



**PANOS**  
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**ILLUMINATING**  
**VOICES**

# Hungry in the city

Profiles of people facing hunger  
in five countries

‘When I go to bed hungry, I can feel anger boiling inside me. Sometimes I quietly curse everyone around me. Other times, I say it out loud. Hunger makes me angry.’

**Lakshmi Kumari**  
Maid, Delhi, India

‘It seems the global volatility of food prices is here to stay, and the era of cheap food is over.’

**Bekele Geleta**  
Secretary General, International  
Federation of Red Cross and  
Red Crescent Societies (IFRC),  
*World Disasters Report 2011*

**Promoting dialogue, debate and change**

## Introduction

Cover image: Boys on a street in Kyebando slum in Kampala.

MIKKEL OSTERGAARD | PANOS PICTURES

In the final months of 2011, world food prices remain significantly higher than in 2010. These price hikes hit poorer people particularly hard, forcing them to cut back on the quantity and quality of food they eat. Poor nutrition, brought on by a lack of good quality food, reduces people's resistance to disease and makes outbreaks of preventable diseases more likely.

The annual World Disasters Report 2011, published by The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), surveys the state of the world's food security. It argues that the global food system is failing almost one billion hungry and malnourished people and highlights how a new round of steep price rises in basic foods is hitting the poorest people the hardest.

The majority of the world's hungry live in rural areas but increasing numbers are being forced to move to the cities to escape poverty. Around 35 million undernourished people live in towns and cities. Rapid urbanisation is pulling more poverty into cities. The global population is expected to increase to 9.1 billion by 2050 and experts predict there may not be enough food to feed everyone. Most of this population increase will take place in urban areas in low and middle-income nations. According to the UN, by 2030 more than four billion people will live in cities so the numbers of urban poor are likely to rise.

This media brief from Panos London selects case studies of individuals and communities in five cities: Islamabad, Delhi, São Paulo, Buenos Aires and Kampala.

'...they are also the powerless, those without the means to withstand the effects of climate change, increasing food and energy prices, and the negative impacts of agribusiness, the global marketplace and unfair terms of trade.'

**Bekele Geleta**

Secretary General, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC),  
*World Disasters Report 2011*

One of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals is to halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015. It is unlikely that these targets can be achieved without further investment in agriculture and social protection.

**High density housing, Nairobi.**  
**By 2030 more than 4 billion people**  
**will live in cities.**

ADRIAN GATHU | PANOS LONDON



### Where the hungry live

Ninety-eight per cent of the undernourished live in developing countries. **UN figures for 2010**

- Sub-Saharan Africa: 239 million
- Asia and the Pacific: 578 million
- Latin America and the Caribbean: 53 million
- Near East and North Africa: 37 million
- Rest of world: 19 million.

### Facts

- In 2005 it was estimated that malnutrition cost the global economy around US 80 billion dollars. **World Bank**
- Women make up a little over half of the world's population, but they account for over 60 per cent of the world's hungry. **ECOSOC, 2007**
- The number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day is projected to be 883 million by 2015. **World Bank**
- Malnourished mothers are more likely to have underweight babies. **IFRC**
- 44 million more people are estimated to have become poorer between June and December 2010 because of higher food prices. **World Bank 2011**
- 10.9 million children under five die in developing countries each year. Malnutrition and hunger-related diseases cause 60 per cent of the deaths. **UNICEF, 2007**

## Hungry voices from around the world

### Pakistan

#### Overview

High food prices have significantly affected food security. Since 2005 the food insecure population has increased by an estimated 12 million people. Food prices in Pakistan have hovered near an all-time peak since late 2010, sending tens of millions of Pakistanis deeper into poverty. After decades of steady progress in the fight against hunger, the number of people without enough to eat is again rising in Pakistan and could soon be at dangerous levels. Nearly two thirds of the population spends between 50 and 70 per cent of their income on food, making them vulnerable to rising prices. An Oxfam global food survey carried out in 2011 has revealed that the cost of food was the biggest worry of a majority of respondents in Pakistan, and they were not eating the same food as they did two years ago – the period before the current food price crisis began. Only 45 per cent of the people surveyed in Pakistan said that they always had enough food to eat on a daily basis, but 51 per cent listed the cost of food as one of their top concerns.

*'I live in a rented house with my nine children and wife and mother. My brother lives upstairs with his seven children. Altogether we are around 20 people. Before the floods came we were quite prosperous – we grew our own vegetables on our land and had fruit trees and my restaurant would do quite well during the summer tourist season in Swat.*

*'But the floods have taken everything from us – they even destroyed our ancestral graveyard. We have nothing to go back to. The government did help us in the beginning. They gave us Rs20,000 [£148/€170] and that supported us while we stayed at different relatives homes before moving to Islamabad last year. Now we survive on my earnings from driving a rented taxi, which is around Rs400–700 [£2.88/€3.30–£5/€5.77] a day. I have taken several loans from my more well off relatives amounting to around Rs500,000 [£3,600/€4,123]. I had to take this money to settle in my family and to make sure the children keep on going to school.'*

**Musheer Ahmed, Islamabad, Pakistan**

As told to journalist Rina Saeed Khan

*'Food inflation has risen to alarming levels. Three years ago, a bag of wheat cost Rs450 [£4.50/€3.82] for 40kg – now it costs Rs950 [£7/€8], which means a 200 per cent increase in prices. Milk prices are also increasing. Pakistan is one of highest milk producers in the world, yet milk now costs around Rs60 [£0.45/€0.50] per kilo in the rural areas, which is almost equivalent to what Nestle and other milk companies are selling in packets in the cities!'*

**Qasim Shah, Director, Programme Development,  
Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad**

As told to Rina Saeed Khan



**Musheer Ahmed no longer grows food for his family**

RINA SAEED KHAN | PANOS LONDON

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**Lakshmi Kumari**

SURYATAPA BHATTACHARYA | PANOS LONDON

## India

### Overview

India has a rapidly growing economy, yet a sizeable proportion of its 1.2 billion population is under-nourished. Today, more than three quarters of the population live in households with calorie consumption per head below 2,100 per day in urban areas and 2,400 per day in rural areas – numbers that are often cited as ‘minimum requirements’ for people in India. **Angus Deaton, Jean Drèze, Princeton University**

Food inflation is rising in India at a rate of 10 per cent a year. Food prices have hovered at elevated levels for more than two years due to increased demand. The Reserve Bank of India attributes this to growing prosperity in the country that has led to increased consumption of high-protein foods such as eggs, fish, meat and milk. This inflation hits the poorest the hardest. Of India’s 1.9 billion people, 34 per cent live on less than US\$1 a day, and 80 per cent on less than US\$2 a day.

*‘I am a maid. I share a one-room apartment with eight people, including my husband’s brothers and sisters, his mother, my husband and our child. I came to New Delhi after I was married two and a half years ago. Three of us work to support the rest of the family. I earn 2,500 [£32.80/€37.50] rupees a month working in three different homes every day. At night I make dinner for everyone. I eat after everyone else has had their meal. If there is not enough, I go to bed hungry. We pay almost twice for what we used to buy before, so we have cut down on eating meat, but everyone eats the same amount of food – except for me. When I go to bed hungry, I can feel anger boiling inside me. Sometimes I quietly curse everyone around me. Other times, I say it out loud. Hunger makes me angry.’*

#### **Lakshmi Kumari, Delhi**

As told to journalist Suryatapa Bhattacharya

*‘Delhi is open to migrants who come in search of work because under- or unemployment pushes people to migrate from agricultural areas to a city, but they have no skills here and it further deteriorates into urban hunger. Climate change is pushing those who depend on rain-fed agriculture to migrate.’*

#### **Jaya Singh, Head of Delhi operations, Child Rights and You**

As told to Suryatapa Bhattacharya

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Waste picker Daniel Corazza survives with the help of shop handouts.

ANA BELLUSCIO | PANOS LONDON

## Argentina

### Overview

With almost 2.8 million square kilometers, Argentina is the eighth largest country in the world by land area and houses over 40 million people. Despite the vastness of its territory, statistics show nearly 32 per cent of the population lives in the city of Buenos Aires, capital of the country, and its metropolitan area. Decades of state policies, designed to favor the financial market, led to the closure of factories and farms. Impoverished rural populations moved to the main urban zones looking for work and food and settled in shantytowns in cities and suburbs. Thirteen million people live in Buenos Aires and its suburbs of which 2.2 per cent live below the poverty line.

*'I had to start earning my money like this after losing my previous job a few months before the 2001 economic crisis. At that time it was very difficult for me to get a new job because the country was paralysed. I also have a birth defect: one of my arms is smaller and weaker than the other and no factory would hire me. I never finished school, and in almost any job they request a high school diploma. Looking in the garbage for food was the only option to feed me and my family.'*

*'When I started in 2001 I had no job or money at all. There was nothing to pick up from the streets, as thousands of other cartoneros roamed around looking for food, and even if we found something to sell, nobody would pay anything. There was a bakery that sometimes gave me their unsold bread after closing. Some days I received a 10kg bag, some days nothing. But everything they gave me I shared with my relatives and friends, as we all were and still are very poor. They still give us their leftover bread. Whenever we can save money from not having to buy bread, we save it for other food such as meat, which is the most expensive.'*

**Daniel Corazza, Buenos Aires**

As told to journalist Ana Belluscio

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**Maria Aparecida Garcia da Silva spent a month without the money to buy food for her seven children**

ANNA CAROLINA LEMENTY | PANOS LONDON

## Brazil

### Overview

São Paulo is a vast city with much inequality. Even with Brazil's re-democratisation process in the 1980s and after becoming the ninth richest economy in the world, the city suffers from great inequalities between rich and poor. More than eight per cent of Brazilians live in extreme poverty. **Population Census conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2010**

UN-Habitat estimate that São Paulo has four million people who live in favelas and corticos (tenements), on the streets and in informal housing. Many people move from rural areas to cities in an attempt to improve their lives.

From the total of 16.2 million people in the country regarded as extremely poor, with per capita income lower than R\$70 (£24.40/€28), about 1.1 million reside in the State of São Paulo, which represents 7 per cent of the poor population of the country, or 2.6 per cent of the population of São Paulo. In 2010, food prices in São Paulo rose by 6.41 per cent. **Veja magazine and Consumer Price Index/ Foundation Institute of Economic Research – FIPE, 2010**

*'The money to support my family comes from my work as a housemaid. I work every Saturday, from 8am to 2pm, and earn R\$60 [£21/€24] for each cleaning job I do. I would like to work more often, but I can't find a job.'*

*'Before I found this job, seven months ago, we went through many difficulties. We spent a month with no money whatsoever and couldn't afford food. Whenever I managed to get something, I would buy some bread. And that is all we had. Seeing a child crying because it is hungry is really hard. We cry along.'*

#### **Maria Aparecida Garcia da Silva, São Paulo**

As told to journalist Anna Carolina Lementy

*'This situation derives from the country's structural problems, such as a lack of jobs, low wages and income distribution. There is also a lack of agricultural policies aiming at an expansion of cultivation areas, and a rising of food prices.'*

#### **Camila Maria da Silva, Nutritionist at Associação Prato Cheio**

As told to journalist Anna Carolina Lementy

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**Motorcycle taxi driver Charles Kaddu cannot get milk for his children**

SHIFA MWESIGYE | PANOS LONDON

## Uganda

### Overview

The price of food and fuel has risen dramatically this year in Uganda, leading to protests and unrest. Inflation has hit 20 per cent and the Shilling fell to an 18-year low this month. Figures from the national statistics bureau show that prices of food crops in March were 30 per cent higher than a year ago, with the corresponding figures for April rising to 39.3 per cent. The poor have been worst-hit. Uganda has the third-fastest-growing population in the world, behind Niger and Yemen, according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics. Home to 34.6 million people, Uganda is expected to have 103 million by 2050. Migration from rural areas to urban areas is increasing and has led to more pressure on land, water and other natural resources.

*'I was born in Masaka, about 140km from Kampala. We moved to Kampala about 25 years ago. I dropped out in secondary school due to lack of school fees and I have been operating my boda-boda [motorbike taxi] for five years now. My income varies depending on the number of passengers I get, but in a month it is usually Shs 300,000 [£68.40/€78.50] after deducting expenses of maintaining the motorcycle. With the extra money I make from making bricks this can go up to Shs 500,000 [£114/€131]*

*'Most of this money is spent on food and in the last one year the food prices have become very bad. We usually eat matooke [steamed plantain], posho [maize meal] and rice. These days we rarely eat potatoes because they are very expensive. But everything is too expensive today. For me as a father this situation is painful. My first born is only six years old and I know that if children do not feed well, their development suffers. But because the prices are so high, we just improvise. For instance, milk is unaffordable. Imagine your children not taking milk.'*

#### **Charles Kaddu, Kampala**

As told to journalist Richard Kavuma

*'Recently our inflation passed the 20 per cent mark. That means that when you go to the market, the price of staple food items like matooke have doubled or tripled and yet people's income has remained the same, that means people cannot buy enough food, yet food is a basic necessity, which you cannot do without. A good example is the primary school teachers who have been striking: they are earning less than \$100 a month and yet the food prices have doubled or tripled.'*

*'The population is growing, therefore we need more food as a country, and yet we are exporting a lot of food. So we are sharing the little food we produce with regional markets – Kenya, South Sudan and beyond.'*

#### **Daisy Owomugasho, Country Director, The Hunger Project**

As told to Richard Kavuma

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**Richard Kavuma** is a Ugandan journalist. From 2008 to 2010, he reported on *The Guardian* newspaper's Katine project, a development project implemented by Amref in Katine, a village in north-east Uganda. In 2006 he won the UN's foundation award for development and humanitarian reporting and in 2007 was named the CNN Multichoice African Journalist of the Year.

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### About Panos London

Panos London promotes the participation of poor and marginalised people in national and international development debates through media and communication projects. It is part of the worldwide Panos Network.

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