Compared with the 1990 score for South Asia, the 2013 Global Hunger Index (GHI) score was 34 percent lower.

Progress in East and Southeast Asia was even more remarkable, with the GHI scores falling by 52 percent.

In South Asia, the region with the highest GHI score—20.7—the rates of progress have been uneven. The region reduced its GHI score markedly between 1990 and 1995, but the decrease in GHI scores slowed down afterwards despite strong economic growth. It witnessed the steepest absolute decline in GHI scores since 1990, amounting to almost 11 points.

Social inequality and the low nutritional, educational, and social status of women are major causes of child undernutrition in this region and have impeded improvements in the GHI score.

India and Timor-Leste have the highest prevalence of underweight in children under five—more than 40 percent in both countries.

Some countries achieved noteworthy absolute progress in improving their GHI scores. Comparing the 1990 GHI and the 2013 GHI, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam saw the largest improvements among Asian countries—with decreases in their scores ranging between 15 and 23 points.

Vietnam has achieved impressive progress in reducing hunger since 1990. It reduced the proportion of undernourished from 47 percent to only 9 percent, lowered underweight in children from more than 40 percent around 1990 to 12 percent in 2011, and more than halved the under-five mortality rate.

Thailand has also reduced its 1990 GHI by almost three-quarters. In the past two decades, Thailand experienced robust economic growth and reduced poverty despite transient setbacks related to the Asian financial crisis.