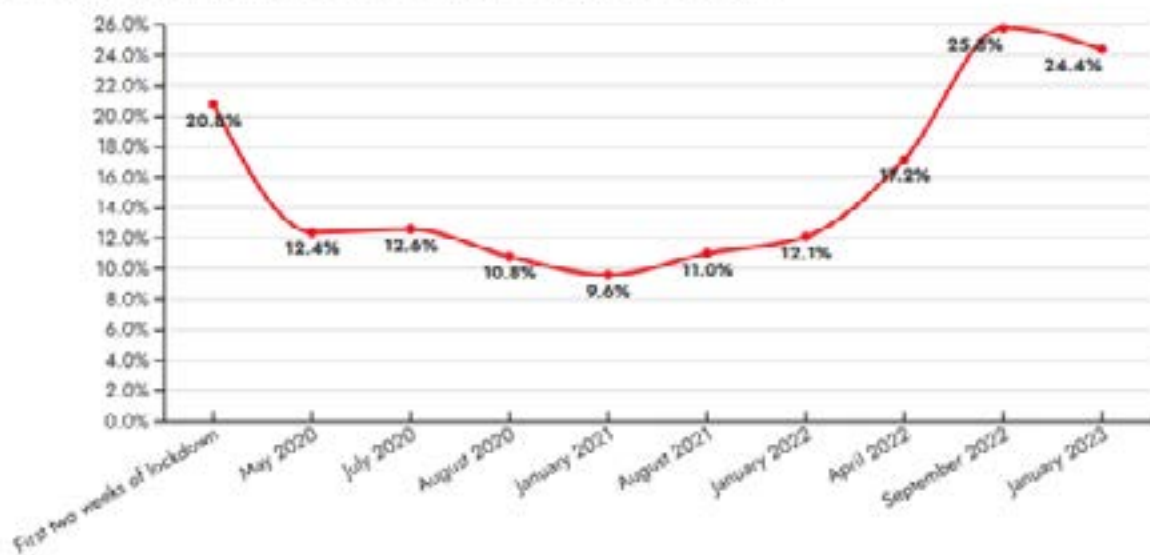
21 *What is Child Wasting?* UNICEF USA, [www.unicefusa.org/stories/what-child-wasting](http://www.unicefusa.org/stories/what-child-wasting).

## RELEVANT MEDIA AND HELPFUL RESOURCES:



### One in four households with children (24.4%) experienced food insecurity in January 2023

Percentage of households with children that are experiencing food insecurity\*:





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- UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/>.
- Food companies are swapping ingredients with lower-quality substitutes to cut costs <https://mcgill.ca/macdonald/channels/news/food-companies-are-swapping-ingredients-lower-quality-substitutes-cut-costs-experts-say-350487>
- Food security and nutrition in the world 2022: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000140990/download/?ga=2.34564769.1644605667.1730903838-1112037384.1730903836>.
- On Food Fraud <https://hir.harvard.edu/uncovering-the-secrets-of-the-global-food-industry/>.
- Save the Children <https://www.savethechildren.org/>.
- WHO <https://www.who.int/about>.
- “Nestlé Adds Sugar to Baby Milk and Cereal in Poorer Nations, Report Finds” <https://time.com/6968112/nestle-sugar-baby-milk-cereal-poorer-nations/>.
- “Soda companies turning to low- and middle-income countries to replace sagging U.S. soda sales” <https://www.cspinet.org/new/201602091.html>.

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