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The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI®) was established in 1975 to identify and analyze alternative national and international strategies and policies for meeting food needs of the developing world on a sustainable basis, with particular emphasis on low-income countries and on the poorer groups in those countries. Research results are disseminated to policymakers, opinion formers, administrators, policy analysts, researchers, and others concerned with national and international food and agricultural policy. IFPRI also contributes to capacity strengthening of people and institutions in developing countries that conduct research on food, agriculture, and nutrition policies.

“2020 Vision for Food, Agriculture, and the Environment” is an IFPRI initiative to develop a shared vision and consensus for action for meeting future world food needs while reducing poverty and protecting the environment. Through the 2020 Vision Initiative, IFPRI brings together divergent schools of thought on these issues, generates research, and develops policy recommendations.

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# **The Poorest and Hungry**



# **The Poorest and Hungry**

## **Assessments, Analyses, and Actions**

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An IFPRI 2020 Book

Edited by Joachim von Braun,  
Ruth Vargas Hill, and Rajul Pandya-Lorch

International Food Policy Research Institute  
Washington, D.C.

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## Foreword

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**A**lthough many millions of people have exited poverty in recent decades, much of the reduction in poverty has benefited people living close to the poverty line rather than those at the very bottom of the income distribution. This book is not focused on poverty per se but rather is focused on looking particularly at those most deprived in society. It is this focus on the poorest and hungry people that is the major contribution of this volume. Relatively little is known about people living in extreme deprivation. Who are the poorest of the poor and those most afflicted by hunger? Who are those who are left behind or out of poverty and hunger reduction processes? Why is poverty so persistent in some places and among some people? What are the key pathways out of ultra poverty and hunger? Which strategies, policies, and interventions have been successful in eradicating ultra poverty and hunger so far?

To address these questions and to examine what new and different action is required to improve the welfare of the poorest and hungry people, beginning in late 2006 the 2020 Vision Initiative of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) facilitated a two-year global policy consultation and conference process, the centerpiece of which included an international conference, Taking Action for the World's Poor and Hungry People, held October 17–19, 2007, in Beijing. The conference was co-organized with the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development of China and cohosted with the International Poverty Reduction Center in China (IPRCC) and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS). A distinguished international advisory committee provided valuable guidance.

At the midpoint between the adoption of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and the target year for achieving these goals

in 2015—particularly the first MDG, which called for halving the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day and those suffering from hunger between 1990 and 2015—IFPRI believed it would be timely to engage in a policy consultation and conference process to turn its attention to the poorest of the poor and to what extent they were participating in the poverty reduction processes or being left behind or out of these processes.

The decision to hold the IFPRI 2020 conference in Beijing was guided by the recognition that China is one of the few large countries to have almost achieved the hunger and poverty MDG and is now engaged in efforts to go beyond the MDGs to reach the remaining poorest of the poor and those left behind. The conference facilitated research- and experience-based deliberations among more than 400 leading policymakers, researchers, and practitioners from nongovernmental organizations, international agencies, and the private sector participating from 40 countries. The conference is represented at <http://www.ifpri.org/2020ChinaConference/index.htm>.

To contribute to well-informed conference deliberations with solid research and experience, the IFPRI 2020 Vision Initiative commissioned a number of background papers from IFPRI staff and other leading experts from around the world. In a few instances, the papers drew on earlier published work that was then refined or refocused explicitly on issues related to the ultra poor. All papers were peer reviewed and, primarily in draft form, were made available to participants in the Beijing conference where they were debated and reviewed among peers from around the world before being published as separate policy briefs. In this book some appear in their original form, but some have been revised in light of further comments. Other chapters were commissioned following the conference in response to gaps identified during the discussions. In addition, the book features essays by leading policymakers and practitioners who share their views on these key issues and thereby contribute to the diversity of perspectives presented.

This edited book seeks to lay out the major issues involved in realizing improvements in the welfare of the world's poorest people. It is not designed to be read at one sitting; rather it is a "recipe book" for use by policymakers and practitioners as a guide to approaches and options as well as by academics and researchers as an instrument for training and teaching purposes. To enable this material to be accessible to a wide audience, we deliberately asked the authors to refrain from adding references in the text but instead to direct readers interested in fuller discussions and more data to the further readings referenced at the end of each chapter.

We express our deep appreciation to the co-sponsors of the policy consultation and conference process that made this book possible: the Asian Development Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Canadian International Development Agency, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (German Agro-Action), the

European Commission, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (BMZ/GTZ), the International Development Research Centre, and Irish Aid. IFPRI also gratefully acknowledges unrestricted support for IFPRI from Australia, Finland, France, India, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the World Bank, which enabled IFPRI to establish the research base needed for the overarching work reported here.

We are deeply grateful to the authors of the chapters and essays for sharing their invaluable contributions, which have enriched our knowledge, stimulated our perspectives, provoked our thinking, and ultimately contributed to better informing policies and actions that we hope will improve the well-being of the poorest and those most afflicted by hunger.

We are indebted to many colleagues inside and outside IFPRI for their exceptional support throughout the preparation of this book, from the commissioning of the chapters to their peer review, editing, and production. In particular, we warmly thank Evelyn Banda, Mary-Jane Banks, Djhoanna Cruz, Diana Flores, Heidi Fritschel, Michael Go, Vickie Lee, Tewodaj Mengistu, Uday Mohan, Carmen Ruiz, and Gwendolyn Stansbury.

It is our hope that this book will serve scholars, development activists, and policy advisers and will draw attention to the need for policies and strategies explicitly designed to focus on and address the poorest and hungry people in the world, not just to tackle general poverty.

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