

# *Globalization of Hunger?*

## *Global Inequality in Historical Perspective*

Every day people die as a result of preventable causes. One of the globally most important is the unequal distribution of food, accounting for ten million deaths per year, although enough is produced to feed all. Globalization may be able to alleviate this problem, because it makes the distribution of goods cheaper and easier. But competition from world markets also destroys local production.

Thus, can globalization help to alleviate hunger, or is it rather part of the problem? For answering this question two tasks have to be performed. At first a more clear understanding of the term and phenomenon “globalization” has to be developed taking two “waves” of globalization in the nineteenth and twentieth century as starting points of analysis. Secondly, from this historical perspective, the quality and quantity of the interdependence between hunger and globalization has to be revealed empirically and comparatively.

To address this issue is not only important because of the ongoing suffering on the planet, but because research on this field has remained rather scarce so far. Although economists work a lot on globalization (although mainly with a mere implicit or relatively narrow understanding of the phenomenon), and frequently even combine this research with poverty or inequality issues, hunger – for being a rather “silent” catastrophe – seems to be almost completely overlooked.

In this project therefore three questions are in the centre of analysis: Is globalization even causing famine, hunger and starvation, or is it on the contrary alleviating the problem and its consequences? In which way are globalizational processes linked to the disastrous hunger catastrophes of the nineteenth and twentieth century (Ireland, India, China, Ethiopia, Sahel, just to name some)? And finally, have they even contributed to globalization, at least in the sense of a “world public” for these disasters or a better coordination of help?