

# World hunger help failing

Painfully hungry every day — the latest World Disasters Report takes a hard look at why nearly a billion people live like this, when there is enough food being produced to feed everyone

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) says that more people are going hungry in cities and in high-income countries. However, the vast Asia-Pacific region and sub-Saharan Africa are where lifelong hunger is worst, mostly in rural areas.

The Disasters Report says the first of the UN Millennium Development Goals probably will not be achieved by 2015: that is halving the proportion of people suffering from extreme hunger and poverty. The underfed now number some 925m worldwide, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation. 3m under-fives die from not getting enough to eat every year.

Undernutrition stunts the growth of an estimated 178m children under the age of five. The handicap begins from conception — while the infant is still inside the mother — when she is not adequately fed. And of all the world's undernourished people, six out of ten are female. Girls in some countries are under double the threat of death from disease and lack of food as boys. The causes of food crises, the IFRC report says, include speculation and global market fluctuation affecting prices.

Fuel prices, for instance, have a big impact on harvesting and getting crops to consumers. High-



A woman receives food from the National Co-ordinator for Disaster Reduction (CONRED)

er oil costs raise the price of food. A woman interviewed in a produce market in Cairo one year ago said, "I'm doing my best to make a meal last for or two or three days, but it is beyond my control. I'm retired and my husband is too. I'm spending on vegetables alone.

I can't even afford fruit." Soon afterwards the Egyptian Government's inability to cope with the upward spiral in food prices brought people out in public protest, undermining political stability, and contributing to the fall of President Mubarak. For building

up food security more investment in agriculture is clearly essential. Yet a core question in the report is whether investment should go to small-scale producers — where results have proved poor — or to capital-intensive farming on a big scale.

## CERN scientists break the speed of light

**Sub-atomic particles apparently travelling faster than light could force a major rethink of theories about how the cosmos works**

The international physicists who made the startling findings at CERN near Geneva said they must now be confirmed by independent research teams. The wider scientific community expressed astonishment and scepticism.

CERN said measurements over three years had shown invisible neutrino particles covering the 730km to a laboratory in Italy 60 nanoseconds — or 60 billionths of a second — faster than light. That reading could show that Albert Einstein, father of modern physics, was wrong when he laid down in his 1905 theory of special relativity that the speed of light was a 'cosmic constant', and nothing could go faster.

Physicists on the experiment say they had checked and rechecked over many months anything that could have produced a misreading before announcing what they had found. Prof. Jenny Thomas, who works on neutrinos at the US physics research centre, commented, "The impact of this measurement, were it to be correct, would be huge."

## Athens to speed up austerity plan

**Greek Government says it will step up cuts, taking aim at civil servants and pensioners to satisfy its international lenders and avoid default**

Pensions of more than 1,200 Euros will be slashed by 20 percent, while wages for 30,000 public sector workers will be cut. One young

mother attending a rally in Athens criticised Greek Finance Minister Evangelos Venizelos for 'constantly announcing new measures'. "I have a one year old child. What kind of world will she live in. People need to come out and to protest," she said.

Mr. Venizelos told legislators that the new cuts were needed to

keep emergency loans flowing. He also said pensions for those under the age of 55 would be lowered by 40 percent.

Athens must follow a strict deficit reduction plan agreed with the EU and the IMF under a bailout deal to receive the next aid payment of 8bn Euros.

## Fed's outlook for US economy rattles markets

**World stocks fell to a new one-year low recently, battered by fears of slowing global economic growth**

That came after the Federal Reserve unveiled its latest efforts to boost the faltering recovery saying it had to act because there were 'significant downside risks' to the US economy. To promote stronger growth the US Central Bank will try to push down long-term borrowing costs.

Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke and his fellow policymakers will do that by selling short-term government bonds and buying \$400bn worth of longer-term bonds between now and next summer. The move will anger Republican politicians who believe such 'intervention' will hurt the US economy. Faced with an unemployment rate of 9.1 percent



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange

as well as weak consumer and business confidence Fed officials have been signalling in recent weeks that they would move to prevent already sluggish US growth from weakening

further. The world's largest economy grew at a less than one percent annual rate during the first half of the year and analysts have warned of a heightened risk of recession.

## France's poor get poorer

**Increasing numbers of French people are living in poverty and the country is suffering rising inequality, according to the latest figures from the French Government**

The statistics cover 2009, the latest data available, when the economic crisis was starting to bite. In that year, 8.2m people — out of a population of 60m — lived under the official poverty threshold of 954 Euros per month. Compared with the previous year, the standard of living of the richest 10 percent went up by 0.7 percent; for the poorest 10 percent, it went down by 1.1 percent.

Olivier Bernard lives in a shelter run by a charity since losing his job and gets 400 Euros per month of state aid. He said, "Four hundred Euros a month, that is maybe 11 or 12 Euros per day. Just to buy a metro ticket costs 1.70 Euro. For a round trip that's 3.40 Euros: so you see how fast the money goes."

Despite the worsening situation in France, with 13.5 percent of households below the poverty threshold, it compares well with the rest of Europe where the average poverty rate was 16.3 percent in 2009.

## X-rays reveals hidden Goya painting

**Previously unknown painting by Francisco de Goya found hidden underneath one of his masterpieces**

The unfinished work was discovered underneath Goya's *Portrait of Don Ramon Satue*, using a new X-ray technique. It is thought to depict a French general, and may even portray Napoleon Bonaparte's brother, Joseph. The Rijksmuseum, in Amsterdam, says the Spanish master may have covered up the portrait for political reasons.

Joseph Bonaparte was briefly King of Spain, from 1808-1813. When the Napoleonic army was driven out and Ferdinand VII restored to the throne, Goya, who retained the painting, would have wanted to distance himself from the French regime. The artist had served the French king and feared reprisals, despite receiving an official pardon and being reinstated as first court painter. Eventually, unhappy with Ferdinand VII's autocratic regime, he applied for permission to settle in France, where he lived until his death in 1828.

Bombarding a piece of art with powerful x-rays, causes atoms in the picture's layers of paint to emit 'fluorescent' x-rays of their own, which indicate the chemicals they originated from. That enables a colour map of the hidden picture to be produced. The technique was successfully tried out on a Van Gogh painting two years ago, revealing a portrait of a peasant woman behind the work *Patch of Grass*, from 1887.