



The United Nations [Zero Hunger Challenge](#) , launched in 2012, has five specific objectives: to make sure that everyone in the world has access to enough nutritious food all year long; end childhood stunting; build sustainable food systems; double the productivity and income of smallholder farmers, especially women; and prevent food from being lost or wasted.

Timor-Leste, Asia-Pacific's youngest country, yesterday became the region's first to [launch](#) a national campaign under the UN Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge.

“Hunger is the single greatest obstacle to creating the inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future we want for all the people of Asia and the Pacific”, said Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)), at the launching ceremony in the National Parliament in Dili, the capital. “Working together, hunger can be beaten and the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific, with the support of our development partners, are taking the lead in making hunger history,” said Ms. Heyzer, who is also Secretary General Ban Ki-moon’s Adviser for Timor-Leste, which the UN shepherded to independence in 2002 after it voted to secede from Indonesia.

Tmor-Leste has a population of some 1.1 million people, but the Asia-Pacific region is home to nearly two-thirds of the world's chronically food insecure, with some 575 million thus classified.

The region has made good progress in reducing the proportion of the population suffering from chronic hunger, which has declined from more than 24 per cent in 1990-92 to 13.5 per cent in 2011-13, but it is still home to more than 553 million undernourished people with underweight children still comprising more than 34 per cent of all children in South and South-West Asia.

Underlining the challenge confronting Asia and the Pacific, UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) Regional Representative Hiroyuki Konuma told last April's Bangkok meeting that despite efforts to reduce hunger, and the rapid economic growth in much of Asia, progress in eradicating hunger has been very slow.

“One in every eight people in Asia-Pacific lacks the most basic human right because they are victims of chronic hunger,” he said. “Nearly two-thirds of the world's chronically hungry people live in the Asia-Pacific region.”

Mr. Ban launched the Zero Hunger Challenge with the goal of creating a future in which all people enjoy their fundamental right to food, and where livelihoods and food systems are resilient enough to withstand multiple shocks, including the impacts of global climate change.

In 2013, under the Zero Hunger Challenge, UNRIC launched the [Nordic-Baltic ad competition](#) for the best ad to raise awareness on food waste. The campaign was organized together with the Nordic Council of Ministers, and held in support of the UN campaign [Think.Eat.Save – Reduce Your Foodprint](#), an initiative of UNEP (the UN Environment Programme) and FAO (the Food and Agriculture Organization).