

The Importance of Understanding Hunger

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As George Eliot once said, “no man can be wise on an empty stomach.” Without their basic needs met, people are far less likely to improve in other essential areas such as education and economy.

How does the health of individuals affect our global health? As responsible global citizens, it is important to make sustainable personal choices and provide resources to help others meet their basic needs.

Students have diverse levels of experience with hunger, from awareness to personal experience. Some come from homes with plentiful healthy food choices, while others do not have many healthy choices available to them. The goal of this set of activities is to raise awareness of nutrition needs for all and to empower students to take personal action to make responsible choices about health that are sustainable for themselves and others.

In our interconnected world, global citizens share resources and learn from one another. By learning about the prevalence of hunger and international famine, they gain the foundation they need to make life-long choices with awareness of their own impact on others. Providing students with interesting facts and up-close looks at the state of international hunger will help to engage them in taking action and bolster their understanding of the issue.

A Closer Look: Some Startling Facts about Hunger across the Globe from DoSomething.org

- The world produces enough food to feed all 7 billion of the population, but people who go hungry either don't have land to grow food or money to buy it.
- Poverty is the main cause of hunger. Poverty may come from lack of resources, unequal income distribution, or conflict in a country.
- Poor nutrition plays a role in half of the deaths of children.
- 815 million people worldwide suffer from hunger, meaning they consume less than 2,100 calories per day.

Report: State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2017 <http://www.fao.org/state-of-food-security-nutrition/en/>

A Comparative Look:

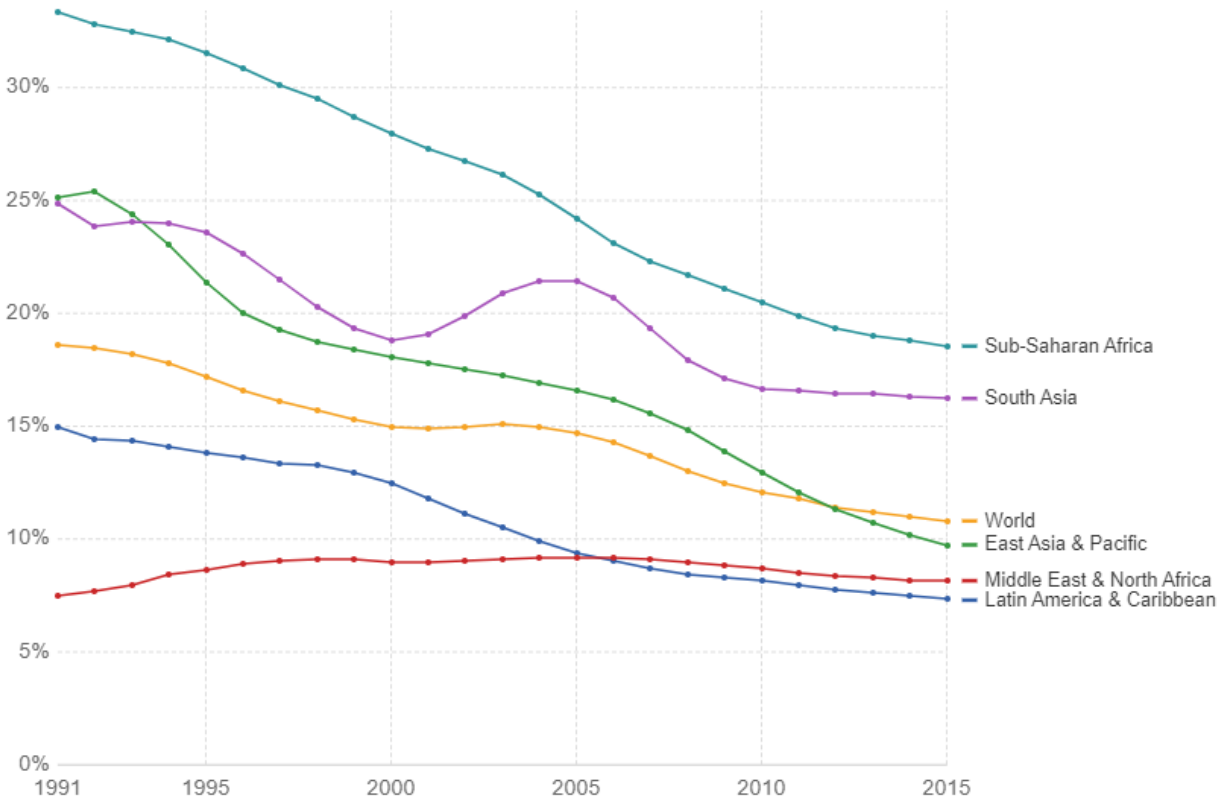
We know that hunger is a worldwide problem. Many people may not realize hunger is widespread within the United States. Below is a graph showing populations of food



insecurity around the globe. This may be used as a resource in the context of the upcoming activities.

Share of the population that is undernourished

This is the main FAO hunger indicator. It measures the share of the population that has a caloric intake which is insufficient to meet the minimum energy requirements necessary for a given individual. Data showing as 5 may signify a prevalence of undernourishment below 5%.



Source: World Bank

OurWorldInData.org/hunger-and-undernourishment/ • CC BY-SA

Note: Developed countries are not included in the regional estimates since the prevalence is below 5%.

Background:

Kids who don't get enough to eat — especially during their first three years — begin life at a serious disadvantage. When they're hungry, children are more likely to be hospitalized and they face higher risks of health conditions like anemia and asthma. And as they grow up, kids struggling to get enough to eat are more likely to have problems in school and other social situations (Feeding America, 2017).

Although the majority of hungry people live in developing countries, hunger is also an issue in developed countries. (Food and Agriculture Organization

<http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/icn2/faq/en/>)

