

WORLD HUNGER

E.M. Young

Liz Young

World Hunger



London and New York

First published 1997
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

© 1997 Liz Young

Typeset in Times by
Pointing-Green Publishing Services, Chesham, Buckinghamshire

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Young, Liz

World hunger / Liz Young.
(Routledge introductions to development)
Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Food supply – Developing countries. 2. Hunger – Developing countries. I. Title. II. Series.

TX360.5.Y68 1996
363.8'09172'4-dc20 96-36545

ISBN 0-415-13773-X

For Jim

Acknowledgements

Several colleagues, past and present, in the Geography Division at Staffordshire University were very helpful. I would like to thank Jenny Elliott and Steve Wyn Williams for their initial encouragement, members of the Research Committee who granted me time off from teaching, and Sabiha Sayid, Hamish Main and Jenny Elliott for being so generous with their slides and time. Map work was completed with the help of Owen Pucker and John Mooney who were always quick and efficient, thank you both. Finally, I would like to thank David Drakakis-Smith and John Bale for their help and encouragement throughout.

Contents

List of plates	ix
List of figures	xi
List of boxes	xii
List of tables	xiii
Acknowledgements	xiv
1 A framework for analysis and historical overview	2
Introduction	2
A framework for analysis	3
Historical perspectives	7
Conclusion	14
Key ideas	15
2 The contemporary nature and extent of hunger	17
Terminology	17
The contemporary extent of hunger	26
Conclusion	30
Key ideas	34
3 International perspectives on global hunger	36
Introduction	36
The changing geography of global food production and consumption, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century	37
Trends since the 1970s: globalisation and transnational corporations (TNCs)	47
Conclusion	59
Key ideas	59

4 National perspectives	64
Introduction	64
Historical legacies	66
Development strategies	70
Conclusion	83
Key ideas	85
5 Gendered fields	88
Introduction	88
Women as economic actors	91
Intra-household entitlements	99
Conclusion	106
Key ideas	109
6 Sub-national perspectives	111
Introduction	111
Regions	111
Ethnic and religious minorities	120
Households and food security	121
Conclusion	130
Key ideas	131
7 Conflict and hunger	133
Introduction	133
Conflict and hunger: the connections	134
Conclusion	144
Key ideas	145
8 Alternative futures	147
Introduction	147
Whose business is it?	148
Empowerment approaches	161
Conclusion: concerted actions	166
Key ideas	168
Review questions, reference and further reading	169
Index	177

Plates

3.1	Exotic foods	50
3.2	We're all global now	51
3.3	What sort of apple did that recipe recommend?	51
3.4	Agricultural machinery, Kansas, USA	56
3.5	Hybrid maize varieties, Kansas, USA	56
3.6	The Hoover Dam, Colorado, USA	57
3.7	Local millet porridge, northern Nigeria	60
3.8	An Islamic butcher, Kano, Nigeria	60
3.9	Fishing in the River Sokoto, Nigeria	61
3.10	A sugar cane seller, northern Nigeria	61
4.1	Female labourers in India	76
4.2	Seamstresses in Kano city, northern Nigeria	76
4.3	Beating indigo dye, northern Nigeria	77
4.4	Fuelwood for the urban market, northern Nigeria	77
4.5	Urban street trader, Calcutta, India	80
4.6	Street hawker, Dhaka, Bangladesh	80
4.7	Urban market, Dhaka, Bangladesh	80
4.8	Urban agriculture, Dhaka, Bangladesh	81
4.9	Urban agriculture, Delhi, India	81
4.10	Recent migrants to Delhi	82
5.1	Cultivating a <i>dambo</i> in Zimbabwe	92
5.2	Maize farmers in Zimbabwe	92
5.3	Women harvesting olives in Tunisia	93
5.4	Woman winnowing guinea corn in Kano state, Nigeria	93
5.5	Women harvesting mussels from wetlands outside Calcutta	100

x Plates

5.6	Women selling craft work to tourists, small town, Ecuadorian Andes	100
5.7	Women selling <i>kosai</i> in northern Nigeria	101
5.8	Female vegetable trader, Jos Plateau, Nigeria	101
6.1	A farmer in Zimbabwe battles against soil erosion	116
6.2	Soil erosion in a semi-arid region in Tunisia	116
6.3	Animal market, Sokoto, Nigeria	119
6.4	Fulani women transporting milk to market	119
6.5	Guava tree, Kano state, northern Nigeria	128
6.6	A village on the Jos Plateau, Nigeria	128
6.7	Kebili Oasis, Tunisia	128

Figures

2.1	The vicious circle of female malnutrition	22
2.2	Distribution of sample countries by per capita daily calorie intake	28
4.1	How governments interact with the food security system	65
6.1	India: regional diversity	113
6.2	China: regional contrasts in rural income and literacy	122
6.3	The local food security system	124
8.1	World per capita cereal production, 1951–93	151
8.2	Diversity of NGO types	162

Boxes

1.1	The quality of food and drink in nineteenth-century England	8
1.2	Cholera in Manchester, 1832	13
2.1	Women and anaemia in the developing world	21
2.2	The breastfeeding debate	23
2.3	The northeast of Brazil	31
3.1	Wheat and the pampas	38
3.2	Get fresh!	48
3.3	Industrial agriculture and the environment	55
4.1	China: a conflicting picture	67
4.2	Cash crops and entitlements: some dangers	73
4.3	Harare: the urban food system	79
5.1	Village women pack up and leave	94
5.2	Joyce Kayaya, a Zambian farmer	96
5.3	Contrasting cases: gender relations and household expenditure	103
5.4	Female empowerment	107
6.1	Mali	118
6.2	Sri Lankan case study	127
7.1	Refugees and displaced people	139
7.2	Children sold by Afghan widows	142
8.1	Trends in world food production	151
8.2	World Summit for Children/International Conference on Nutrition	155
8.3	Brazil's campaign against hunger and misery, and for life	163

Tables

1.1	The construction of entitlements	5
2.1	The percentage of chronically underfed, by region	27
2.2	The absolute number of chronically underfed, by region	30
2.3	GNP per capita and selected social indicators, selected countries, 1992	31
3.1	The power of the transnationals	54
4.1	Growing urbanisation in selected countries, 1992	71
5.1	HDI and GNP rankings, 1992	90
5.2	HDI and GDI values, selected countries, 1992	91
5.3	Changes in average GDI values, 1970–92	106
6.1	India, 1992: urban–rural discrepancies in access to basic services	112
6.2	Regional diversity in India	114

Vietnam

SHRIMP AND CHICKEN SALAD

Serves 4

Each chapter opens with a recipe. These are included for several reasons: to indicate the richness and variety of food around the world which exists despite recent global processes of homogenisation; to encourage readers to experiment with different recipes and consider how these differ from their diets; to remind readers that all over the world, even when people are poor, families and friends gather to eat and enjoy food. In addition to its function in maintaining our health, the social and cultural significance of food is immeasurable.

INGREDIENTS

½ lb/225g shelled shrimps, cooked

6-inch/15cm cucumber, sliced

handful fresh cilantro/coriander leaves

½ lb/225g cooked chopped lean chicken meat, cut into small cubes

½ cup/60g peanuts, crushed or coarsely chopped

4 cups/200g bean sprouts

salt and pepper

2 tablespoons lemon juice

1–2 teaspoons sugar

2 tablespoons fish sauce*

1 carrot, grated

* Fish sauce, called *nuoc nam*, is obtainable from Chinese food shops; or you could use 1 tablespoon anchovy essence instead.

METHOD

- 1 Pour in just enough water to cover the bottom of the saucepan. Heat it up and when it is boiling throw in the bean sprouts, for a few seconds only. Drain them and allow to cool.
- 2 In a bowl, mix the lemon juice with the sugar, fish sauce, salt and pepper.
- 3 Now arrange the bean sprouts, carrot and cucumber on a serving dish and pour the dressing over.
- 4 Place the chicken and shrimps on top of the salad and garnish with the cilantro/coriander leaves and crushed peanuts.

1

A framework for analysis and historical overview

Introduction

Sainsbury's marketing manager described entering the store as a geography lesson or a trip around the world.

(Cook, 1994, 244)

This book examines the geography of the world food system. It examines the processes 'behind the supermarket shelves' which explain the geography of food production and consumption. The main thesis is that hunger persists because the political will to eliminate it is lacking. Decisions made at all scales, from the international to the familial, help explain why some people enjoy a rich and varied diet while others suffer from hunger. This book challenges traditional conceptualisations of hunger, which analyse it with reference to natural disasters and 'overpopulation' and which tend to grant it an element of inevitability. There is nothing inevitable about the persistence of hunger. When the essential political character of hunger is appreciated then it becomes possible to envisage a world where hunger is history.

While the political character of the problem has long been appreciated by some academics (Warnock, 1987), the 'problem of hunger' in popular consciousness and in some textbooks continues to assume an apolitical character which denies the connections between feast in some regions and hunger in others. It is conceptualised as a 'world food problem' rather than a problem of 'world hunger'; these are quite different things. Most students, when asked to rank the causes of world hunger, prioritise natural causes over human ones; floods, droughts and poor soils are most popular. When the human dimension

is acknowledged, the 'problem of population' is most frequently offered, followed by war. Several other assumptions are exposed through discussions with students. Among the most relevant are the following:

- that hunger exists only in the developing world;
- that hunger in the developing world is explicable with reference to the internal characteristics of those countries alone, that is they are ignorant of the historical and international dimensions of the problem;
- that famine is the main problem;
- that the problem of hunger is most serious on the African continent;
- that increased food production is imperative.

This text challenges all of these easy assumptions.

A framework for analysis

Many students subscribe to the 'lack of' school of thought, usually associated with the 'cycles of poverty' school. This theory is based on the notion that where hunger persists it is because people lack everything from 'good weather' to 'modern technology', 'the pill' and 'education and investment', and that all these reinforce each other. These mantras prove incredibly resilient and have been known to emerge in examinations at the end of a series of lectures and seminars specifically designed to undermine them as explanations of hunger. This text reflects my efforts, in lectures and seminars, to alter these widely held assumptions so that we, individual consumers in the affluent world, can appreciate how we are implicated in the problem of world hunger.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century the most popular assumption has been that hunger is caused by population growth, that population growth proceeds at a faster pace than food production and that famine occurs if population growth is not reduced. This is testament to the persistence of Malthusian interpretations of hunger, which are adequately critiqued elsewhere (Arnold, 1988; Devereux, 1993; Lappe and Collins, 1986) and need not be repeated here. Recent analyses have turned Malthus on his head, so to speak, by understanding that poverty causes population growth rather than vice versa. The best way to reduce fertility is to raise the living standards of the poor and to improve the status of women in society and their access to power, which may include increasing their ability to make informed decisions about their fertility (Momsen, 1991). It has also been observed that population can expand rapidly and not be accompanied by widespread hunger – China since 1949, except for the 1958 famine – or indeed that food production per capita can

4 World hunger

increase without being accompanied by any diminution of the problems of hunger. Clearly, a more sophisticated framework is required to reveal the complexities of global hunger.

Proximate and structural causes of hunger

A useful first step is to differentiate between proximate and structural causes of hunger. Proximate causes of famine and/or undernutrition are those which can be identified immediately as playing a role. Some of the most important are war, drought, flooding, late rains, and crop failures due to disease or pests. A recent example is the chaos to food supplies in North Korea because of floods in 1995 and torrential rains in 1996. The food crisis that ensued caused the World Food Programme to launch an emergency aid operation in 1995 which was expanded in 1996; it is currently supplying food aid to approximately 1.5 million people in North Korea. This analysis occasionally considers the proximate variables listed above, but prioritises instead the role of long-term structural processes and the political context of hunger creation. The thesis is that while proximate variables trigger hunger or famine, these are only effective as triggers in specific 'spaces of vulnerability' (Watts and Bohle, 1993) that have emerged consequent upon historically created processes and ideologies which dictate access to power, in its many manifestations, at the international, national and local levels.

The entitlement concept

Starvation is the characteristic of some people not having enough food to eat. It is not the characteristic of there being not enough food to eat. While the latter can be the cause of the former, it is but one of the many possible causes.

(Sen, 1981, 1)

Since the publication of Sen's (1981) research on hunger a new concept has been available to inform analyses of hunger. That is the concept of entitlement. Some of the limitations of the term as initially outlined by Sen have been addressed and an elaborated notion of entitlement has been constructed which is more comprehensive. It is this formulation that informs the analysis outlined in this text. The analytical focus is upon understanding distributive mechanisms; that is, what determines how available food is distributed and how politics, economics and ideology influence distribution. A main proposition is

that concepts used to analyse famine are as relevant to analyses of chronic hunger, of which acute hunger, manifest as famine, is a part. The geography of hunger is explained by employing an elaborated conceptualisation of entitlement and examining how it controls command over food at a variety of scales. Table 1.1 shows some of the factors and mechanisms at every scale which influence peoples ability to command food. The following discussion summarises the main elements of the term and indicates its utility in exposing the social relations that explain the gross inequalities in access to a decent diet which exist between populations.

Table 1.1 The construction of entitlements: selected factors and mechanisms at different scales

<i>Level of analysis</i>	<i>Factors/Mechanisms</i>		
	<i>Historical</i>	<i>Economic</i>	<i>Political/ideological</i>
International	processes of integration	BWI (WB, IMF and GATT/WTO)*	development philosophies
	accumulation of power and wealth in core	TNCs** gendered macro-economic policy	SAPs*** interpretations of hunger
National	processes of integration	export orientation	development strategies
	character and capacity of the state property relations access to resources	investment priorities, infrastructure, health, etc.	gender relations access to power public policy
Regional	processes of integration	limited infrastructural development	public policy
	regional and ethnic disparities environmental legacies	vulnerable income base	regional/ethnic discrimination differential representation in government
Household	socially sanctioned	investment decisions	gender relations
	familial patterns		public policy access to power and resources

Note: Neither factors nor scales are discrete and factors and mechanisms are indicative only.

* BWI = Bretton Woods Institutions; WB = World Bank; IMF = International Monetary Fund; GATT = General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade; WTO = World Trade Organisation.

** TNC = transnational corporations.

*** SAP = structural adjustment plan.

The patterns of food distribution, at a variety of levels, may be examined with reference to people's entitlements, reflected in their ability to *command* food. This term, 'entitlement', used by Sen, may be employed more generally