

## PRESS RELEASE

**For immediate release  
October 11, 2010**

**For more information, please contact:**

Michael Rubinstein, [m.rubinstein@cgiar.org](mailto:m.rubinstein@cgiar.org), +1 (202) 862-5670  
Simone Pott, [Simone.Pott@welthungerhilfe.de](mailto:Simone.Pott@welthungerhilfe.de), +49 228-2288-132  
Paul O'Mahony, [Paul.OMahony@concern.net](mailto:Paul.OMahony@concern.net), +353 (1) 479 1309

### **Improve Child Nutrition to Reduce Global Hunger, Says New Global Hunger Index**

**Washington, D.C.** –Malnutrition among children under two years of age is one of the leading challenges to reducing global hunger and can cause lifelong harm to health, productivity, and earning potential, according to the 2010 Global Hunger Index (GHI).

Released in advance of World Food Day (October 16) for the fifth year, the report is published by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Welthungerhilfe, and Concern Worldwide.

The Index scores countries based on three equally weighted indicators: the proportion of people who are undernourished, the proportion of children under five who are underweight, and the child mortality rate. The biggest contributor to the global score is child undernutrition, which accounts for almost half of the score.

“To improve their scores, many countries must accelerate progress in reducing child malnutrition. Considerable research shows that the window of opportunity for improving nutrition spans from conception to age two. After age two, the negative effects of undernutrition are largely irreversible,” explained Marie Ruel, director of IFPRI’s Poverty, Health and Nutrition division and co-author of the report.

The Index is calculated for 122 developing and transition countries for which data on the three components of hunger are available. Twenty-nine countries have levels of hunger that are “extremely alarming” or “alarming.” Most of these countries are in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

While the highest regional GHI scores are for South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia has made much more progress since 1990. In South Asia, the low nutritional, educational, and social status of women is among the major factors that contribute to a high prevalence of malnutrition in children under five.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, low government effectiveness, conflict, political instability, and high rates of HIV and AIDS are among the major factors that lead to high child mortality and a high proportion of people who cannot meet their calorie requirements. In some countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, for example Burundi, Madagascar, and Malawi, about half of the children are stunted (low height for age) due to poor nutrition.

The burden of child undernutrition could be cut by 25-36 percent by providing universal preventive health services and nutrition interventions for children under two and their mothers during pregnancy and lactation.

“The health of women, specifically mothers, is crucial to reducing child malnutrition. Mothers who were poorly nourished as girls tend to give birth to underweight babies, perpetuating the cycle of undernutrition,” noted Welthungerhilfe chairperson Bärbel Dieckmann. “Nutrition interventions should be targeted towards girls and women throughout the life cycle and especially as adolescents before they become pregnant.”

The report recommends that to reduce global hunger, countries must:

- target interventions where they will do the most good – among pregnant and breastfeeding women and children in their first two years of life;

- address the underlying causes of undernutrition, including poverty, gender inequality, and conflict;
- engage, empower, and support those working at the local level to improve nutrition;
- and make nutrition, especially for young children, a political priority.

“Ensuring appropriate and adequate nutrition during the first 1,000 days is absolutely critical,” said Concern Worldwide CEO Tom Arnold. “This Global Hunger Index report sets out clear recommendations to inform and encourage the international community to take decisive action on this issue.”

###

The Global Hunger Index, fact sheets, and related information are available at:  
<http://www.ifpri.org/pressroom/briefing/2010-global-hunger-index-crisis-child-undernutrition>

*The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI is one of 15 centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, an alliance of 64 governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations. Please visit our website at [www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org).*

*Welthungerhilfe is one of the largest non-governmental aid organisations in Germany. It provides fully integrated aid from one source, ranging from rapid emergency relief to reconstruction programmes, as well as long-term projects with local partner organisations following the principle of help towards self-help. Since its foundation in 1962, more than 6,247 projects have been carried out in 70 countries with a total funding of €2.03 billion, striving for a world without hunger or poverty. For further information, visit [www.welthungerhilfe.de](http://www.welthungerhilfe.de).*

*Concern Worldwide is an international non-governmental humanitarian organization dedicated to the reduction of suffering and working towards the ultimate elimination of extreme poverty in the world's poorest countries. The public can receive regular updates online through the Concern website, [www.concern.net](http://www.concern.net).*