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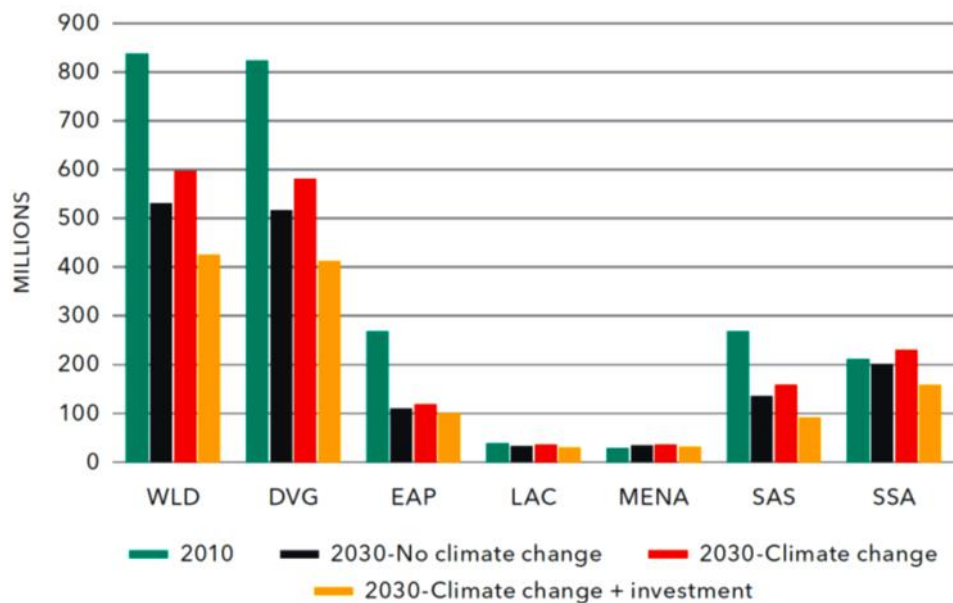
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Public-Private Partnership for Addressing Southeast Asia's Growing Hunger Problem

POPULATION AT RISK OF HUNGER IN 2030



Source: International Food Policy Research Institute, 2018 Global Food Policy Report. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute, 2018, p.132.
Note: WLD = World; DVG = Developing countries; EAP = East Asia and Pacific; LAC = Latin America and Caribbean; MENA = Middle East and North Africa; SAS = South Asia; SSA = Africa south of the Sahara.

World Hunger Day 2019 on 28th May provides an opportunity to recognise an emerging problem faced by Southeast Asia: for the first time in a decade, the region saw hunger levels increase, with 3 million more people undernourished from 2014 to 2016. This is based on the *State of Food Security in the World 2018 Report* by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN FAO). It shows a reversal of past regional trends wherein the number of undernourished people fell by an average of 4.55 million per year from 2005 to 2014, an upset to the Sustainable Development Goal of 'zero hunger' by 2030. By 2017, the number of undernourished people rose by 100,000, for a total of 63.7 million in Southeast Asia alone.

The worsening hunger problem in the region coincides with longer-term trends of increasing numbers of extreme climate-related disasters

(droughts, floods, extreme temperature and storms) over the past decades. Disasters can wipe out entire batches of crops before they can be harvested, while increasing variability in temperature and rainfall makes environments less conducive to plant growth. In fact, increases in undernourishment occurred alongside severe drought in 27 countries, globally, according to the UN FAO. Moreover, countries around the world with 'high exposure' to these extremes (defined as experiencing climate extremes in more than 3 years of the period 2011- 2016) have had 351 million more people who are undernourished, compared to countries with 'low exposure'.

Food prices are a key mechanism through which these food production disruptions affect hunger. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) projects that by 2050, reduced production yields alongside competing

uses of scarce resources like land and water, could lead rice prices to increase by 113 percent to 121 percent in the face of climate change, in comparison to a 61 percent increase if there was no climate change. This is important as rice is a key staple that makes a significant share of Asian diets.

While GDP per capita, especially in developing countries, is expected to increase at a faster rate on average than the price increase, some segments of the population remain vulnerable, especially as economic inequality is still prevalent in the region. Poorer populations in urban areas would be disproportionately affected by food price increases, as they already spend a significant share of their income on food, but may not have the alternative of subsistence production given the higher opportunity cost of land in cities. Worst hit would be rural farming communities, who apart from facing high-

er food prices, would also lose agricultural income from poor harvests during supply disruptions.

One way forward is for farmers to tailor practices and adopt climate adaptive agricultural technologies (CAATs). These include smart irrigation that boosts water-use efficiency; digital technologies that optimise the use of nutrients for plant growth; and crop varieties that can withstand unfavourable environments, among others. IFPRI projects that these could reduce the number of people at risk of hunger to approximately 420 million people, or 5 percent of total population by 2030.

Public-private partnerships offer one way of allowing farmers to access these technologies. In 2017, for instance, car manufacturer Toyota signed an agricultural partnership with the Ishikawa Prefecture in Japan, wherein the former would apply its 'kaizen' (continuous

improvement) production management system to boost farming efficiency across Ishikawa's municipalities, training its agricultural advisers on gathering and analysing farm data. These advisers will, in turn, transfer this knowledge to farmers. Such an approach can be promoted in Southeast Asia, to complement existing approaches such as the Greater Mekong Sub-region Core Agriculture Support Program by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the UN FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Suggested Readings

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CLIMATE SECURITY

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ENERGY SECURITY

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FOOD SECURITY



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HEALTH SECURITY



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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

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Start network launches new charity to transform the global humanitarian sector

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Myanmar launches framework for migrant workers management

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