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## **Spiraling prices create world hunger crisis**

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27<sup>th</sup> February, 2008

## THE ARTICLE

Hunger and malnutrition may soon hit the world's largest and poorest cities. This was the dire warning from the United Nations on February 25th. Josette Sheeran, head of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) warned that sky-rocketing food and oil prices are making it very hard for the organization to feed the world's poorest people. Food prices have risen by up to 40 per cent in the past year. Ms Sheeran told reporters that spiraling global inflation has created a "new face of hunger". She gave the bare and basic facts that the UN no longer had enough money to feed the world's hungry. "We will have a significant gap if commodity prices remain this high, and we will need an extra half billion dollars just to meet existing...needs," she said. The WFP feeds less than one tenth of the world's hungry and starving. That figure will greatly decrease if prices continue to escalate.

A worrying new development created by the sharp rises in commodities is that hunger will affect billions of people in cities. Many of those on less than a dollar a day will only be able to afford one daily meal. Sheeran warned that many people can now no longer buy basic food items. She said: "There is food on shelves but people [in urban areas] are priced out of the market.... There are food riots in countries where we have not seen them before." There are many reasons for this upcoming crisis. Developing countries like India and China are demanding more animal feed and their expanding middle classes are buying more food, farmers are using more of their land to grow crops for biofuels, and climate change is creating more floods and droughts. Ms Sheeran appealed to rich countries to donate more money so the WFP could feed the 73 million who rely on it every day.

## WARM-UPS

**1. HUNGER:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about being hungry. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*hunger / malnutrition / poor cities / food prices / inflation / bare facts / worrying developments / a dollar a day / food riots / biofuels / floods / drought*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. SPIRALING PRICES:** With your partner(s), decide which of these items you need most. Which would cause you most financial pain if prices increased? What would you do if prices doubled? Change partners and share what you talked about.

| Commodity / Service   | If the price of ... doubled, I'd ... |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. food               |                                      |
| b. the Internet       |                                      |
| c. clothes            |                                      |
| d. mobile phone calls |                                      |
| e. water              |                                      |
| f. petrol             |                                      |
| g. other _____        |                                      |

**4. A DOLLAR A DAY:** With your partner, talk about what life would be like on a dollar a day. Change partners and share your ideas and findings.

**5. INFLATION:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'inflation'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**6. QUICK ROLE PLAY:** Students A **strongly** believe that the world will have plenty of food for all soon; Students B **strongly** disagree. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. There may soon be many hungry people in many world cities.         | T / F |
| b. The United Nations can still feed all the people it needs to.      | T / F |
| c. Food prices have gone up by as much as 14 percent in a year.       | T / F |
| d. The UN only feeds about ten per cent of the world's hungry.        | T / F |
| e. People on a dollar a day will only be able to buy two meals a day. | T / F |
| f. Although there is food on shop shelves, there are food riots.      | T / F |
| g. People are going hungry because countries need to feed animals.    | T / F |
| h. Farmers are using more land to produce crops for biofuels.         | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. malnutrition | a. depend on  |
| 2. dire         | b. items      |
| 3. significant  | c. increase   |
| 4. spiraling    | d. steep      |
| 5. escalate     | e. terrible   |
| 6. sharp        | f. serious    |
| 7. afford       | g. starvation |
| 8. commodities  | h. food       |
| 9. feed         | i. pay for    |
| 10. rely on     | j. rising     |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. malnutrition may soon hit the world's | a. out of the market          |
| 2. sky-rocketing                         | b. to escalate                |
| 3. global inflation has created a        | c. "new face of hunger"       |
| 4. The WFP feeds less than one tenth     | d. less than a dollar a day   |
| 5. prices continue                       | e. food and oil prices        |
| 6. A worrying new                        | f. are buying more food       |
| 7. Many of those on                      | g. largest and poorest cities |
| 8. people in urban areas are priced      | h. who rely on it             |
| 9. expanding middle classes              | i. of the world's hungry      |
| 10. the WFP could feed the 73 million    | j. development                |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Hunger and malnutrition may soon \_\_\_\_\_ the world's largest and poorest cities. This was the dire warning from the United Nations on February 25th. Josette Sheeran, \_\_\_\_\_ of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) warned that sky-rocketing food and oil prices are making it very hard for the organization to \_\_\_\_\_ the world's poorest people. Food prices have risen by up to 40 per cent in the past year. Ms Sheeran told reporters that spiraling \_\_\_\_\_ inflation has created a "new face of hunger". She gave the bare and basic \_\_\_\_\_ that the UN no longer had enough money to feed the world's hungry. "We will have a significant \_\_\_\_\_ if commodity prices remain this high, and we will need an extra half billion dollars just to \_\_\_\_\_ existing...needs," she said. The WFP feeds less than one tenth of the world's hungry and starving. That figure will greatly decrease if prices \_\_\_\_\_ to escalate.

*global**head**meet**continue**facts**hit**gap**feed*

A worrying new development created by the \_\_\_\_\_ rises in commodities is that hunger will affect billions of people in cities. Many of those on less than a dollar a \_\_\_\_\_ will only be able to afford one daily meal. Sheeran warned that many people can now no longer buy basic food \_\_\_\_\_. She said: "There is food on \_\_\_\_\_ but people [in urban areas] are priced out of the market.... There are food \_\_\_\_\_ in countries where we have not seen them before." There are many reasons for this upcoming \_\_\_\_\_. Developing countries like India and China are demanding more animal feed and their expanding middle classes are buying more food, farmers are using more of their land to grow \_\_\_\_\_ for biofuels, and climate change is creating more floods and droughts. Ms Sheeran appealed to rich countries to \_\_\_\_\_ more money so the WFP could feed the 73 million who rely on it every day.

*riots**items**crops**shelves**donate**sharp**crisis**day*

**LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.**

Hunger and malnutrition \_\_\_\_\_ world's largest and poorest cities. This was the dire warning from the United Nations on February 25th. Josette Sheeran, head of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) warned that sky-rocketing food and oil prices \_\_\_\_\_ hard for the organization to feed the world's poorest people. Food prices \_\_\_\_\_ 40 per cent in the past year. Ms Sheeran told reporters that spiraling global inflation has created a "\_\_\_\_\_". She gave the bare and basic facts that the UN no longer had enough money to feed the world's hungry. "We will have a significant gap if commodity prices remain this high, and \_\_\_\_\_ half billion dollars just to meet existing...needs," she said. The WFP feeds \_\_\_\_\_ the world's hungry and starving. That figure will greatly decrease if prices continue to escalate.

A worrying new development \_\_\_\_\_ rises in commodities is that hunger will affect billions of people in cities. Many of those on less than a dollar a day \_\_\_\_\_ afford one daily meal. Sheeran warned that many people can now no longer buy basic food items. She said: "There is food on shelves but people [in urban areas] \_\_\_\_\_ market.... There are food riots in countries where we have not seen them before." There \_\_\_\_\_ this upcoming crisis. Developing countries like India and China are demanding more animal feed and their expanding middle classes are buying more food, farmers are using more of their \_\_\_\_\_ biofuels, and climate change is creating more floods and droughts. Ms Sheeran appealed to rich countries to donate more money so the WFP could feed the 73 million \_\_\_\_\_ day.

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'sky' and 'rocket'.

|            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| <b>sky</b> | <b>rocket</b> |
|------------|---------------|

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dire</li> <li>• oil prices</li> <li>• global</li> <li>• face</li> <li>• gap</li> <li>• escalate</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sharp</li> <li>• less</li> <li>• basic</li> <li>• crisis</li> <li>• middle</li> <li>• rely on</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

## STUDENT HUNGER SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about hunger in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

|      | STUDENT 1<br>_____ | STUDENT 2<br>_____ | STUDENT 3<br>_____ |
|------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Q.1. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.2. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.3. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.4. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.5. |                    |                    |                    |

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

## **DISCUSSION**

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
  - b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'hunger'?
  - c) What's the hungriest you've ever been?
  - d) Are you finding that prices are going up?
  - e) What price rises affect you most?
  - f) What can the UN do to feed more of the world's hungry people?
  - g) How will cities change if they are full of starving people?
  - h) Are you worried about the spiraling global inflation?
  - i) Are there starving people in your country?
- 

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What do you think life is like on a dollar a day?
- c) Do you worry that people can spend millions of dollars on a car, jewelry or painting, while other people starve to death?
- d) Could you survive on one small meal a day?
- e) Could there be food riots in your town?
- f) Do you think you would riot in the streets to get food?
- g) Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the story in this article?
- h) What questions would you like to ask Josette Sheeran?
- i) Did you like this discussion? Why (not)?

## LANGUAGE

**CORRECT WORD:** Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

Hunger and malnutrition may soon (1) \_\_\_\_\_ the world's largest and poorest cities. This was the dire warning from the United Nations on February 25th. Josette Sheeran, (2) \_\_\_\_\_ of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) warned that sky-rocketing food and oil prices are (3) \_\_\_\_\_ it very hard for the organization to feed the world's poorest people. Food prices have risen by (4) \_\_\_\_\_ to 40 per cent in the past year. Ms Sheeran told reporters that spiraling global inflation has created a "new face of hunger". She gave the bare and basic facts that the UN no (5) \_\_\_\_\_ had enough money to feed the world's hungry. "We will have a significant gap if commodity prices remain this high, and we will need an extra half billion dollars just to (6) \_\_\_\_\_ existing...needs," she said. The WFP feeds less than one tenth of the world's hungry and starving. That figure will greatly decrease if prices continue to escalate.

A worrying new development created by the (7) \_\_\_\_\_ rises in commodities is that hunger will affect billions of people in cities. Many of those on less than a dollar a day will only be able to (8) \_\_\_\_\_ one daily meal. Sheeran warned that many people can now no longer buy basic food items. She said: "There is food on shelves but people [in urban areas] are priced (9) \_\_\_\_\_ of the market.... There are food riots in countries where we have not seen them before." There are many reasons for this upcoming crisis. Developing countries like India and China are demanding more (10) \_\_\_\_\_ feed and their expanding middle classes are buying more food, farmers are using more of their land to grow crops (11) \_\_\_\_\_ biofuels, and climate change is creating more floods and droughts. Ms Sheeran appealed to rich countries to donate more money so the WFP could feed the 73 million who rely (12) \_\_\_\_\_ it every day.

- |     |                  |              |            |             |
|-----|------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| 1.  | (a) hate         | (b) hike     | (c) hit    | (d) hip     |
| 2.  | (a) head         | (b) foot     | (c) leg    | (d) hand    |
| 3.  | (a) representing | (b) creating | (c) doing  | (d) making  |
| 4.  | (a) in           | (b) up       | (c) on     | (d) of      |
| 5.  | (a) longest      | (b) long     | (c) longer | (d) lengthy |
| 6.  | (a) join         | (b) assemble | (c) gather | (d) meet    |
| 7.  | (a) sharp        | (b) blunt    | (c) rough  | (d) pointy  |
| 8.  | (a) affect       | (b) afford   | (c) affair | (d) after   |
| 9.  | (a) for          | (b) to       | (c) in     | (d) out     |
| 10. | (a) species      | (b) creature | (c) animal | (d) beasts  |
| 11. | (a) to           | (b) for      | (c) by     | (d) of      |
| 12. | (a) on           | (b) in       | (c) an     | (d) to      |



## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find out more about the spiraling global inflation. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. FOOD SHORTAGES:** Make a poster showing the different reasons for the food shortages mentioned in the article. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. A DOLLAR A DAY:** Write a magazine article about life on a dollar a day. Include imaginary interviews with a hungry and poor person who lives on the streets and a billionaire.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down new words and expressions.

**5. LETTER:** Write a letter to Josette Sheeran. Ask her three questions about world hunger. Give her three suggestions that might help the UN feed more people. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

a. T      b. F      c. F      d. T      e. F      f. T      g. T      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. malnutrition | a. starvation |
| 2. dire         | b. terrible   |
| 3. significant  | c. serious    |
| 4. spiraling    | d. rising     |
| 5. escalate     | e. increase   |
| 6. sharp        | f. steep      |
| 7. afford       | g. pay for    |
| 8. commodities  | h. items      |
| 9. feed         | i. food       |
| 10. rely on     | j. depend on  |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. malnutrition may soon hit the world's | a. largest and poorest cities |
| 2. sky-rocketing                         | b. food and oil prices        |
| 3. global inflation has created a        | c. "new face of hunger"       |
| 4. The WFP feeds less than one tenth     | d. of the world's hungry      |
| 5. prices continue                       | e. to escalate                |
| 6. A worrying new                        | f. development                |
| 7. Many of those on                      | g. less than a dollar a day   |
| 8. people in urban areas are priced      | h. out of the market          |
| 9. expanding middle classes              | i. are buying more food       |
| 10. the WFP could feed the 73 million    | j. who rely on it             |

### GAP FILL:

#### Spiraling prices create world hunger crisis

Hunger and malnutrition may soon **hit** the world's largest and poorest cities. This was the dire warning from the United Nations on February 25th. Josette Sheeran, **head** of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) warned that sky-rocketing food and oil prices are making it very hard for the organization to **feed** the world's poorest people. Food prices have risen by up to 40 per cent in the past year. Ms Sheeran told reporters that spiraling **global** inflation has created a "new face of hunger". She gave the bare and basic **facts** that the UN no longer had enough money to feed the world's hungry. "We will have a significant **gap** if commodity prices remain this high, and we will need an extra half billion dollars just to **meet** existing...needs," she said. The WFP feeds less than one tenth of the world's hungry and starving. That figure will greatly decrease if prices **continue** to escalate.

A worrying new development created by the **sharp** rises in commodities is that hunger will affect billions of people in cities. Many of those on less than a dollar a **day** will only be able to afford one daily meal. Sheeran warned that many people can now no longer buy basic food **items**. She said: "There is food on **shelves** but people [in urban areas] are priced out of the market.... There are food **riots** in countries where we have not seen them before." There are many reasons for this upcoming **crisis**. Developing countries like India and China are demanding more animal feed and their expanding middle classes are buying more food, farmers are using more of their land to grow **crops** for biofuels, and climate change is creating more floods and droughts. Ms Sheeran appealed to rich countries to **donate** more money so the WFP could feed the 73 million who rely on it every day.

### LANGUAGE WORK

1 - c    2 - a    3 - d    4 - b    5 - c    6 - d    7 - a    8 - b    9 - d    10 - c    11 - b    12 - a