Compared with the 1990 score, the 2013 Global Hunger Index (GHI) score was 23 percent lower in Africa south of the Sahara and 28 percent lower in North Africa and the Near East.

In Africa south of the Sahara—a region with the one of the highest GHI scores, at 19.2—the rates of progress have been uneven. Its GHI score increased marginally between 1990 and 1995, fell slightly until 2000, and declined more markedly thereafter.

Since 2000, mortality rates for children under age five have declined in Africa south of the Sahara. A key factor behind the improved rates seems to be the decrease in the prevalence of malaria.

The situation in the Sahel remains fragile in 2013 despite a good harvest. Recurrent crises in recent years—a combination of sporadic rainfall, locust infestation, crop shortages, and high and volatile food prices—have negatively affected food and nutrition security in the region.

The conflict in northern Mali, growing insecurity in northern Nigeria, and migration pressure have exacerbated the hunger situation in those countries.

In Africa south of the Sahara, only one country—Ghana—is among the 10 best performers in terms of improving its GHI score since 1990.

The three worst performers on the GHI—Comoros, Swaziland, and Burundi—are located in Africa south of the Sahara.

The three countries with extremely alarming 2013 GHI scores—Burundi, Comoros, and Eritrea—are in Africa south of the Sahara. The situation in other likely hunger hot spots in the region, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia, cannot be assessed because reliable data are lacking.

Some countries achieved noteworthy absolute progress in improving their GHI scores. Comparing the 1990 GHI and the 2013 GHI, Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Niger, and Rwanda saw the largest improvements among African countries—with decreases in their scores ranging between 15 and 21 points.

Burundi, Comoros, and Eritrea currently have the highest proportion of undernourished people—more than 60 percent of their populations.

Mali, Sierra Leone, and Somalia have the highest under-five mortality rate, ranging from approximately 18 to about 19 percent.