

A Blueprint to End Hunger



**NATIONAL
ANTI-
HUNGER
ORGANIZATIONS**

June 3, 2004

Working Document

Toward a final Blueprint to End Hunger based on the principles outlined in the Millennium Declaration to End Hunger in America, issued by NAHO.

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A Blueprint to End Hunger

Hunger should have no place at our table. It is inconsistent with our commitment to human rights and objectionable to the American values of fairness, opportunity, family and community.

*Millennium Declaration to End Hunger in America
December 2003*

The Problem of Hunger

The United States is the largest and most efficient food producer in the world. Yet, each year nearly 35 million Americans are threatened by hunger, including 13 million children. These numbers would be even greater save for the fact that Americans are a caring people, quick to respond to human suffering and mindful of the responsibility that wealth brings. But despite our abundance and charitable spirit, we have failed to assure that every American is adequately fed. Instead, some children rely on a free school lunch as their only meal of the day. Many elderly people eat too little to maintain their health. And working parents often skip meals so that their children can eat.

Hungry people can be found in every city, county and state in the United States, and the ill effects of hunger touch everyone in some way. Still, an end to hunger can be achieved if we all work together.

This Blueprint maps out an effective and targeted strategy to address hunger throughout the United States.

The Desire to End Hunger

Both the United States and the world community have long been committed to reducing hunger. At

the 1974 World Food Conference, countries pledged to eradicate global hunger within a decade. While that goal was not met, heartening progress has been made. The proportion of undernourished people in developing nations has been cut in half, and the number of undernourished people in the world has declined. In industrialized countries, the United States is the only nation that still tolerates widespread hunger within its borders.

At the 1996 World Food Summit, the United States and nearly all other nations of the world pledged to cut in half the number of hungry people worldwide by 2015. For domestic hunger, the U.S. government committed itself to a more ambitious goal of cutting U.S. food insecurity in half by 2010. But progress against hunger in the United States has been marginal and intermittent – far below the rate needed to reach the 2010 goal.

Over the years, U.S. leaders have worked together in a bipartisan fashion to develop national nutrition programs, such as the child nutrition programs, the Food Stamp Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). These programs have been successful in helping to reduce U.S. hunger and continue to serve as a major bulwark against hunger. But despite their effectiveness, the programs are underfunded and fail to reach many people. By strengthening the programs and improving people's access to them, the United States can do much more to reduce hunger.



The Solution

The fastest, most direct way to reduce hunger is to improve and expand the national nutrition programs so they can provide people at risk of hunger with the resources they need to buy food for an adequate diet. The Food Stamp Program, which provides families with an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card to buy food, must be improved and expanded. Supplementary nutrition programs like the child nutrition and congregate feeding programs for the elderly, which are designed to help the most vulnerable people – children, the elderly and the disabled – also must be enhanced. And by working together, state and local governments, schools, nonprofit organizations and other community groups can make sure that these national nutrition programs and local anti-hunger efforts best complement and build on each other.

We know what to do to reduce hunger, but these changes will not be achieved without stronger political commitment. A national movement is needed that calls on everyone – from the president to the average citizen – to act to end widespread hunger. To reach the 2010 goal of cutting food insecurity in half, concerned Americans across the country must join together and insist that the president and Congress – and leaders at the state and community level – move this knowledge into action.

We also believe that the United States should

commit itself to effectively ending hunger and food insecurity by 2015. To reach this more ambitious goal, broader measures to reduce poverty also are needed to address the fundamental cause of hunger – poverty.

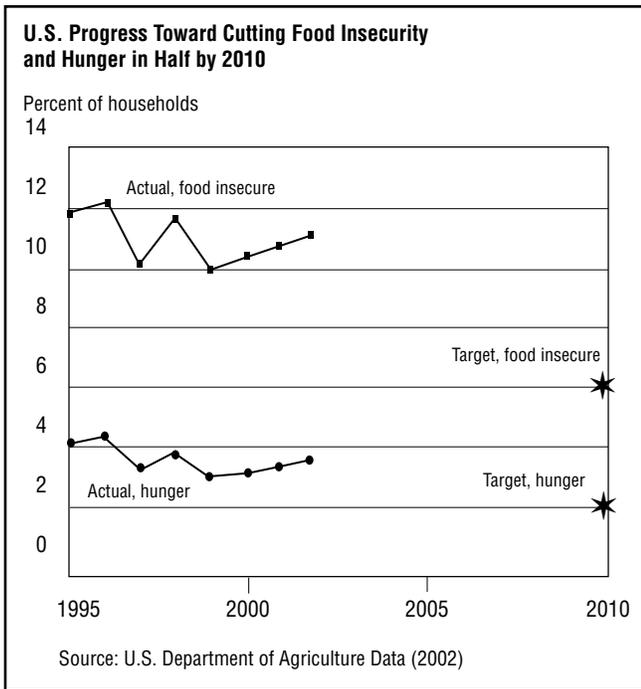
Some 35 million Americans live below the poverty line; 14 million Americans live below half the poverty line. Many of these people also are food insecure or hungry because they do not have enough money to buy the food they need. If the United States is to end hunger and reach a point where essentially all Americans are able to buy the food they need, we must work to ensure that potential workers have job opportunities, earnings that allow them to provide for their families' basic needs, and the education and training they need to stay competitive. This would require the U.S. government to ensure a strong economy, improve the national education system, expand employment opportunities and raise the minimum wage – which today is 30 percent lower in purchasing power than it was, on average, in the 1970s.

Programs that support work – such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit – also play a crucial role in helping people transition out of poverty. And while progress has been made to expand some work supports, not enough is being done to address health insurance, child care and housing disparities:

- Only 7 percent of poor people are able to purchase private health insurance outside the workplace, leaving more than 40 million men, women and children uninsured.
- Only one of every seven eligible children in low-income working families receives a child care subsidy.
- Only one in four eligible low-income renters receives rental assistance, and more than half of poor renters spend 50 percent or more of their earnings on housing.

When working-poor families have to spend inordinate amounts of their limited incomes on health care, housing or child care expenses, they have even less money to spend on food.

As a basic human right, all people should be able to purchase the food they need. Moving toward a fu-



ture where everyone enjoys that right is a realistic, affordable and morally compelling goal for the United States. By strengthening the national nutrition programs and pursuing poverty reduction using the values and energies that have made this nation great, we can make dramatic progress against hunger. The president and Congress assume this primary responsibility. Just as national defense is a federal responsibility, so too is the assurance of adequate food for Americans. But state and local governments, schools, community organizations, nonprofit groups, and labor and industry also play key roles in providing assistance and creating the political will necessary to bring about change.

We know how to end hunger. Other advanced industrialized nations already have done so. Now is the time to act. We must work together to muster the political will that will move these words into action and create an America where all men, women and children are free from hunger.

Steps we can take today to bring about an end to hunger.

1. Federal Government

- Live up to the official U.S. commitment to cut hunger and food insecurity in half by 2010, and commit to ending both by 2015.

- Invest in and strengthen the national nutrition safety net.

- Ensure that states, localities and schools offer all federal food assistance programs and work actively to enroll eligible people in these programs.
- Base monthly food stamp benefits on a realistic measure of what poor households need to buy food for an adequate diet.
- Allow low-income families to participate in the Food Stamp Program without forfeiting the opportunity to save.
- Extend food stamp eligibility to more struggling low-income people.
- Expand access to child nutrition programs so that more eligible children benefit.
- Strengthen federal commodity food programs.
- Provide the WIC program with sufficient funds so all eligible people participate.

- Invest in public education to increase outreach and awareness of the importance of preventing hunger and improving nutrition for health, learning and productivity.



2. State and Local Government

- Strengthen local use of federal nutrition programs.
 - Adopt policies that would expand eligibility and promote participation in the Food Stamp Program.
 - Reduce the complexity and stigma of applying for food stamps.
 - Work with school districts and localities to ensure that they offer the full range of child nutrition programs.
 - Expand program outreach of benefits and services, especially to underserved populations, such as working-poor households, children and the elderly.
- Invest in public education to increase outreach and awareness of the importance of preventing hunger and improving nutrition for health, learning and productivity.

3. Schools and Community Organizations

- Provide eligible children the full range of federal nutrition assistance programs, including free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch, after-school snacks and supper, the summer meals program, and the child and adult care meals program.
- Ensure that all eligible children who wish to participate are enrolled in the school meal and child nutrition programs.
- Invest in public education to increase outreach and awareness of the importance of preventing hunger and improving nutrition for health, learning and productivity.

4. Nonprofit Groups

- Work to increase public awareness of the problem of hunger in the community and advocate for policies to end hunger.

Obesity and Hunger

There is growing and appropriate concern in this nation about rising obesity rates among both children and adults, and its negative health and social consequences. While important, the widespread presence of overweight and obesity does not signal the demise in our nation of the problems of hunger and food insecurity.

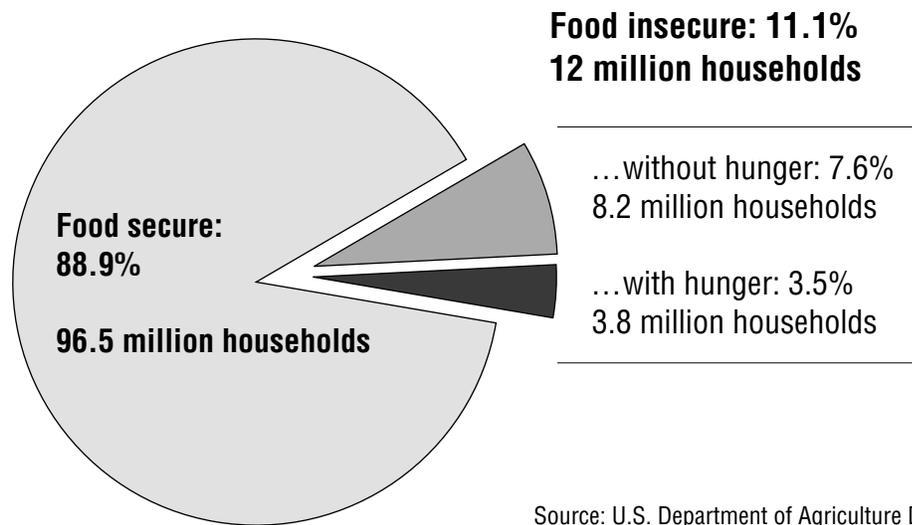
Obesity, food insecurity and hunger all are serious health problems in the United States that can sometimes coexist in the same households and the same people. Food insecure families often adapt using such strategies as relying on less expensive, less nutritious, high-calorie foods to stave off the sensation of hunger.

The prevention of both obesity and food insecurity requires regular access to affordable and nutritionally adequate food. Federal nutrition programs already play an important role in this area by providing nutritious foods on a regular basis. Research also is beginning to show the nutrition programs' positive impact on the prevention of obesity among food insecure children.

In the end, the national nutrition programs are part of the solution both to obesity and food insecurity in the United States.



How Many U.S. Households Are Food Insecure?



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Data (2002)

- Ensure that state and local governments take advantage of all federal nutrition assistance programs.
- Educate low-income people about their potential eligibility for nutrition assistance and help connect them with the appropriate programs.
- Monitor program performance in food stamp offices, schools and communities.
- Ensure that, once families are connected with food assistance, they also have access to affordable nutritious food.
- Continue to acquire and distribute balanced and nutritious food.

5. Labor and Industry

- Collaborate with government and community groups to connect low-wage workers to federal nutrition programs.
- Contribute time, money, food, warehouse space and/or transportation capacity to local anti-hunger organizations.

- Support workplace giving campaigns that target hunger.
- Advocate for improved public policies to end hunger.

6. Individuals

- Urge elected officials to do more to reduce hunger by improving and expanding the national nutrition programs.
- Become involved with local anti-hunger organizations by donating time, money and/or food.
- Raise local awareness of hunger by talking to friends and family, and working in your local community.

As we make progress toward ending hunger, it will be important to reassess these policy recommendations to make sure they continue to represent the most effective approach. The level of investment needed here will rise or fall depending on economic conditions and advances (or setbacks) in areas such as employment, work supports and overall poverty reduction.

Glossary

Nutritional Terms

Food insecurity – The limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods, including involuntarily cutting back on meals, food portions or not knowing the source of the next meal.

Food security – Access to enough food for an active, healthy life. At a minimum, food security includes: (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g., without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging or other coping strategies).

Hunger – The uneasy or painful sensation caused by a recurrent or involuntary lack of access to food. Many scientists consider hunger to be chronically inadequate nutritional intake due to low incomes (i.e., people do not have to experience pain to be hungry from a nutritional perspective).

Malnutrition – A serious health impairment that results from substandard nutrient intake. Malnutrition may result from a lack of food, a chronic shortage of key nutrients, or impaired absorption or metabolism associated with chronic conditions or disease.

Obesity – An abnormal accumulation of body fat that may result in health impairments. Obesity is generally defined by the National Institutes of Health as having body weight that is more than 20% above the high range for ideal body weight.

Undernutrition – The consequence of consuming food that is inadequate in quantity and/or nutritional quality.

Food Program Terms

After-School Snack Program – The After-School Snack Program provides nutritious snacks and meals to low-income children participating in after-school programs. It is run under the auspices of both the National School Lunch Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Child and Adult Care Food Program – The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal program that provides healthy meals and snacks to children and adults (elderly people unable to care for themselves) in day care settings.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program – The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) works to improve the health of low-income children, mothers and other people at least 60 years old by supplementing their diets with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) commodity foods. USDA administers CSFP at the federal level, providing food and administrative funds to states, though not all states participate.

Elderly food programs – Federal nutrition programs that specifically target at-risk elderly people and include home-

delivered meals and congregate meals programs, which provide meals at central facilities in group settings.

Emergency food program – Emergency food programs distribute donated food items to hungry people through avenues such as shelters, soup kitchens and food pantries, which usually are supplied by food banks. Such programs typically are run by private, nonprofit community organizations.

Food bank – A charitable organization that solicits, receives, inventories, stores and donates food and grocery products pursuant to grocery industry and appropriate regulatory standards. These products are distributed to charitable human service agencies, which provide the products directly to clients.

Food pantry – Nonprofit organizations (typically small in size), such as religious institutions or social service agencies, that receive donated food items and distribute them to hungry people.

Food Stamp Program – The federal Food Stamp Program serves as the first line of defense against hunger. It enables low-income families to buy nutritious food with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. Food stamp recipients are able to buy eligible food items in authorized retail food stores. The program is the cornerstone of the federal food assistance programs and provides crucial support to low-income households and those making the transition from welfare to work.

School Lunch and Breakfast Programs – The National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs are federally assisted meal programs operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. They provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals to children each school day.

Soup kitchen – An organization whose primary purpose is to provide prepared meals served in a local agency kitchen for hungry people.

Summer Food Service Program – The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides reimbursements to schools, local government agencies and community-based organizations for meals and snacks served to children during the summer months. Geared toward low-income children, the SFSP is the single largest federal resource available for local sponsors who want to combine a feeding program with a summer activity program.

Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) – WIC provides supplemental nutritious foods, as well as nutrition counseling, to low-income, nutritionally at-risk pregnant women, infants and children up to age 5.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) – Under TEFAP, commodity foods are made available by the USDA to states. States provide the food to local agencies that are selected, usually food banks, which distribute the food to soup kitchens and food pantries that directly serve the public.

The Blueprint: Federal Government

The federal food assistance programs serve as the primary instrument for addressing hunger in the United States and must continue as the cornerstone of our nation's anti-hunger strategy. These programs protect millions of low-income people and families from hunger by providing them resources to buy the food they need, direct meal service and/or supplementary food.

To end hunger, however, more must be done to ensure that the programs offer sufficient help and reach all eligible people.

- **Live up to the official U.S. commitment to cut hunger and food insecurity in half by 2010, and commit to ending both by 2015.**

The United States produces more than enough food for every American. For a variety of reasons, though, we have been unable to eliminate hunger in our country. The main problem has been the lack of political will: We must believe, we must commit, and we must demand that this problem be solved.

The United States pledged, as part of its Healthy People 2010 Initiative in concert with the World Food Summit of 1996, to cut food insecurity in half by 2010. While some progress was made toward this goal in the late 1990s, we have recently lost ground. We can do better than that. We need to renew and strengthen this commitment – to not only halve food insecurity by 2010, but also eradicate hunger by 2015 – and then fulfill these commitments by taking appropriate actions.

- **Ensure that states, localities and schools offer all federal food assistance programs and work actively to enroll eligible people in these programs.**



The federal food assistance programs do a remarkable job of addressing the food needs of people who participate, but unfortunately many hungry people who are eligible do not participate. This happens for two basic reasons. First, not every locality offers the full range of food assistance programs. For example, many localities do not offer free summer meals or school breakfasts to poor children.

Second, some eligible people do not participate in the programs because they do not know they are eligible, believe they are not eligible for much help, or have found it too difficult to apply. For example, nearly 40 percent of people eligible for the Food Stamp Program do not receive its benefits.

The federal government needs to redouble its efforts to ensure that federal food assistance programs reach all eligible people who wish to participate. This will involve conducting public media campaigns; assisting the outreach efforts of nonprofit groups, states and localities; providing technical assistance to communities that need help setting up new programs; and establishing participation targets toward meeting the goal of ending hunger by 2015 and holding program operators accountable for meeting those targets.

Such an undertaking will require resources. Many states and localities are cutting administrative funding for the nutrition programs due to budget shortfalls, despite growing need (and despite the demonstrated economic stimulus that food stamp expenditures bring to state and local economies). The federal government will need to support adequate administrative operations for states as well as innovative efforts to improve services to eligible individuals and families. For example, by

expanding federal grants to local nonprofit groups so they can continue and broaden their outreach work, more eligible families would receive food stamp benefits, helping to protect them from hunger.

The government also needs to pay particular attention to better understanding why certain populations, especially low-income elderly people, have low participation rates in the food assistance programs. Research should be undertaken to determine which programs would best address the needs of these groups and whether changes to the programs or their benefit delivery systems would result in more eligible people participating.

- **Base monthly food stamp benefits on a realistic measure of what poor households need to buy food for an adequate diet.**

The Food Stamp Program is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. Each month it provides more than 10 million households with benefits on EBT (debit) cards that enable them to buy nutritious food. (We're long overdue to rename the Food Stamp Program. It's an electronic system now, not a paper one.)



However, food stamp benefits need to be strengthened. Currently, benefit levels are based on the Thrifty Food Plan, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) estimate of what it would cost for a hypothetical family of four (two parents and two elementary school children with no special needs) to purchase a month's worth of food, representing a minimally adequate diet. Even when the plan was first developed during the Depression, the federal government described it as inadequate for long-term consumption. Studies since have shown that these initial food cost assumptions are incorrect for most low-income people. Thus, the Thrifty Food Plan – and the corresponding food stamp benefits offered – is not enough to supply an adequate diet.

The maximum monthly food stamp benefit in 2004 for a family of four is \$471 or \$1.31 per person per meal. Most participants do not receive the maximum benefit because the program assumes that households can contribute one-third of their income toward food purchases. The average per-person monthly benefit is \$84 or 93 cents per meal. Some households only receive the minimum monthly benefit of \$10.

Food stamp benefit levels should be based on a food plan that more accurately reflects what it costs to feed a family. In addition, the benefit formula should be revised to allow families to set aside more of their income for rent, utilities, child care and health costs, which have risen significantly since the program was established. And all aspects of the benefit structure must keep pace with inflation.

- **Allow low-income families to participate in the Food Stamp Program without forfeiting the opportunity to save.**

Even modest financial assets can prevent low-income families from falling into debt and poverty if a financial emergency – such as a spell of unemployment or a major car repair – arises. Unfortunately, the Food Stamp Program is not available to individuals who have even minimal savings.

Currently, a household may not participate in the Food Stamp Program if it has more than \$2,000 in savings or other assets (\$3,000 for households with elderly or disabled members). The Food Stamp Program's restrictive asset limit helps trap families in poverty and closes off some of the most viable avenues to self-sufficiency and generational progress. Food stamp recipients should be allowed to save, especially for goals such as their retirement or their children's education – goals that benefit all of society.

■ **Extend food stamp eligibility to more struggling low-income people.**

Many low-income people are working two or more jobs, yet are unable to meet their food needs without resorting to charitable food outlets. Some have incomes just above current program eligibility limits. Others have been made ineligible by Congress, undermining the program's role as a universal food assistance program. Closing gaps in food stamp coverage for those in need is vital if we are to reduce hunger. For example:

- The 1996 welfare law made most immigrants, including those legally residing in the United States, ineligible for food stamps. While some legal immigrants have regained food stamp eligibility, many others have not, and many legal immigrants remain confused about whether they are eligible for benefits or would face penalties for applying. As the use of food stamps by legal immigrant families has dropped, hunger in these families has risen, especially among children – including citizen children of immigrant parents. One in four poor children in America has an immigrant parent. It is essential that they receive the full protection of the Food Stamp Program.

Hardworking families with a legal immigrant should not go hungry. Legal immigrants should be made eligible for food stamps on the same basis as citizens.

- The 1996 welfare law also imposed a severe food stamp time limit on unemployed people without children: These people may not receive benefits for more than three months in any

three-year period, even if no jobs are available. Federal law should remove this arbitrary time limit for unemployed people who are unable to find work.

■ **Expand access to child nutrition programs so that more eligible children can benefit.**

The national school lunch and breakfast programs, which provide free or reduced-price meals

Focusing on Elderly People's Unique Needs

Hunger among the elderly in the United States is a complex issue that still is not fully understood. While much can be accomplished against hunger through the federal nutrition programs that already exist for the elderly, additional efforts may be needed to address their unique needs.

The elderly in America are, in fact, not one group but a diverse and growing population, ranging from active, working or recently retired people able to shop and prepare food for themselves to more frail and often much older adults for whom congregate, home-delivered and institutional-based meals are especially important. Many also have special diets – crucial for maintaining their health – that are more expensive than standard diets. For example, low-fat, -salt and -sugar diets are common for many elderly people who live with diet-related conditions, such as heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes.

As with other age groups, having adequate income is a precondition to making seniors food secure. Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and retirement funds contribute toward seniors' well-being. Providing them with assistance for their health care costs can help seniors avoid choosing between medicine and food.

Reducing hunger among the elderly will require changes in a number of programs at all levels. Connecting eligible seniors with food stamp benefits and making their allotments adequate can help cut seniors' food insecurity. Expanding and increasing funding for CACFP, CSFP, congregate and home-delivered meals, and institutional-based programs also can help ensure seniors' access to adequate nutrition.

to children whose families have incomes at or below 185 percent of the poverty line, represent the nation's principal nutrition support for children at risk of hunger. These programs supply low-income children one-third to one-half of the nutrition they need for healthy growth and development.

However, many low-income children who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals do not receive them. Federal rules should be changed to better enable low-income children who participate in other means-tested programs, such as Medicaid, to be enrolled automatically in school meal programs. This would improve access for eligible low-income children and reduce paperwork for already overburdened schools.

In addition, federal requirements should be changed to help schools offer the breakfast program to more children. The breakfast program serves about 7 million low-income children daily, but could serve many more if every school that offers free or reduced-price lunches also offered free or reduced-price breakfasts. The federal government also should encourage schools that already offer the breakfast program to offer meals in ways that make it easier for children to eat at school.

Other federal nutrition programs should be strengthened as well. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides a reimbursement for nutritious meals for children in school and nonschool settings, such as child care centers, family child care homes and after-school programs. Increasingly, CACFP is being used to subsidize meals in Kids Cafe programs and Boys & Girls Club settings, but the program remains underused. Federal policy should be changed to encourage more child care providers and youth programs to offer CACFP meals and snacks, and evening meals to children who remain in child care longer.

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides federal reimbursements for meals provided to children in low-income neighborhoods during the summer recess season. SFSP is typically operated during the summer months by school districts, county or municipal governments,

summer camps, community centers, Kids Cafes, food banks and other nonprofit groups. Yet, despite the obvious need for a lunch program in the summer, only about 3 million children receive meals during the summer through the SFSP or the school lunch program, as compared to the 16 million low-income children who receive free or reduced-price meals daily during the school year. Federal policy should be changed to make it easier for schools and other organizations to offer meals through the SFSP.



■ **Strengthen federal commodity food programs.**

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) provides federal commodities and funds to states for emergency food assistance distribution. In most instances, TEFAP commodities are provided to nonprofit charitable organizations, such as food banks, which distribute them (along with privately donated food) to hungry people through such local agencies as food pantries, soup kitchens and emergency shelters.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), like TEFAP, provides federal commodities to 32 states and the District of Columbia for distribution to two low-income

groups: (1) pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children; and (2) elderly people. The latter group is making up a growing share of CSFP recipients, and this trend is likely to accelerate as the baby-boom generation retires.

Families seek emergency food sources when they do not have enough money to purchase food and other basic needs. Rather than serving as an occasional stop-gap resource, emergency food boxes have become one of the ways that many low-income families make it through the month. This practice needs to change.

Implementing the other Blueprint proposals will ease the rising burden on charities.

Expanding the emergency food system is not a long-term solution to hunger. All families and people should be able to purchase the food they need, which would mean that food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens no longer would be needed, except for emergencies. But until we reach that goal, these organizations and the federal commodity programs that support them will continue to play an important role in responding to families' needs, particularly in emergency situations. The federal government can do more in the short term to support these charitable organizations that supplement the core federal food assistance programs.

Both TEFAP and CSFP are effective programs that should be expanded in the near term. (They can be reduced once other strategies gain traction in progressing to the goal of ending hunger.) TEFAP needs more funding for commodities and program administration. CSFP also needs additional funding so it can reach more eligible elderly people. Moreover, federal tax law should provide additional incentives to encourage charitable food donations to food banks and pantries.

Every \$1 provided in federal WIC benefits to pregnant women saves approximately \$3 in Medicaid and other health costs.

■ **Provide the WIC program with sufficient funding to enable all eligible people to participate.**

WIC, which provides food assistance and nutrition education to low-income, at-risk pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children up to age 5, often has been described as one of the best government anti-poverty programs ever created. WIC has been shown to reduce the incidence of low birth weight and improve children's diets. According to a General Accounting Office review of the research conducted on WIC, every \$1 provided in federal WIC benefits to pregnant women saves approximately \$3 in Medicaid and other health care costs.

The federal government needs to provide sufficient funding to enable all eligible people to participate in this crucial program. Ongoing resources also are needed to support policies that enhance the program's nutrition outcomes, such as promoting breastfeeding and allowing WIC participants to use their vouchers at local farmers' markets.

■ **Invest in public education to increase outreach and awareness of the importance of preventing hunger and improving nutrition for health, learning and productivity.**

The federal government invests resources each year to survey and study the issue of hunger in our country. This money is well spent, but more needs to be done. Just as the government works to improve public understanding of other public health problems and their consequences for society, it must undertake a major public campaign on the problem of hunger. Such a public discussion needs to include both the causes and costs of hunger.

Federal funding also is needed to support state and local coalitions working to raise awareness of local hunger issues and develop innovative community-based responses to hunger and poverty.

The **Blueprint:** State and Local Government

America's nutrition safety net is established by the federal government, but is administered largely by the states and local agencies. Some of the most promising initiatives that can be undertaken to connect eligible people to federal food assistance programs occur at this government level.

A number of states have already taken important steps to better understand their hunger problem and develop policy solutions. For example, in 1991 Montana's state legislature created the Montana State Advisory Council on Food and Nutrition, where representatives from both public and private sector anti-hunger programs study the state's hunger and nutrition problems and provide information, education and recommendations to policy makers, service providers and the public. The council has helped legislators choose which federal nutrition programs to implement, worked to improve coordination between programs at the state and local level, and even recognized local service providers with annual awards for innovative and effective efforts to address hunger.



■ **Adopt policies that would expand eligibility and promote participation in the Food Stamp Program.**

States now have significant flexibility to change their Food Stamp Program in ways that enable more low-income households to receive food assistance. They can automatically provide five months of transitional food stamps to families leaving welfare without any extra paperwork, thereby ensuring that the Food Stamp Program helps working families. Also, states can now ensure that families do not have to choose between owning a reliable means of transportation and receiving food stamps. More states need to adopt these options to expand

program coverage to more low-income people at risk of hunger.

■ **Reduce the complexity and stigma of applying for food stamps.**

The best way to encourage more eligible people to participate in the Food Stamp Program is to make it easier for them to apply for and retain benefits.

Encouraging progress has been made to streamline and simplify application forms and processes. Some state food stamp offices now provide extended office hours and a range of services online, including applications. Other states conduct some eligibility interviews over the phone.

This progress needs to continue. For example, states should be encouraged to accept food stamp applications at more locations and make sure that all food stamp offices are accessible by public transportation (or provide transportation vouchers). States also should invest in staffing and training to provide good customer service and eliminate counterproductive practices, such as fingerprinting applicants or conducting unwarranted and intrusive family investigations.

■ **Work with school districts and localities to ensure that they offer the full range of child nutrition programs.**

Children cannot concentrate when they are hungry. Research has conclusively demonstrated that good nutrition can promote cognitive development and learning, and that education, in turn, can help break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and dependence on public assistance. If we truly desire a self-sufficient population, we must facilitate

learning by feeding our children nutritious meals on a consistent and reliable basis.

Schools and communities should be given the assistance necessary to offer the full range of child nutrition programs. They should then be held accountable for meeting the nutrition needs of the children in their care.

One way to make sure that school nutrition programs reach eligible children is to make it simpler to apply. For example, since children whose families receive food stamps also are eligible for free school meals, states could share information from their Food Stamp Program with local schools, eliminating redundant application processes.

■ **Expand nutrition program outreach, especially to underserved populations, such as working-poor households, children and the elderly.**

Many people who are eligible for food stamps or child nutrition programs do not know they are eligible or think they are eligible for very low benefits. Public education campaigns are crucial to addressing these misconceptions.

Because of their closer proximity to the public, state and local governments have numerous opportunities to communicate with the intended recipients of federal nutrition programs, as well as potential program sponsors and others whose support is vital to these programs' success. State and local governments can conduct outreach and education in places where eligible people shop, work, transact other business and/or learn, including retail food stores, Social Security offices, elderly congregate meal settings and schools.

States also can partner with community-based groups to expand their existing outreach activities to include the federal nutrition programs. People who run nonprofit programs are trusted by clients and may be the most effective at educating people about the Food Stamp Program.

Many states and local governments have active campaigns for the Earned Income Tax Credit, government sponsored health insurance or the



new federal prescription drug benefit. The target populations for these outreach efforts overlap considerably with the populations who are eligible but not participating in the federal nutrition programs. Expanding the scope of existing outreach activities would be an efficient mechanism for connecting eligible people to food assistance.

■ **Invest in public education to increase outreach and awareness of the importance of preventing hunger and improving nutrition for health, learning and productivity.**

Like the federal government, state and local governments need to do more to raise awareness of the public health problem of hunger and support local efforts to understand and respond to it. One way to raise awareness is to conduct a media campaign. Governments also can work with state and local anti-hunger and anti-poverty coalitions to gain a better understanding of hunger in local communities.

For example, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski has made a public commitment to respond to the problem of hunger in his state. He has hosted two statewide summits to discuss the problem of hunger in Oregon as well as possible solutions. Working with anti-hunger and anti-poverty advocates, he has outlined an ambitious 40-point plan for ending hunger that focuses on its root causes – high unemployment, low-paying jobs, high rents and social isolation. These efforts have raised the visibility of the problem in the state and laid the groundwork for ending hunger in Oregon.

The Blueprint: Schools and Community Organizations

There is no better way to reach children and their parents than through schools and community organizations. Families' lives often revolve around their children's school and extracurricular activities. Schools also have a large responsibility for assuring children's intellectual and physical development, both of which require proper nutrition.

- **Provide eligible children the full range of federal food assistance programs, including free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch, after-school snacks and supper, the summer meals program, and the child and adult care meals program.**

Schools and community programs have enormous influence over the quality of children's nutrition via the food they serve and sell. It is crucial that low-income children be given as many opportunities to receive nutritious food as possible. Not only do children at risk of hunger spend much of their time in school and community program settings, but their food options elsewhere are likely to be more limited – and less nutritious.

- **Ensure that all eligible children who wish to participate are enrolled in the school meal and child nutrition programs.**

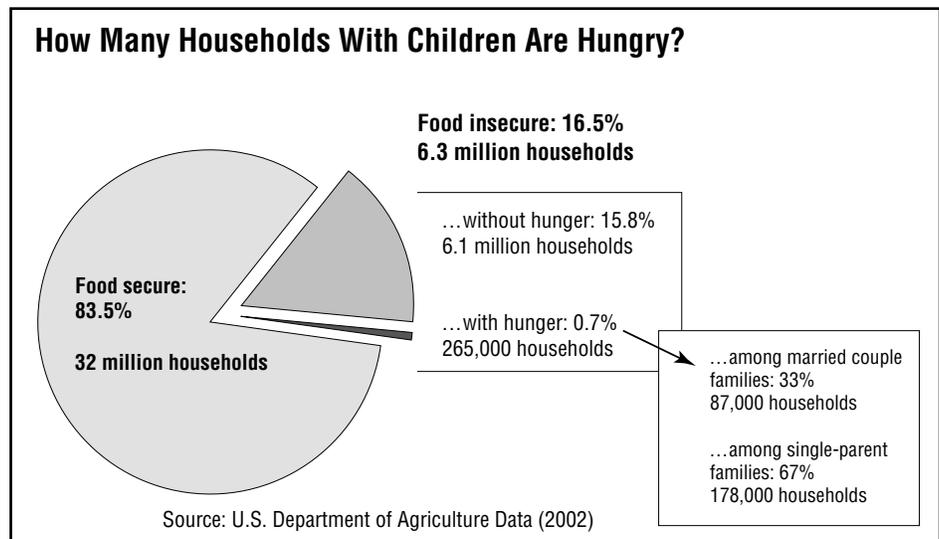
Daily meals and snacks are part of every child's school experience and many community activities. Increasingly, children at risk of hunger not only need a free or reduced-price lunch, but also a free or reduced-price breakfast, after-school snacks and even dinner. Many children arrive at school without having had breakfast, and more chil-

dren than ever are in after-school programs that stretch into the traditional dinner hour as their parents work longer hours and commute longer distances. Schools need to offer the full range of food programs and take aggressive steps to enroll all eligible children.

- **Invest in public education to increase outreach and awareness of the importance of preventing hunger and improving nutrition for health, learning and productivity.**

The best approach to nutrition education begins early in childhood and teaches through experience. In addition to making nutritious food available to low-income children, schools can offer nutrition education that promotes healthy food choices while also raising awareness of the problem of poverty and hunger in local communities.

This education effort need not end with children. Schools also can work with parents and the local community to increase understanding of hunger and its impact on children's ability to learn. Together, they can collaborate to find ways to take advantage of the federal resources available to the community.



The **Blueprint:** Nonprofit Groups

Nonprofit groups have a major role to play in ending hunger. While the federal nutrition programs are and should be the primary source of food assistance for Americans at risk of hunger, nonprofits can build public awareness and commitment through effective advocacy. They can also help drive program accountability and improvement as well as deliver services that supplement and enhance our nation's response to hunger.

Hunger affects an individual, then a family and ultimately a community. It can best be seen and understood where it is experienced. Many of the best approaches to addressing hunger arise from local communities. For example, some nonprofits have set up hot lines to help hungry families locate services and food assistance programs.

On a state and national level, nonprofit groups advocate for the use of government resources in ways that are equitable and effective in meeting the stated purpose of food assistance and related programs. Ending hunger will require even greater involvement from nonprofit groups in advocacy. Meanwhile, emergency food assistance will continue to be needed for local and individual crises as well as for more widespread hunger problems as we transition to a hunger-free America.

- **Work to increase public awareness of the problem of hunger in the community and advocate for policies that will end hunger.**

Whether they have a specific anti-hunger focus, nonprofits and charities are some of the strongest voices trying to raise public understanding of the problem of hunger. They conduct analyses and education about hunger in their communities. They advocate for policies that respond to hunger's root causes, such as stronger work supports. They work to ensure full use of government programs and improvements at the local level. They collaborate with government, labor and industry to develop

innovative local strategies for connecting eligible people with food assistance programs. They must continue and further improve these efforts.



- **Ensure that state and local governments take advantage of all federal nutrition assistance programs.**

Government agencies that administer nutrition assistance programs often are hampered by inadequate resources coupled with complex regulations governing multiple programs. Nonprofit groups can help bring a focus to the issue of hunger and the need for adequate public investments in program administration and infrastructure. Agencies are likely to welcome collaborative efforts with nonprofit groups that can help to increase the reach of nutrition programs.

- **Educate low-income people about their potential eligibility for nutrition assistance and help connect them with the appropriate programs.**

Some eligible people do not participate in federal nutrition programs because they find that the time and out-of-pocket costs to enroll and stay enrolled

are too high. There are many ways to increase program benefits and reduce costs, and these are discussed elsewhere in this document.

Other people simply do not know they are eligible for benefits. Relatively small investments in outreach can pay large dividends. For example, many nonprofit groups around the country take advantage of their own or government-provided computer screening tools to help families determine whether they are eligible for federal food assistance.



■ **Monitor program performance in food stamp offices, schools and communities.**

Nonprofit groups can serve an essential role in making sure that nutrition programs are reaching the people who need them and accomplishing the stated objectives. Food stamp offices, schools and communities vary tremendously in their effectiveness in implementing the nutrition programs. In most cases, others can readily replicate the best practices of high performers.

■ **Ensure that, once families are connected with food assistance, they also have access to affordable nutritious food.**

Even when low-income families access programs like the Food Stamp Program that boost their ability to purchase food, they can have difficulty

finding affordable markets that carry a wide variety of healthy foods. Supermarkets are scarce in low-income rural and urban communities. Nutritious food, particularly produce, can be difficult to acquire for residents of these communities. Prices at existing supermarkets in poorer neighborhoods typically are higher than in middle-income communities. These factors can have a substantial impact on a family's budget and diet.

To address this situation, many nonprofit groups work in low-income communities to secure new food retail outlets as well as more food choices through community gardens, farmers' markets, farm-to-school sales and cooking education classes. Not only can these projects directly improve peoples' nutrition, they also bring other benefits to communities and forge alliances with new constituencies, such as farmers.

■ **Continue to acquire and distribute balanced and nutritious food.**

Expanding the charitable emergency food system cannot bring an end to hunger. Our nation needs to reach the point where all citizens have the means to acquire sufficient quantities of nutritious food. We recognize that it will take some time to get there, and in the interim food pantries, soup kitchens and other programs that provide food to people facing hunger will continue to be needed. Ultimately, emergency feeding should become just that, food for emergency situations.

The Blueprint: Labor and Industry

Business is a primary beneficiary of ending hunger: Workers are more productive when they are not worrying about how they will feed their children. Children, in turn, grow into more productive workers when they are adequately fed. And self-sufficient consumers are full participants in the nation's economy.

Unfortunately, Americans are increasingly finding that a job does not ensure the ability to provide for oneself or one's family. Even though the official definition of poverty in America is quite sparing, millions of workers and their families still fall below that threshold each year.

This Blueprint focuses on strengthening programs and initiatives that address immediate hunger. But, as noted earlier, a true end to food insecurity and hunger will only come when workers are able to secure wages and benefits that allow them to provide the basic needs for themselves and their families.

■ Collaborate with government and community groups to connect low-wage workers to federal nutrition programs.

Companies have a stake in promoting the stability of their work force and economic health of their communities. They can do so not only directly, through the compensation and benefits they offer their workers, but also by helping their workers and others in the community find out about and use federal programs for which they are eligible. Every \$1 in federally funded food stamp benefits generates nearly twice that in local economic activity.

Some businesses already make it a practice to facilitate their employees' enrollment into the Earned Income Tax Credit and government-sponsored health insurance. Some retail stores even provide such benefit information to their consumers. Efforts to include information about



the federal nutrition programs are underway in some places and should be expanded.

Companies can work with the entities that administer these programs to match eligible employees with programs. For example, a state food stamp agency could make a food stamp eligibility screening tool available to a company's human resources department, which then could help workers understand the level of support for which they might be eligible. Employees benefit from improved food security, and employers benefit from higher employee retention.

■ Contribute time, money, food, warehouse space and/or transportation to local anti-hunger organizations.

Many food and grocery businesses already contribute to hunger relief by donating food. More businesses need to join this effort.

In addition, they can provide warehouse space and assist with transportation as well as share their expertise in these areas. The nation's charitable infrastructure could be dramatically improved if food bank and food rescue networks incorporated industry best practices in such areas as warehouse management and transportation.

■ **Support workplace giving campaigns that target hunger.**

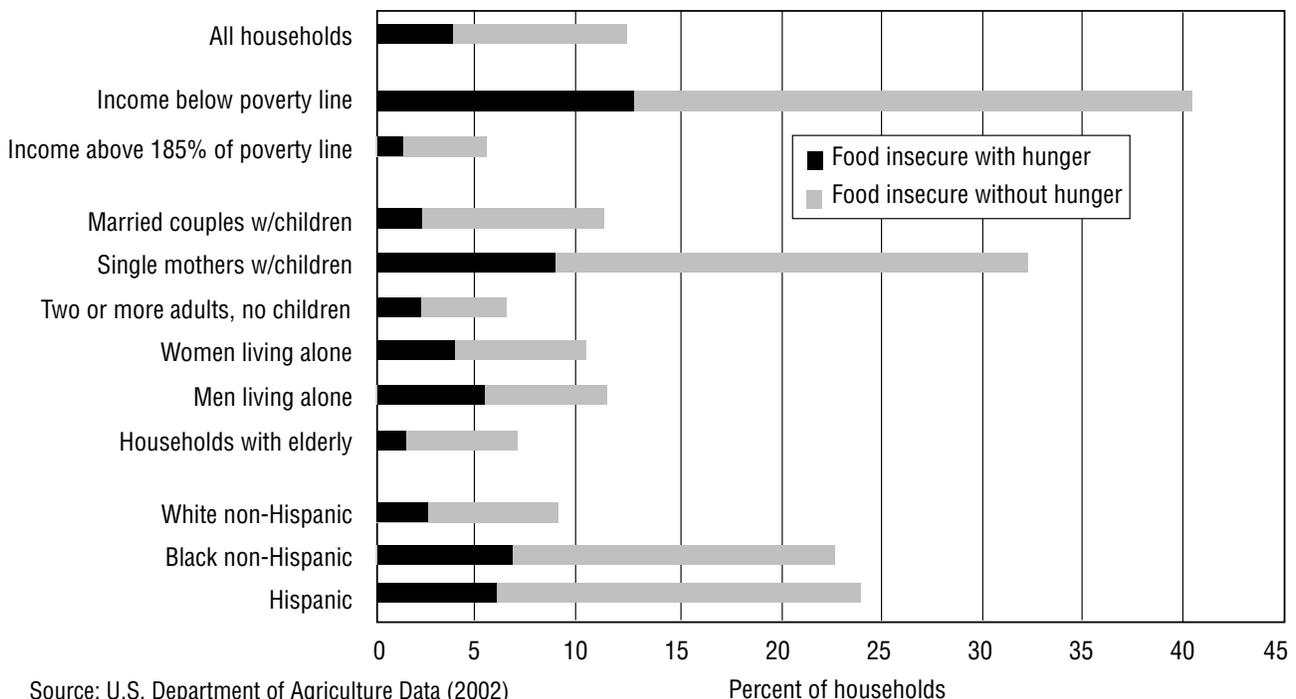
Ending hunger is an excellent focus for business giving campaigns. Hunger is a widely supported and nonpartisan issue that is national in scope but has local impact. It also can be combined with broader charitable contexts, such as a campaign that responds to child poverty. In addition to helping feed hungry people, funds raised can enhance advocacy and awareness efforts that will make ending hunger a reality.

■ **Advocate for improved public policies to end hunger.**

Business and labor organizations and their members can be effective advocates for government policies and public awareness on ending hunger. A simple step would be to join a local collaborative that is working to raise awareness of the hunger problem and advocating for policies that respond to hunger.



Who Is Food Insecure?



The Blueprint: Individuals

As individuals, we can join the campaign to end hunger in many different ways. We can participate through government, as voters and taxpayers. We can participate through business, as consumers, shareholders and employees. We can participate through nonprofit and faith-based organizations, as members, donors and volunteers. But we also can participate as individuals, by exercising our political rights and responsibilities.

Ultimately, the nation's political will to end hunger must build from each of us.

- **Urge elected officials to do more to reduce hunger by improving and expanding the national nutrition programs.**

We elect our legislators and we expect them to represent our priorities. They are, after all, spending public money. We have to let them know that ending hunger is one of those priorities and, as such, it should receive the resources it needs. We can express this most directly in how we cast our votes. Recognizing that hunger is one of many issues that Americans care about, we must challenge candidates to articulate their positions and their plans for ending hunger.

- **Become involved with local anti-hunger organizations by donating time, money and/or food.**

Each year, well over a million Americans volunteer to help hungry people by working in food pantries, soup kitchens, food banks and countless other programs across the country. Increasingly, those volunteers are helping make federal programs more effective, such as by prescreening people for food stamp benefits and working to make sure that their local community has sponsors for the summer food program.

Individuals can continue to help in other ways, such as donating food, providing financial support

for advocacy efforts, volunteering to help potentially eligible people find out how to connect with nutrition program benefits and services, and advocating with program administrators and elected officials for better nutrition program delivery.



- **Raise local awareness of hunger by talking to friends and family, and working in your local community.**

Millions of Americans feel strongly about the existence of hunger in the United States – and even more strongly about its existence in their community. One of the most discouraging things about hunger in America is how many people are unaware that it exists.

People can help correct this misperception by talking about hunger within their circle of family, friends and community organizations. In many communities, coalitions of concerned citizens have joined together to address hunger locally – these groups provide a highly effective way to increase people's awareness of hunger and encourage their participation in the fight against hunger. Such widespread public awareness and action can powerfully contribute to the goal of ending hunger.

The Blueprint: Conclusion

The responsibility to end hunger is a shared one. Food insecure and hungry people cannot end hunger alone. The same is true for people working low-wage jobs, the elderly, the disabled and children. We all are responsible for ending hunger, and if we are to solve this problem, we all must work together



The first and most important step is to ensure that the programs we have established to address hunger are fully used and appropriately structured. For this to happen, we must understand that the government is not a separate entity or someone else, somewhere else. *We* are the government in America. We govern through the people we elect and the institutions and organizations we join. We govern through the letters we write, the contributions we make and the opinions we voice. We must exercise our power to hold our nation accountable for the hunger that exists in our midst.

Through our governments, our businesses, our unions, our schools, communities, houses of worship and nonprofit organizations, we can make the existing federal nutrition programs work as they are intended. We also can ensure that hungry people are reached whether they are old or young, urban or rural, working or unemployed. Moreover, we can advocate for economic policies that will create opportunity and reward all Americans who are working hard to achieve a better life for themselves and their families.

The solution to hunger in America is not a secret. We have both the knowledge and the tools. If we apply them with energy and fierce determination, we can end hunger in our country.

Let us make that commitment together. And together, as a nation, let us fulfill our commitment to end hunger in America.

THE MILLENNIUM DECLARATION TO END HUNGER IN AMERICA

The National Anti-Hunger Organizations (NAHO) • December 2003

WE CALL UPON OUR NATION'S LEADERS AND ALL PEOPLE TO JOIN TOGETHER TO END HUNGER IN AMERICA

America carries the wound of more than 30 million people – more than 13 million of them children – whose households cannot afford an adequate and balanced diet. Hunger should have no place at our table. It is inconsistent with our commitment to human rights and objectionable to the American values of fairness, opportunity, family and community.

Our nation is committed to leaving no child behind. But children who are hungry cannot keep up. They cannot develop and thrive; they cannot learn or play with energy and enthusiasm. Hunger stunts the physical, mental and emotional growth of many of our children, and stains the soul of America.

Many different points of view unite us in this declaration. Some of us work to end hunger because of deeply held religious beliefs. Others are motivated by hunger's impact on health and cognitive development. Still others are driven by the long-term economic, human and ethical costs of hunger. But all of us are moved by the recognition that America's moral authority in the world is undermined by so much hunger in our midst. Regardless of our religious beliefs or political commitments, we share the conviction that we as a nation must act to end hunger—now.

Ending hunger is a two-step process. We can make rapid progress by expanding and improving effective initiatives like public nutrition programs. This, combined with strengthened community-based efforts, has the capacity to feed all in need. But we need to go even further, to attack the root causes of hunger.

Our nation's own past experience, and the successes of other countries, demonstrate that this two-pronged strategy can work.

ENDING HUNGER

America made great progress in reducing hunger during the 1960s and 1970s, as the economy grew and the nation built strong public nutrition programs – food stamps, school lunches and breakfasts, summer food, WIC, and elderly nutrition programs. These vital programs provide the fuel for children to develop and learn, and for adults to succeed at work and as parents.

As a country we did not sustain that momentum. One response has been the emergence of a strong private anti-hunger sector: food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, food rescue and other emergency feeding programs have become a key bulwark against hunger for many Americans. Volunteers, businesses, non-profits and religious organizations now help millions of needy Americans put food on their table.

But emergency feeding programs alone cannot end hunger. They cannot reach the scale essential to address the desperate need many people face, nor can they provide long-term security for the families they serve. Our country's experience over the past 20 years shows that charity can fill gaps and ameliorate urgent needs. But charity cannot match the capacity of government to protect against hunger, nor the capacity of the private sector to foster economic growth and provide living wages.

Ending hunger requires a sustained public commitment to improve federal nutrition programs, and to reduce red tape to reach every household and every individual in need:

- We can begin with the millions of at-risk children who start their school days without food, or who miss meals during the summer months, when they lose access to regular year school meal programs. Expanding programs for school lunch, breakfast, summer food, after-school meals for school age children, and child care food and WIC for pre-schoolers, is essential, cost-effective and a moral imperative.
- The food stamp program, the cornerstone of the nation's hunger programs, has the capacity to wipe out hunger for millions of families. We should reduce the red tape that often keeps working families and others from getting essential food stamp help. And the help families get should be enough so they do not run out of food toward the end of each month.
- We also must better protect elderly citizens whose frail bodies and meager incomes make them susceptible to hunger and nutrition-related diseases. Improving food stamps, home delivered meals, congregate feeding programs and commodity donations will ensure that increasing age does not also mean an empty cupboard.

These and related nutrition programs can become readily available through the support of innovative community efforts across our country. And all programs can be re-woven to deliver healthy, nutritious meals to ensure an end to hunger in America.

ENDING THE CAUSE OF HUNGER

The root cause of hunger is a lack of adequate purchasing power in millions of households. When individuals and families do not have the resources to buy enough food, hunger results. As a nation we must encourage work and also ensure all who work that the results of their labor will be sufficient to provide for the basic needs of their families. For those unemployed or disabled, or too old or young to support themselves, other means can ensure sufficient income to protect them from hunger.

Many steps can be taken to help families achieve independence and security: a strong economy; an adequate minimum wage that, like the one a generation ago, lifts a small family out of poverty; private and public sector provision of jobs and job training; strategies to create and increase assets among working families; social insurance protection for the unemployed and retired; and child care, refundable tax credits, food stamps and health insurance that reward work efforts of families trying to make ends meet.

A sustained and comprehensive investment in the efforts of all American families will ensure that inadequate income never again results in lack of needed nutrition for the children and adults of our country.

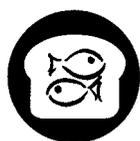
Taking these steps to reward work and effort, along with the ready availability of nutritious food programs, will ensure that residents of the United States are not hungry tomorrow or any time in the future. Ending hunger in America will reduce dramatically the deprivation that currently saps the lives of so many of our children and families. Ending hunger will make us a stronger nation.

This goal is achievable. The time is now. We call upon the President, Congress, and other elected leaders in states and cities provide decisive leadership to end hunger in America. Let us all work together, private and public leaders, community, religious and charitable groups, to achieve an America where hunger is but a distant memory and we live true to the values of a great nation.

NATIONAL ANTI- HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS



America's Second Harvest
35 E. Wacker Drive, Ste. 2000
Chicago, IL 60601-2200
www.secondharvest.org



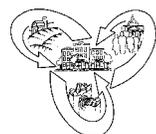
Bread for the World
50 F St. NW, Ste. 500
Washington, DC 20001
www.bread.org



**Center on Budget and Policy
Priorities**
820 First St. NE, Ste. 510
Washington, DC 20002
www.cbpp.org



Center on Hunger and Poverty
Brandeis University
Mailstop 077, PO Box 549110
Waltham, MA 02454-9110
www.centeronhunger.org



**Community Food Security
Coalition**
PO Box 209
Venice, CA 90294
www.foodsecurity.org



Congressional Hunger Center
229 1/2 Pennsylvania Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20003
www.hungercenter.org



The End Hunger Network
365 Sycamore Road
Santa Monica, CA 90402
www.endhunger.com



Food Research and Action Center
1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, #540
Washington, DC 20009
www.frac.org



MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
1990 S. Bundy Drive, Ste. 260
Los Angeles, CA 90025-1015
www.mazon.org



The National Interfaith Hunger Directors
100 Witherspoon St.
Louisville, KY 40202

RESULTS
440 First St., NW, #450
Washington, DC 20001
www.results.org



Share Our Strength
1730 M St., NW, Ste. 700
Washington, DC 20036
www.strength.org



World Hunger Year
505 8th Ave., 21st Floor
New York, NY 10018-6582
www.worldhungeryear.org