

# The Sustainable Development Goal of Zero Hunger Cannot be Achieved Without Addressing Colonialism, Racism, and Climate Change

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**“A racial twist was given to what is basically an economic phenomenon. Slavery was not born from racism, rather racism was the consequence of slavery”**

– Eric Williams, first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago

## Colonialism

- European colonization a vast imperial project 1400s-1900s
- The United Kingdom, France, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Russia, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden established colonies outside Europe (Murrey, 2020)
- Settler colonialism: “settlers come with the intention of making a new home on the land, a homemaking that insists on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain” (Tuck & Yang, 2019)
- Exploitation colonialism: “extractive state” is established to transfer maximum resources from the colony to the colonizer with minimum investment (Acemoglu et al., 2001)
- Only five countries never colonized by Europe: Japan, Korea, Thailand, Liberia, and Ethiopia (Fisher, 2015)
- The history of colonialism cannot be separated from the history of humanitarianism
- King Leopold II of Belgium carried out a brutal plundering of today’s DRC, framed as a humanitarian effort. As much as half of the population, or approximately 10 million Congolese, were killed (Hochschild, 1998)
- Neocolonialism is the continued economic and cultural control of countries that have been decolonized

## Racism

- “Racialization” is the complex and contradictory process of designating groups a particular “race” and thereby subjecting them to different treatment. Historically white people have held the social, political, and economic power to name and categorize people of color and Indigenous peoples (ACLRC, 2021)
- Prior to European colonization no naturally occurring concept of race
- Portuguese chronicler Gomes de Zurara documented a major slave auction in Portugal, describing the range of appearances of the captives from the African continent with some “white enough, fair to look upon, and well proportioned,” while others were “like mulattoes” or “as black as Ethiops, and so ugly.” Zurara blended them into one single group worthy of enslavement (Kendi, 2019).
- Racial tropes normalized importation of the “strong” enslaved Africans and the ongoing genocide of the “weak” Indians in the Americas (Kendi, 2019)
- Colonialism is a relationship of domination and difference, and race was constructed to serve as the primary marker of difference (Mahmud, 1999)

**“The story begins with people stolen from Africa and lands stolen from Indigenous peoples; two practices of brutal expropriation so dizzyingly profitable that they generated the excess capital and power to launch the age of fossil fuel led industrial revolution and with it the beginning of human-driven climate change”**

– Naomi Klein, Canadian author, social activist, and filmmaker

## Climate Change

- Growth in Europe increased during the peak of European colonial slave trading and holding, and research has demonstrated that wealth from both accelerated Britain’s Industrial Revolution (Heblich et al., 2023, Stallard, 2023)
- Human activities rapidly increased greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere since start of the Industrial Revolution (~1750)
- Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) and methane gas (CH<sub>4</sub>) among most harmful greenhouse gases (GHGs)
- GHGs primarily released into our atmosphere by burning fossil fuels, such as coal, oil, and natural gas for electricity, heat, and transportation
- Climate change began warming tropical oceans and the Arctic in the 1830s (McGregor, 2016)
- Global leaders have known about the danger of climate change for decades, including academic institutions (Robinson & Robbins, 1968), ExxonMobil (Hall, 2015), the CIA (CIA, 1974), and the first Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 1990).

## Global South

## Global Majority

## EFFECTS

## TODAY

- Wealth extraction from formerly colonized nations continues today
- 242 trillion USD was drained from the Global South 1990-2015, “enough to end extreme poverty 70 times over” (Hickel et al., 2022)
- Annually, more wealth leaves the Africa continent than enters it, according to the 2017 *Honest Accounts* report
- The impact on food systems can be seen in the large swaths of fertile land in the Global South devoted to producing monoculture cash crops for consumers in the Global North (Rehman, 2023, Bjornlund, 2022)
- Colonialism continues to have effects on malnutrition and health
- Dell documented long-term damaging effects of the extensive “mita” colonial forced mining labor system in Peru and Bolivia 1573-1812. Results demonstrated significant differences in child stunting in communities historically subjected to the mita system (Dell, 2010).
- Many of the structures and power dynamics that underpinned European colonization are embedded within the aid and development sectors today (Jayawickrama, 2018)

- Due to the awe-inspiring scale at which racial constructs were adopted and internalized during European colonization (Mahmud, 1999), the concept of “race” persists today
- The variable of race is not a biological construct with innate differences, it is a social construct that reflects the impacts of racism (Jones, 2000)
- Racism as a systemic reality on three levels: institutionalized, personally mediated, and internalized (Jones, 2000)
- “Racism, xenophobia, and discrimination exist in every modern society causing avoidable disease and premature death” (Devakumar, 2022)
- Discrimination affects health via biological pathways—including neuroendocrine and stress responses—throughout the life cycle (Devakumar et al., 2022)
- There can also be intergenerational consequences via changes in maternal mental health, parenting, and epigenetic changes as exposure to discrimination in one generation can cause adverse health effects in the next generation (Devakumar et al., 2022, Selvarajah et al., 2022).

- 2021 was the third costliest year for climate-related events, economic losses from natural disasters estimated at 343 billion USD (AON, 2021)
- Communities that contribute least to global emissions carry the burden of the climate crisis (Islamic Relief, 2021, AON, 2021).
- Colonial powers are responsible for 51.7% of cumulative global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions while they are just 12.6% of the world’s population
- increasing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and rising temperature is predicted to reduce the overall yield and micronutrient concentrations of staple plant and animal foods (Semba et al., 2022)
- Extreme weather events and the reduction of biodiversity are linked to the collapse of pollinator communities (Vasiliev & Greenwood, 2021)
- Ocean warming and declining oxygen levels are altering marine ecosystems and adversely impacting global fisheries (Deutsch et al., 2015).
- UN warns that extreme heat, wildfires, and greater food insecurity caused by El Niño may increase acute malnutrition (AFP, 2023).

### Case Study 1: Haiti

- The Indigenous Taino population largely exterminated by Spanish and French colonization
- Primarily West Africans imported as slave labor to produce raw goods for international commerce
- France’s richest colony in the 18th century, “the pearl of the Antilles”, large-scale coffee and sugar production
- First independent nation with Black leadership born from a successful slave rebellion
- In 1825 Haiti forced to begin paying enormous “reparations” to the French slaveholders it had overthrown
- A crippling debt, with interest, that took 122 years to pay off - 112 million francs (560 million USD today)
- If that wealth had remained in Haiti, rather than being sent to enrich France, conservative estimates suggest would have added 21 billion USD to Haiti’s economy over the last two centuries (Gamio et al, 2022)
- Despite seemingly insurmountable setbacks, Haiti was largely food self-sufficient until the mid-1980s
- 1995, immense international pressure to liberalize trade, import tariffs cut, devastating local food producers
- Today, nearly half of all the food consumed in Haiti is imported (Koski-Karell & Dortilus, 2023)
- Haiti ranked 163 out of 191 countries per the UN’s Human Development Index (UNDP, 2023)
- Haiti considered one of the ten most vulnerable countries to climate-related losses from 2000-2019, both in terms of lives and economy, by the 2021 Global Climate Risk Index (Eckstein et al., 2021).
- The March-June 2023 estimates from the IPC demonstrate that nearly 5 million people in Haiti (nearly half the population) are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC, 2023)

### Case Study 2: Pakistan

- Pre-colonization the Indian subcontinent a collage of 500+ regional kingdoms known as princely states
- A series of European powers colonized the coast of the subcontinent with trading settlements
- By mid-1700s the English East India Company was the dominant colonial power (Roy, 2021)
- In the 1800s, the British colonial administrators began categorizing Indians by religious identity and skin color to segregate and clearly define groups (Roy, 2021, Christopher, 1988)
- People forced to choose just one religion instead of the pre-colonial fluidity of their identities (Khalid, 2021)
- In elections, people could only vote for candidates of the same religion. These practices exaggerated differences and bred distrust between previously coexisting communities (Roy, 2021).
- In 1947, The British Viceroy announced that India would gain its independence and be partitioned into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. Hindus and Muslims fled to the areas where they thought they would be safest.
- One of the largest forced migrations in history, 14 million+ displaced and ~2 million died (Kumar, 2019)
- Two-hundred years of anti-colonial hatred channeled into the Indo-Pakistani War 1947-1948 (Kumar, 2019)
- In 2023 Pakistan ranked 161 out of 191 countries per the UN’s Human Development Index (World Bank, 2023)
- From June to October 2022, catastrophic floods in Pakistan killed 1,739 people, and caused damage exceeding 40 billion USD (Mangi, 2022)
- Indian Physician Dr. Raman Kumar: “The malnourished children of South Asia are carrying forward the legacy of their colonized ancestors who suffered extreme hunger, poverty, and disease burden” (Kumar, 2019).

# ENDING HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION