

8-1997

# A Curriculum Addressing Issues of Hunger and Food Security for Minnesota Youth

Fighting Hunger in Minnesota

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcecurriculum>

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Service Learning Commons](#)

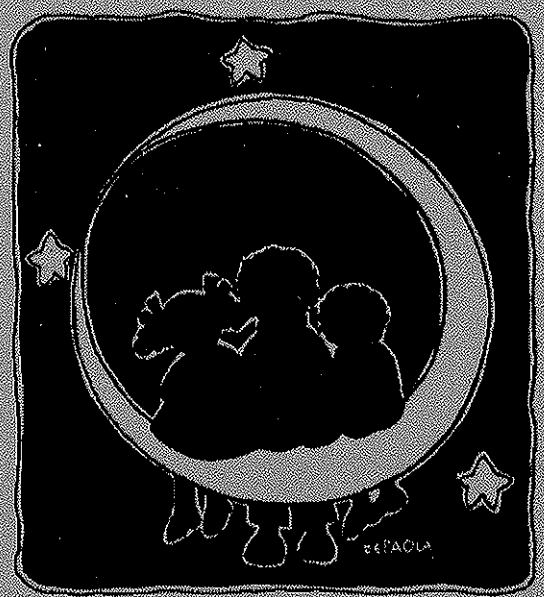
## Recommended Citation

Fighting Hunger in Minnesota, "A Curriculum Addressing Issues of Hunger and Food Security for Minnesota Youth" (1997).  
*Curriculum*. Paper 7.

<http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcecurriculum/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Service Learning and Community Engagement Projects at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Curriculum by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact [unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu](mailto:unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu).





# Kids for Kids

*Fighting Hunger in Minnesota*  
Grades 6-8 and Grades 9-12

A Curriculum Addressing Issues of Hunger  
and Food Security for Minnesota Youth

August 1997

NSLC  
c/o ETR Associates  
4 Carbonero Way  
Scotts Valley, CA 95066

A special thank you to Land O' Lakes, Inc.  
for providing printing of the  
"Kids for Kids: Fighting Hunger in Minnesota" curriculum.



# Kids for Kids

## *Fighting Hunger in Minnesota*

A Curriculum Addressing Issues of Hunger  
and Food Security for Minnesota Youth

August 1997

*This curriculum was adapted from "Kids for Kids: Fighting Hunger in Wisconsin" with permission from the Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee Youth Curriculum Task Force. Additional materials were adapted from the Atlanta Community Food Bank, "Hunger 101, Curriculum Guide" and materials were prepared by the Minnesota Hunger Partners Curriculum Committee.*

### INTRODUCTION

Children have an incredible capacity for understanding the problems of other children, but often lack the opportunities to participate in the solutions. In order to provide children with that opportunity, Hunger Partners of Minnesota has produced "Kids for Kids: Fighting Hunger in Minnesota." "Kids for Kids" is designed to help children develop an awareness about hunger, understand the extent of the problem in their community and state, and motivate them to respond to their community's needs.

*Do all the good  
you can,  
by all the means  
you can,  
in all the ways  
you can,  
at all the times  
you can,  
to all the people  
you can,  
as long as  
you can.*

*— John Wesley*

*Hunger is a children's problem.*

Poverty is the root cause of hunger. Thousands of children in Minnesota live in poverty. Hungry children are more likely to suffer from fatigue, have health problems, and have trouble concentrating, which contributes to increased absences, tardiness, and difficulty learning in school.

*Hunger is a problem that can be solved.*

It takes all parts of a community, including youth to address hunger and its causes and to work on both short and long term solutions for ending hunger.



All individuals in the community can take personal responsibility for learning about and understanding the problem of hunger and its causes.

"Kids for Kids" is based on a curriculum initially developed by the Maryland Food Committee. Building on that foundation, a dedicated committee of volunteers from the Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee created 'Kids for Kids: Fighting Hunger in Wisconsin."

The Minnesota Hunger Partners chose to adapt the Wisconsin curriculum to create 'Kids for Kids: Fighting Hunger in Minnesota."

The goal of the committee was to design a curriculum about hunger which would engage children intellectually, physically, and emotionally.

The curriculum includes hands-on activities and volunteer opportunities, and reproducible resource materials to adapt the curriculum for diverse religious, youth group, and school settings.

"Kids for Kids" is to be a living document. The format of a ringed binder with loose leaf pages is designed to easily accommodate changes and to provide convenient access to

materials or sections.

Teachers and youth leaders can choose sections to utilize and are encouraged to add their own projects and materials.

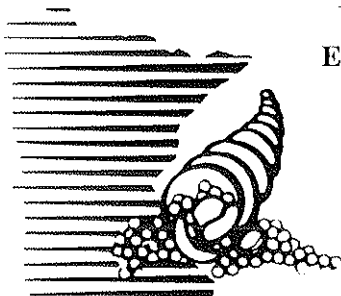
"Kids for Kids: Fighting Hunger in Minnesota" complements Hunger Partners' vision of a community that works to solve problems through interaction and education rather than the assignment of blame, which understands the long term costs of hunger, and is dedicated to ensuring food security for all.

*The Minnesota Hunger Partners are pleased to present teachers, youth leaders, and children with a curriculum that gives youth the opportunity to help and support their community.*

**Minnesota  
FoodShare**

(612) 721-8687

Email: [hn2783@handsnet.org](mailto:hn2783@handsnet.org)



**Minnesota Food Bank Network**  
(612) 486-9860



**MFSA**

(612) 536-9180

Minnesota Food Shelf Association

**Minnesota Food and  
Education Resource  
Center (MNFERC)**

A Program of the Urban Coalition  
(612) 348-8550



# Acknowledgments

We want to give special thanks to the Milwaukee Curriculum Task Force for allowing us to adapt their curriculum to create "Kids for Kids: Fighting Hunger in Minnesota." Many thanks go to the following people and organizations who helped in the creation, development, and production of this curriculum:

**Land O' Lakes, Inc.**

**Maryland Food Committee**

**Minnesota Hunger Partners Curriculum Committee:**

Kevin Adams  
Systems Administrator  
Second Harvest St. Paul Food Bank

Sharlynn A. Edgeberg  
Elementary Teacher  
World Cultures & Languages - St. Paul Public Magnet School

Bettina Graupner  
Program Associate  
Minnesota Food Shelf Association

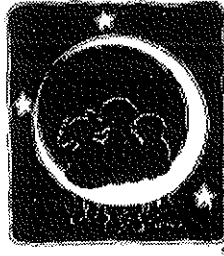
Karla Halvorson  
Communications Coordinator  
Minnesota FoodShare

Marsha Micek  
Graphic Designer  
Braun Printing

Paula Rittenhouse  
Middle School Teacher  
Sunrise Park Middle School

Jaci Stipe  
Director of Food Bank Programs  
Second Harvest St. Paul Food Bank

Mary Wilcox  
Child Nutrition Coordinator  
Minnesota FoodShare



# Contents

## *Youth Groups/Grades 6–8*

Defining Hunger and Identifying Its Effects .....	7
Understanding the Causes of Hunger .....	11

## *Teens/Grades 9–12*

Understanding the Causes and Pervasiveness of Hunger .....	19
Recognizing the Uneven Distribution of Food and Resources in the World and in the United States .....	23
Seeking Solutions to the Problem of Hunger in Our Community .....	27
Taking Action Against Hunger .....	35
30 Ways You Can Fight Hunger.....	37

Resources: Bibliography



# Purpose and Goals of the “Kids for Kids” Curriculum

The purpose of “Kids for Kid” is to help youth think about hunger, its causes and effects, the extent of hunger in Minnesota, and the resources available to promote food security (access for all people to nutritionally adequate food at all times from normal food channels) for Minnesota families. Given this knowledge, youth will have a more complete understanding of hunger and may be challenged to act to alleviate hunger and to ensure food security locally.

**Goal I:** To develop an awareness of what hunger is and how it affects individuals, youth will be able to:

1. Recognize healthy eating habits.
2. Define hunger.
3. Identify physical and mental effects of hunger on children.
4. Define food security.

**Goal II:** To demonstrate an understanding of the pervasiveness and causes of the problem of hunger, youth will be able to:

1. Recognize the extent of the problem of hunger in Minnesota.

2. State conditions which make it difficult for some persons to get enough food.

**Goal III:** To demonstrate an awareness of both short term attempts to relieve hunger and long term efforts to ensure food security, youth will be able to:

1. Name and describe the work or purpose of at least one short term way of dealing with hunger.
2. Identify long term strategies that individuals and organizations are using to promote food security.

**Goal IV:** To motivate and empower youth to respond to the problem of hunger, youth will be given opportunities to:

1. Shatter stereotypes of people experiencing hunger so as to view the problem of hunger as one which stems from circumstances that can happen to any individual or family living in any community, including their own.
2. Develop concern and empathy for hungry people.
3. Educate others about the problem of hunger and the need for food security.

4. Take action to fight hunger and ensure food security within their own communities—as appropriate for their age level
5. Effect long term change that will end hunger and promote food security by political and social action.

**Goal V:** To demonstrate an understanding of the pervasiveness and causes of the problem of hunger throughout the world. Youth will be able to:

1. Recognize the extent of the problem of hunger in the world.
2. Recognize the uneven distribution of food and resources in the United States and the world.
3. Identify the immediate and long term causes of hunger in areas of the world where there is widespread starvation.
4. Consider how our lives relate to the rest of the world and to problems of hunger and starvation.







# Defining Hunger and Identifying Its Effects

*Topic One for Youth Groups/Grades 6-8*

## *Background Information for Teachers and Youth Leaders*

In 1992 the U.S. Department of Agriculture introduced the Food Guide Pyramid. The purpose of the Pyramid is to help people to select foods containing the nutrients needed daily without consuming too much fat, cholesterol, sugar, sodium or alcohol. A picture of the Food Guide Pyramid, which includes suggested daily servings from each food group, is found at the end of this chapter.

People who do not regularly eat well-balanced meals may suffer from the effects of hunger and/or poor nutrition. Just as all people need a healthy environment in which to live, where the air is safe to breathe and the water healthy to drink, all people need adequate, nutritious food.

Hunger has devastating effects. Poor nutrition of infants contributes to infant mortality and low birth weight. Mothers who are undernourished during pregnancy have babies with

more physical illnesses and more problems growing and learning. Children who do not get a nutritious diet are more likely than their well nourished peers to experience headaches, fatigue, frequent colds, and other illnesses. Hungry children are also likely to be absent from school and are at risk of dropping out. According to the National Education Association, undernourished children are less

physically active, less attentive, less independent, and less curious. They cannot concentrate as well as children who eat properly. As a result, their reading ability, verbal skills, and motor skills suffer. Some of these effects will not be permanent if better nutrition is provided. Adults who are hungry may become nervous, irritable, and unable to concentrate. Chronic undernutrition weakens bones and muscles, increases the risk of illness, and contributes to depression and lack of energy. Poor nutrition can worsen any health problems that plague older adults.

What does it mean to be hungry? The Food Research and Action Center interviewed over 5,000 low-income families with children about hunger. The survey found that one-fifth of the families with at least one child under age 12 are hungry in some part of one or more months of the past 12 months. These families spent over half of their income on housing and were only able to spend an average of 68 cents per person per meal. The survey

*We must therefore  
act together as a  
united people ...  
For the birth of a  
new world.  
Let there be justice  
for all.  
Let there be peace  
for all.  
Let there be work,  
bread, water and  
salt for all.*

*— Patricia Young,  
National Coordinator  
World Food Day*



found that parents and other adults reported eating less than they felt they should because there wasn't enough money for food, that parents sometimes had to cut the size of their children's meals or skip meals altogether, and that children sometimes went to bed hungry because there was not enough money to buy food.

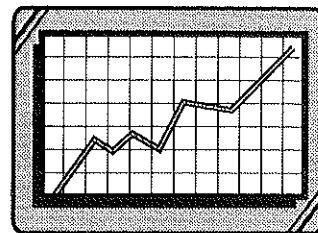
### *Foundational Activities*

Brainstorm class perceptions of "what is hunger." Come up with class definition and compare to Minnesota Hunger Partners' definition. Then use the "Hunger Awareness Quiz." Talk about the students' responses. What answers surprised them? Why? Distribute the quiz to other classes or groups of people. Help the students to tabulate the responses, using the information to prepare charts and graphs comparing facts on hunger to perceptions about hunger in Minnesota. Students

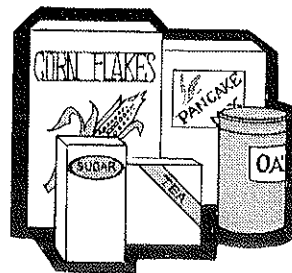
might make an "Awareness Meter" chart showing levels of awareness at various ages. These results could be displayed in the school.

### *Suggested Activities*

1. Ask students to write in their journals their thoughts about the most surprising idea learned about classmates' perceptions of hunger.
2. Use the Food Pyramid Guide to answer the following questions, "What do you think happens when a person doesn't eat the right kinds of foods on a regular basis?" (Possible answers include hunger, inadequate nutrition, diseases related to malnutrition, starvation.) "What are some long term effects of an inadequate diet?" Assign students to investigate the effects various levels of the pyramid have on body systems.



3. Ask youth to chart their own eating habits for one week. How do the foods they ate fit into the food pyramid? Students may be assigned to compare and contrast nutritional values in fast food, processed food and fresh foods consumed.
4. Ask youth what they feel like when they do not eat breakfast compared to when they do. Do they think more about food than school work? Do they tire easier? What is the impact of not eating a good breakfast on the youth's learning?



# 1996 HUNGER FACT SHEET

## WHAT IS HUNGER?



"The physical and mental condition that comes from not eating enough food, due to insufficient economic, family or community resources." Families in which members take turns eating or eat smaller meals to make food last longer.

### THE FACE OF HUNGER:

- In 1995, 1 in 16 Minnesotans relied on food donations from a food shelf.
- Two-thirds of the households using food shelves include children under the age of 18.
- More than one-half of families who use food shelves include children under the age of six, indicating that households with young children are more likely to experience food shortages than other households.
- One-third of the households visiting food shelves report paid employment as their major income source.
- 55,000 children under the age of twelve in Minnesota are hungry, and 144,000 are "at risk" of hunger (families with limited food supplies, who occasionally run out of money for food).
- 19.6 million pounds of food were distributed by food shelves in 1995.

### WHY ARE SO MANY MINNESOTANS HUNGRY?

- 85% of households visiting food shelves in 1995 have incomes below the federal poverty level (\$15,575 per year for a family of four).
- People using food shelves report their income resources are not enough to meet their basic needs. Low wages, unemployment, high housing costs and high out-of-pocket medical expenses make working families vulnerable to hunger.
- For every job that pays a living wage (one that will cover basic expenses every month) there are six job seekers.
- For every job that pays a living wage and requires one year or less of training, there are 32 job seekers.

Minnesota  
FoodShare  
November 1996



### SOURCES:

*Hunger Still Hurts* (1996), The Urban Coalition; *The Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project* (1995), The Food Research and Action Center; *The Minnesota Job Gap Study* (1995), Jobs NOW coalition.

# Hunger Facts

Directions - use the Hunger Fact Sheet to complete the statements. The letters in the circles will form the mystery words.

1. Eighty-five percent of households visiting food shelves in 1995 have incomes below the federal \_\_\_\_\_ Q level.
2. One in sixteen Minnesotans relied on Q Q donations from a food shelf.
3. 19.6 million Q of food were distributed by food shelves in 1995.
4. More than Q - Q of families who use food shelves include children under the age of six.
5. The federal poverty level for a family of Q is \$15,575 per year.
6. 55,000 children under the age of twelve in Minnesota are Q.
7. Some factors that make families "at risk" to hunger are: Q wages  
\_\_\_\_\_ Q  
high Q expenses  
\_\_\_\_\_ Q
8. People using the food shelves report their Q Q Q are not enough to meet their basic needs.

\_\_\_\_\_ conducts an annual food drive statewide.

## Hunger Facts

Directions - use the Hunger Fact Sheet to complete the statements. The letters in the circles will form the mystery words.

1. Eighty-five percent of households visiting food shelves in 1995 have incomes below the federal P o v e r t y level.
2. One in sixteen Minnesotans relied on f o o d donations from a food shelf.
3. 19.6 million p o u n d s of food were distributed by food shelves in 1995.
4. More than o n e - h a l f of families who use food shelves include children under the age of six.
5. The federal poverty level for a family of f o u r is \$15,575 per year.
6. 55,000 children under the age of twelve in Minnesota are h u n g r y.
7. Some factors that make families "at risk" to hunger are: l o w wages  
u n e m p l o y m e n t  
high m e d i c a l expenses  
h o u s i n g c o s t s
8. People using the food shelves report their i n c o m e r e s o u r c e s are not enough to meet their basic needs.

M i n n e s o t a F o o d S h a r e conducts an annual food drive statewide.

# APPENDIX A

## Food Guide Pyramid

### A Guide to Daily Food Choices

Fats, Oils & Sweets

**USE SPARINGLY**

such as salad dressings and oils, cream, butter, margarine, sugars, soft drinks, candies and sweet desserts.

**KEY**

• Fat (naturally occurring and added)

▼ Sugars (added)

These symbols show fats, oils and added sugars in foods.

Milk, Yogurt & Cheese Group

**2-3 SERVINGS**

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs & Nuts Group

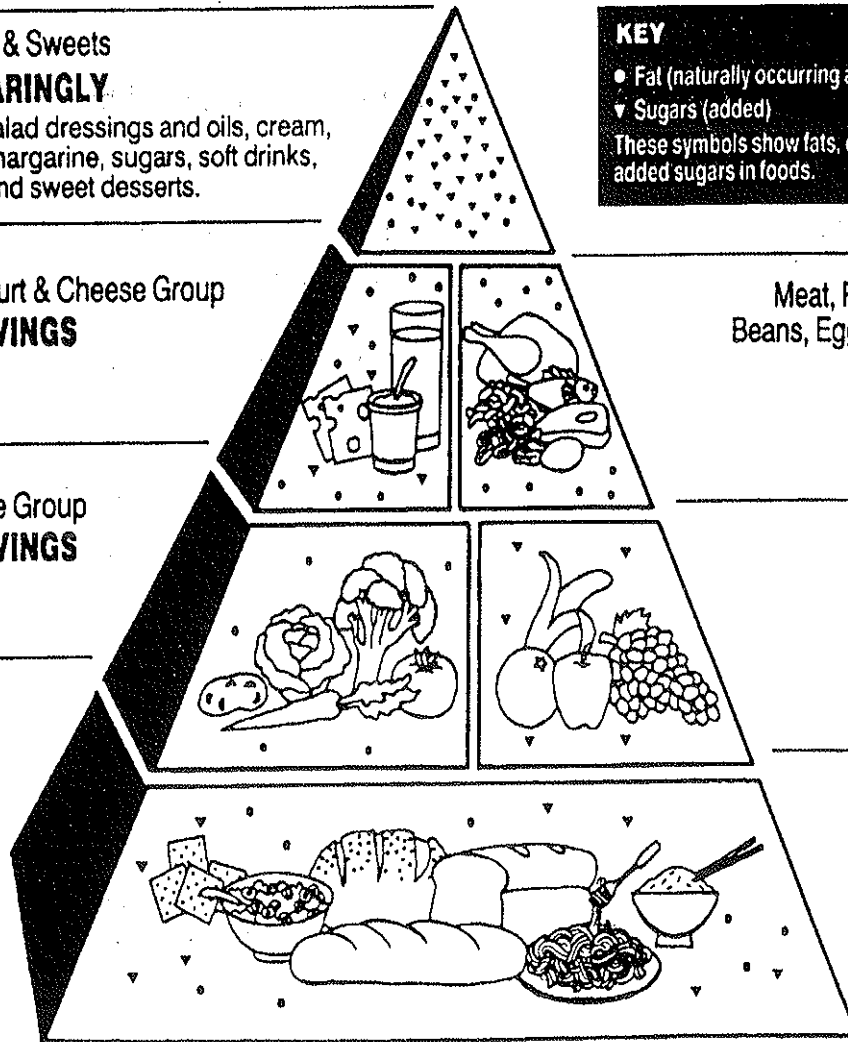
**2-3 SERVINGS**

Vegetable Group

**3-5 SERVINGS**

Fruit Group  
**2-4 servings**

Bread, Cereal, Rice & Pasta Group  
**6-11 SERVINGS**





## Fact Sheet on Childhood Hunger

Tufts University examines research on effects of childhood hunger on behavior of children, their school performance and their cognitive (learning) development. They reported:

*Undernutrition harms children silently. Even before it is severe and its results are readily detectable, inadequate food intake limits the ability of children to learn about the world around them. When children are chronically undernourished, their bodies conserve the limited food energy available. Energy is first reserved for maintenance of critical organ functions, second for growth, and last for social activity and cognitive development. As a result, undernourished children decrease their activity levels and become more apathetic. This in turn affects their social interactions, inquisitiveness and overall cognitive functioning.*

The research found that lack of adequate food, even for a short-term period, hurts children's ability to concentrate and perform complex tasks. Undernourished children typically get tired easier and have less energy to explore their social environment. Anemia affects nearly one fourth of all low income children in the United States and limits children's attention span and memory. Iron deficiency anemia also puts children at higher risk of lead poisoning. Tufts University reports, "Low-income children face a double jeopardy -- they are more likely to be anemic and more likely to live in an environment where the risk of lead poisoning is high."

The Tufts University researchers are not pessimistic, however. They report, "With this greater understanding of the serious threats posed by even mild undernutrition in children comes a 'silver lining.' Unlike some social and health problems plaguing our young, undernutrition is preventable and its effects often modifiable. Many existing programs and treatments are known to be effective. Nutrition and prenatal care for women reduces the incidence of low birth-weight babies and subsequent developmental delays associated with that condition. Iron repletion therapy can reverse some of the effects of anemia on learning, attention and memory. And research consistently establishes that federal initiatives such as the School Breakfast Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) have positive effects on the cognitive development of children. The benefits include higher performance on standardized tests, better school attendance, lowered incidence of anemia, and reduced need for costly special education."

*Tufts University School of Nutrition, "Statement on the Link Between Nutrition and Cognitive Development in Children." 1994*



# Food Pyramid Find

Circle the words you find from each group.

<u>Milk</u>	<u>Grain</u>	<u>Meat</u>	<u>Fruit</u>	<u>Vegetable</u>
milk	bread	poultry	apple	corn
cheese	rice	beans	apricot	broccoli
yogurt	pasta	pork	banana	carrot
ice cream	cereal	hamburger	pear	lettuce
		peanuts		

M	H	E	T	N	N	S	T	P	E	A	N	U	T	S
I	A	T	O	T	R	U	G	O	Y	B	E	A	N	S
L	M	E	R	U	F	N	E	U	C	K	J	T	M	T
K	B	B	R	O	C	C	O	L	I	I	X	S	I	R
J	U	Z	A	C	I	P	E	T	D	R	R	A	E	L
H	R	I	C	R	E	P	O	R	K	A	P	P	G	W
Y	G	I	O	Y	J	C	N	Y	E	P	B	G	A	Y
C	E	X	R	B	D	R	I	P	L	A	W	Y	Y	A
T	R	C	N	Q	S	Z	D	E	N	F	L	P	Z	M
C	Z	Z	U	V	N	H	G	A	E	B	F	O	X	H
A	K	O	P	T	Y	V	N	S	E	X	Y	L	H	P
Y	Z	Y	U	W	T	A	E	S	U	R	T	P	M	L
E	M	Z	E	A	O	E	W	Y	E	T	B	Z	O	L
B	D	X	I	F	H	O	L	A	P	N	H	M	W	H
O	I	R	P	C	J	P	K	I	E	B	O	C	G	S



# Understanding the Causes of Hunger

## *Topic Two for Youth Groups/Grades 6-8*

### *Background Information for Teachers and Youth Leaders*

Unlike developing countries, which may face a shortage of food due to famine or war, there is more than enough food for everyone in the United States. In fact, much edible food is thrown away. Hunger in our country is usually due to a lack of money to buy food. Common reasons for hunger include: unemployment (often caused by illness, injury, or lay-offs), underemployment (working at a job which is only part-time or temporary), high housing costs (which may take up to 70 percent of a family's income), high medical costs not covered by insurance, and high child care costs. In addition, people may go hungry because of a lack of access to reasonably priced food, unawareness of federal food programs, inability to take advantage of federal food programs because they are under-funded and under-promoted, poor budgeting skills, or inappropriate use of food money to support an addictive habit. Children, or other people

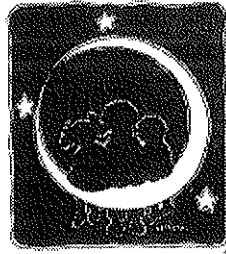
unable to care for their own needs, may be neglected or isolated from others. Some people such as the elderly or physically challenged, may have sufficient funds but cannot shop and/or prepare food without assistance. Many senior citizens are too proud to ask for help. Instead, they try to get by on Social Security. Women make up 75 percent of the elderly who live in pov-

erty. Many of these women survive on \$3,000 to \$5,000 per year in Social Security payments.

To provide a safety net for those people with limited resources, the U.S. government sets a poverty line each year. The poverty line is based on the cost of a basket of foods that the government determines will provide a "minimally adequate diet." The government will help people living below the poverty line to obtain food. People and/or families who fall below this line are eligible for federal and/or state assistance in the form of food, housing and health care. In 1995, the U.S. government set the poverty line at \$7,470 for a single person, \$10,030 for two persons, \$12,590 for a family of three, and \$15,150 for a family of four. More than 32 million people live below the poverty line in the United States. At the current minimum wage, which is \$4.25 per hour, a single working person can rise just above the poverty line, but two people cannot. People living in poverty do not have enough money for basic necessities.

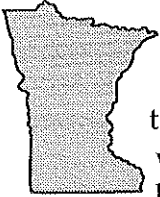
*There is a national interest in making sure that the food, the nutrition, the health care of the children in this country are protected. That is not a state-by-state interest; that is a national interest.*

*—Bill Clinton*



## Foundational Activities

To take a more in-depth look at the problem of hunger in Minnesota, ask youth to think about families who experience hunger in our state.



Distribute the Case Studies of hungry people found at the end of this chapter. Explain that the characters in these stories are real people who live in Minnesota. To shatter common stereotypes about who is hungry, divide the class into five groups and ask each group to consider the following questions:

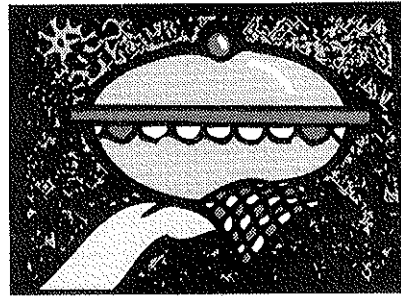
- What can we generalize from this information about who is hungry in Minnesota?
- What do you notice about the ages of people who are hungry?
- What about their gender?
- Where do they live in the state? (locate on Minnesota map).
- Where do they get their money?
- What is their income?
- Do they have anything in common?

Ask each group to share their ideas with the whole class. Share the article on "How

Hungry is America?" from *Newsweek*, March 14, 1994, found at the end of this chapter. What information in the article is supported by data? Are there stereotypes of hungry people promoted in the article?


## Suggested Activities

1. Organize a Hunger Banquet to further develop sensitivity and awareness of what hunger is. The Hunger Banquet is a meal prepared and divided



among the guests in proportion to the income levels of peoples throughout the world. Some guests (15 percent) receive a "gourmet" abundant meal. others (25 percent) eat a simple meal of rice with beans or broth, and the majority get only rice and water. The Banquet helps students and their guests appreciate the food needs of people throughout the world and to think about the unfairness of our present distributions of food. Youth can help organize the banquet by creating posters to publicize the event, make informational speeches to other

classrooms or groups about the upcoming banquet, and inviting local celebrities to speak on hunger. They may also want to use the event to raise funds to support local foodshelves.

2. As a classroom alternative to the Hunger Banquet, organize a  "How Does the World Eat?" snack (from Food First Curriculum, by Laurie Rubin, Institute for Food and Development Policy, San Francisco, California, 1984). After talking about the

uneven distribution of food in the world, distribute a nutritious snack (e.g. graham crackers, fruit slices, peanuts, popcorn, raisins) to the group. Divide up the food so that about 1/4 of the group receives nothing or crumbs, 1/4 receives a very small portion, 1/4 receives a moderate portion, nearly 1/4 receives a very large portion, and 1 or 2 people receive even larger portions than the others. For example, for a group of 24 with 24 medium-sized apples quartered into 96 pieces:

- 6 people (25%) receive nothing,
- 6 people (25%) receive 1



- slice each,
- 6 people (25%) receive 3 slices each,
- 5 people (22%) receive 10 slices each, and
- 1 person (3%) receives 25 slices.

Help the students understand that there are hungry people and well-fed people in every country. Let the children react to the situation, and let the group work out whether they want to redistribute the food more fairly or eat it as is. (If the group has had experiences sharing, you may want to let them experience the unequal distribution and to talk about how various "eaters" and "non-eaters" felt.)

3. To focus on the lack of money as a cause of hunger, divide the class into "families." Give each family the Food Pyramid Guide. Hand each family a slip of paper with their food budget for the week. At least one family should receive a large amount to purchase necessities and extras. Another should receive a sufficient amount for necessities. A third family should receive too little money to purchase what they need. Check out prices at a local grocery store, provide grocery store ads, or share a food



price list which you have created. Set a time limit for the families to "shop." Ask each family to tell what they bought. Then ask:

- Were you able to buy what was on your shopping list? Why or why not?
  - How did you feel about shopping for food if you had enough money? How did you feel if you did not have enough money?
  - If your family group did not have enough money to buy what you needed, what kinds of foods were you unable to afford?
4. To recognize that family decisions about spending for food are shaped by the total family budget, consider several families with very limited resources, e.g. a father (earning \$6.50 an hour, \$1,040 a month, with no health insurance) and his teenage son; a mother receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) payments (\$5.17 a month plus food

stamps and Medicaid) with one teenage daughter and a twelve-year-old son; a mother and father (laid off, with \$1,300 a month in unemployment compensation income, no health insurance) and three preschool children.

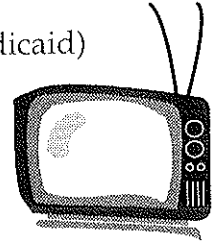


Figure what you would spend for each category. How much would a young person need for clothes (including shoes, winter jackets) each month? How much would you need for school supplies? In addition, how much money would you want to spend on entertainment (movie, TV)? Would you have a phone?

Determine how much the family you've selected can spend this month on food. How much is that per week? Suppose someone in the family gets sick and they must pay \$195 for medicine and a doctor's bill. What can't they afford this month? What would they have to do without? What might happen to this family?

5. To help youth emphasize



with hungry people, ask them to work in teams to plan one day's worth of nutritious meals for a mother and her two school age children. Tell them they have 68 cents per person per meal (the average amount of money families coming to emergency food programs have available for food). Use the Food Guide Pyramid for nutrition information and

grocery newspaper ads to determine the cost of the food. Ask each team to report back to the group. Listen for ideas youth suggest to stretch their food dollar, such as participating in the School Breakfast and Lunch Program, shopping with coupons, looking for sales, and buying in bulk. Talk about what foods they wanted to buy but couldn't afford.

6. To demonstrate how federal food programs provide opportunities to break the cycle of hunger, distribute the handout "Federal Food Programs Break the Cycle of Hunger" found on the following page. Read and discuss this sheet, noting how federal programs can help people at different stages of life to obtain nutritious, low-cost food.



#### **RESOURCES**

"Food First Curriculum: An Integrated Curriculum" (by Laurie Rubin. San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1984). An excellent multidisciplinary approach to issues of cooperation, our food system, hunger and addressing hunger. The guide includes 35 activities designed to involve youth in the issues addressed.

# HOW TO HOST A WORLD HUNGER MEAL

**T**he purpose of a World Hunger Meal is to provide people with an opportunity to experience intellectually and emotionally the disparity of food distribution. This hunger meal will hopefully allow the participants to see the needs of hungry people in a new and more compassionate light. A World Hunger Meal is something you can do with your church's congregation, or invite neighboring churches to participate with your faith community.

When you invite people to the hunger meal, include an RSVP number so that you can get a sense of how many people will be in attendance. Before the event, prepare slips of paper reflecting the number of guests you expect to arrive. 15% of the total number of slips should have an 'H' written on it to mean 'high-income', 25% of the slips should have an 'M' written on it meaning 'middle-income', and 60% should have an 'L' written on it to signify 'low-income'. The percentages reflect the world's income proportions as explained in the Hunger Meal Script on page 13. (If more guests than expected arrive, send them to the low-income group since they constitute the majority of the world's population.) Each of your guests should receive one of these slips when he or she arrives at the hunger meal.

Be creative when you design your guests' menu and seating arrangement. You will of course want to consider the size of the room in which the meal will be held as well as the number of guests you expect to have. Here are some suggestions you may want to incorporate.

Seat the **high-income** group at a large "banquet" table in the middle of the room with elaborate place settings that may

include candles and chinaware. Prepare a multi-course meal complete with wine (as appropriate) and hors d'oeuvres that can be served by attentive waiters and waitresses. The menu should include meats and vegetables, as well as some sort of dessert. You might consider asking a local chef to prepare the meal. An added touch may be to have classical music playing quietly in the background to create an atmosphere of affluence.

The **middle-income** group can be provided with a few picnic tables and benches and plain dishes and utensils. The menu should be very simple, consisting of nothing more elaborate than rice, cooked vegetables and maybe some coarse bread that each person can serve for him or herself. This group can be given water or a rationed amount of milk to drink.

No tables or chairs should be given to those seated in the **low-income** group. They can sit on straw mats or on the bare floor. This group's meal should consist of just rice, with barely enough for everyone to eat. Everyone should be given a small bowl and half the group should be given some type of eating utensil. Provide warm water in a pitcher for the group and one small paper cup for each person.

The Script for a World Hunger Meal and the Hunger Meal prayer service are found on pages 13 and 16. The Script provides facts describing the three income groups that you could share with your guests before or during the meal. The prayer service will help the group keep a faith perspective on hunger. A World Hunger Meal can creatively open the eyes, hearts and hands of people so that they will make a difference in the lives of hundreds of millions of poor and hungry people. Give it a try and be open to the possibilities! ■



# SCRIPT FOR A WORLD HUNGER MEAL

## Hunger Facts

The world grows more than enough food for everyone, yet . . .

- An estimated 786 million people worldwide are hungry. 1.3 billion people are vulnerable to hunger.
- Every third child is chronically malnourished – too hungry to be active and healthy.
- Contrary to what many think, the roots of hunger are poverty, violence and war, discrimination, environmental degradation and unequal distribution of resources. The roots of hunger are *not* primarily:

*Overpopulation.* Many well-fed countries have far more people than hungry ones. Holland, a high-income country, has over 1,000 people per square mile, while Mozambique, one of the poorest countries, has only 48.

*Natural Disasters.* Five years of drought in California resulted in no direct loss of human life. Yet during five years of drought in Ethiopia, over a million people died.

## To the High-Income Group

Those of you who are in the high-income group, represent the 15 percent of the world's population fortunate enough to have a nutritious daily diet. You live primarily in countries like the United States, Australia, France – most countries in Western Europe. You are also the elite of the developing world. This group shares the following characteristics:

- Your average income is over \$7,619.
- The leading causes of death among you – heart disease and diabetes – are directly related to overconsumption of fatty foods, particularly red meat.
- Health care is more readily available to you. In the United States, there is one doctor to every 470 people, compared with one doctor per 7,140 people in Haiti.
- Generally, your children are healthy and your infant mortality rate is low.
- Though you are well-off, millions of your fellow citizens live below the poverty line. Most of them are women and children who lack access to adequate services.

**You could be** Jennifer, an attorney, who lives in an affluent suburb of Boston with her husband, an accountant, and two children.

## To the Middle-Income Group

Those in the middle-income group represent roughly 25 percent of the world's population. There are more countries in this group than in the high-income group – countries like Bolivia, the Philippines, Turkey and Iran. You are also among the middle class of poor countries such as India. You share these common characteristics.

- Your average income ranges from \$611 – \$7,619 per year.
- Your children are six times more likely to die of hunger and related diseases than if they lived in a high-income country.
- You use 35 percent of your income on food, compared with the 15 percent people in high-income countries spend.
- Foreign debt cripples your economies. Debt payments can consume half of your governments' earnings.

**You could be** Moussa, a man in his '30s, who operates a postcard stall in the ancient city of Jerusalem to feed his four children.

## To the Low-Income Group

You represent the majority of the world's population. You live in countries where the average income is less than \$610 a year. Somalia and India are countries in this group. As a member of this group, you share these characteristics:

- You are chronically malnourished and eat only 2,205 calories a day – less than the amount needed for a healthy, hardworking life.
- You cannot afford to own or buy land – even land farmed for centuries by your ancestors.
- You may work on a plantation that produces crops such as bananas and coffee for export to high- and middle-income countries, yet you and your family don't have enough to eat.
- The combined debt owed by all of your governments to wealthy nations totals \$1.3 trillion – more than \$200 per person – and is continually rising.
- Unemployment and hardship in the rural areas is driving you into cities, where you face even greater hardships.

**You could be** Savita, who lives in India where the forests have nearly disappeared. Her people have become nomads, wandering in search of the water needed for sustenance. ■

This script was adapted by permission from the Sample Script for a Hunger Banquet originally published by Oxfam America. For more information on Oxfam's Hunger Banquet and their Fast for a World Harvest Campaign, please call (800) 597-FAST.



## Case Studies

*Twenty-one-year-old Tanya explains why she uses food shelves:*

"I am a single mother of two young children. I currently live with my aunt because my food stamps and AFDC check was cut. As a result of these cuts, I didn't have enough money to pay my rent or purchase enough food for my family. The only option I had was to use foodshelves. I hope to one day get my GED, attend a cosmetology school, and open up my own beauty salon. The one obstacle I've had is that I now have to pay for my GED. This is a problem because I can't afford to pay for books and classes."

*Twenty-three-year-old Andrea explains why she uses food shelves:*

"I am married with five children. My husband is employed less than full-time hours. Although we receive food stamps, it never seems to be enough for a family of seven, therefore, I usually need to use foodshelves. I have received some training in child care, but I didn't complete the training due to my pregnancy. I hope to get this certificate in the future. There is one obstacle that I need to deal with; since three of my children are not school age, my husband and I can't afford child care. Hopefully, when my two-year-old reaches school age, I can complete my training that will certify me to provide child care services."

*Joan a sixty-eight-year-old senior woman explains why she uses food shelves:*

"I am a senior and live in St. Paul. I try to live on the \$250 a month Social Security check. With the check I pay my monthly bills, which include rent, food, cleaning products, and personal items like toothpaste. My kids can not help me out all the time because they have their own to worry about. I can not work because my health is not good."

*An unemployed construction worker:*

A twenty-eight-year-old man lives in the homeless shelters in Minneapolis. He worked on a drywall hanger for more than ten years. He always put money in the bank to help him through the slow seasons when construction workers are laid off. This summer, however, he ran out of money before he could find a new job. He was evicted from his apartment.

Now he sleeps in a shelter on the streets and eats at nearby soup kitchens. "Once you get down this low, it's hard to get out," he says. He is trying to find a job but he has found that it's hard to get people to hire you when you are homeless and don't have an address or phone number." And when you find work — unless you have a job in the food business, or have an understanding boss who will give you time off to go to a soup kitchen for lunch — you starve."



# Food Guide Pyramid

## A Guide to Daily Food Choices

Fats, Oils & Sweets

### USE SPARINGLY

such as salad dressings and oils, cream, butter, a margarine, sugars, soft drinks, candies and sweet desserts.

### KEY

- Fat (naturally occurring and added)
  - ▼ Sugars (added)
- These symbols show fats, oils and added sugars in foods.

Milk, Yogurt & Cheese Group

### 2-3 SERVINGS

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs & Nuts Group

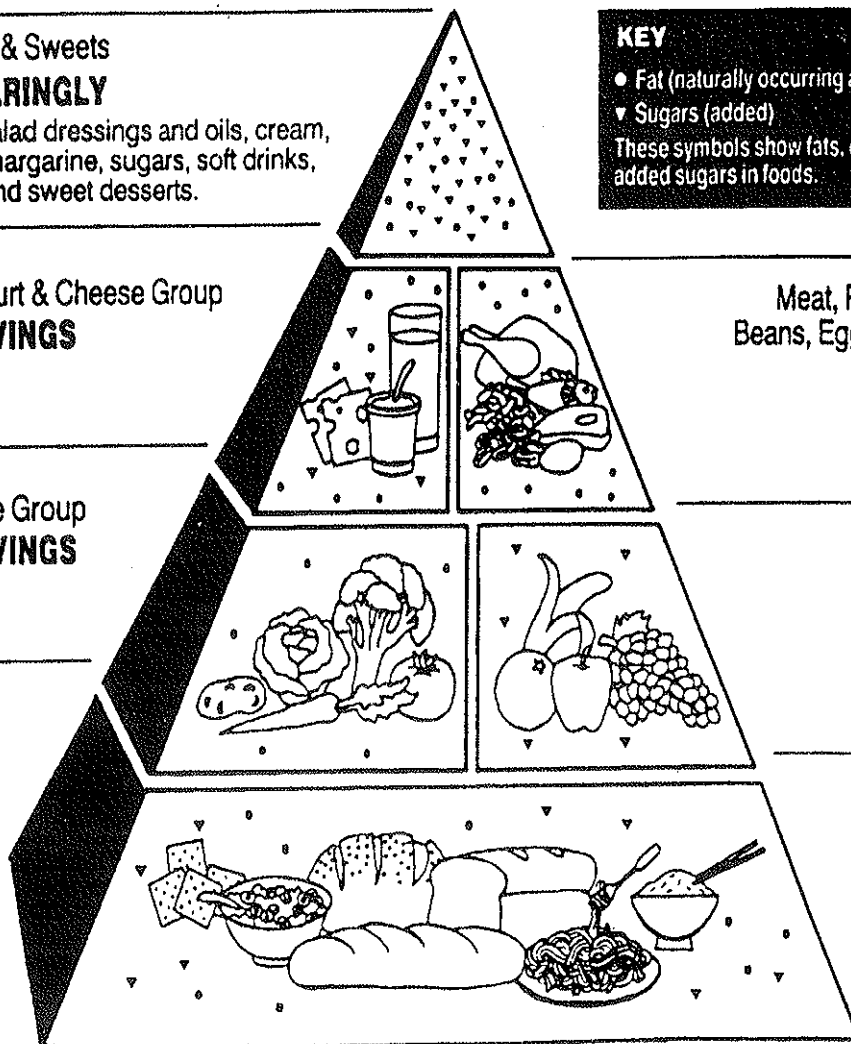
### 2-3 SERVINGS

Vegetable Group

### 3-5 SERVINGS

Fruit Group  
2-4 servings

Bread, Cereal, Rice & Pasta Group  
6-11 SERVINGS





*This article appeared in the March 14, 1994, Newsweek magazine.*

## How Hungry is America?

*Health: A new study says that one out of 10 Americans — many from working-class families — make use of food banks to get enough to eat.*

Eileen is nervous. But she's hungry, too. She downs a plateful of American chop suey and two dishes of red gelatin. This isn't what she's used to -- eating dinner at a soup kitchen in Lynn, Mass. -- but neither is much else in her current life. Eileen, 34, grew up in the comfortable Boston suburb of Belmont, "with a silver spoon in my mouth," she says. A year ago she had a \$42,000-a-year job as a hospital lab technician. Since then she has lost job, apartment and boyfriend. She and her 13-year-old daughter went on welfare and moved into public housing. In January, Eileen signed up for food stamps. "It's very humiliating," she says. Each month she gets \$130 in food coupons, but now there are two weeks to go until the next allotment, and no food in the house. Already this month she has picked up groceries from a Salem food pantry - soup, hot dogs, noodles, crackers, beans and peanut butter. But it's hard to stretch the food when her daughter's friends visit constantly, and constantly eat. So here they are. Her daughter was reluctant to eat at a soup kitchen because she was afraid it would be full of bums. Now she pushes away her tray after eating half her dinner and says she's not very hungry. Eileen is frantic. If the girl gets hungry at home later, there won't be anything to give her. "Next time you have to make sure you eat every drop," she says angrily.

And that's the end of the story - except for all the other people in it. This week Second Harvest, a nationwide network of food banks, is releasing a major new study on hunger in America. The results show that more than 25 million Americans, nearly half of them under 17, now make use of food pantries, soup kitchens and other food-distribution programs. That's one out of 10 Americans forced to eat at least occasionally on the dole -- a startling statistic for one of the world's richest countries. Some poverty experts are skeptical. "I don't believe that many people are hungry," says Robert Haveman, an economist at the University of Wisconsin's poverty-research institute. "People living in poverty are getting food stamps. Maybe they visit a food bank once a year, but that doesn't mean that food banks are meeting a nutritional need in the population."

But people at the front lines of hunger relief say that the study confirms what they see daily: the effects of widespread unemployment and underemployment. According to the survey, nearly a third of the households making use of emergency food programs have someone working full or part time. "People don't have the money to pay the rent and the heating bills and buy food," says Shoshana Pakeiarz, executive director of Project Bread, which funds emergency feeding programs in Massachusetts. Second Harvest's results jibe with previous hunger surveys by organizations like the Urban Institute and the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), as well as poverty statistics.



Christine Valdimiroff, executive director of Second Harvest, says it's time for Americans to put aside their assumptions about hunger. "The face of hunger has changed," she says. "It's no longer just the single man on the street. It's children, mothers, the newly unemployed, the working poor." And it's families like the Williamses -- all 12 of them. East and Nathaniel Williams of Chicago, both 41, and their children, ages 1 to 19, could teach a thing or two about managing hunger to newcomers in ranks. Around the third week of the month, for instance, when food stamps run out, you start letting everyone sleep late. Then you can combine breakfast and lunch, says Esther. Brunch is rice or maybe oatmeal: dinner is rice or beans. "The trick is to feed them late with a lot of water, then put them to bed," she says. When supplies dwindle, she and Nathaniel skip meals; occasionally the older children do, too.

American hunger has no poster children, no skeletal famine victims clutching tin plates. Certainly the children in the waiting room of Dr. Deborah Frank's clinic in Boston City Hospital look healthy and cheerful, if a bit skinny, as they munch on peanut butter and graham crackers. But the giggly toddler isn't a toddler at all, she is 6 years old. And the 9-month-old baby weighs as much as an infant of 12 weeks. Frank's clinic, which treats severely malnourished children, is one of eight in Massachusetts, set up in 1984 after a state survey found that 10 percent of low-income children under five showed signs of malnutrition. "The kid's whole future is at stake here," says Frank, who runs her own food pantry so that families can take home the high-calorie foods their children need to catch up. Similar clinics are opening across the country.

But most hungry children don't show it. "It's a silent problem," says Christin Driscoll of FRAC, which surveyed children nationally and found 5.5 million underfed. "Maybe they're just a few pounds underweight, or a little shorter. It won't show up in physical exams, but even short-term undernutrition can cause concentration problems. These kids are going to school. But they're falling behind." At Lundhurst Elementary School in Baltimore, where more than half of the children eligible for a free school breakfast, hunger is visible chiefly when school has been closed for a while. "With all the snow days this year, we're sure the children aren't eating well," says Lula Sessoms, a regional cafeteria manager. "The day the children came back to school, breakfast was like, 'Give me something to eat!'" Stephanie Lambert, 10 says she always gets up in time for school breakfast: on a recent morning it was juice, Frosted Flakes, milk, toast, and a fried "breakfast bar" of potatoes, ham and egg. If she doesn't eat, she says, "I don't feel like doing my work. I get a headache and my stomach starts hurting."

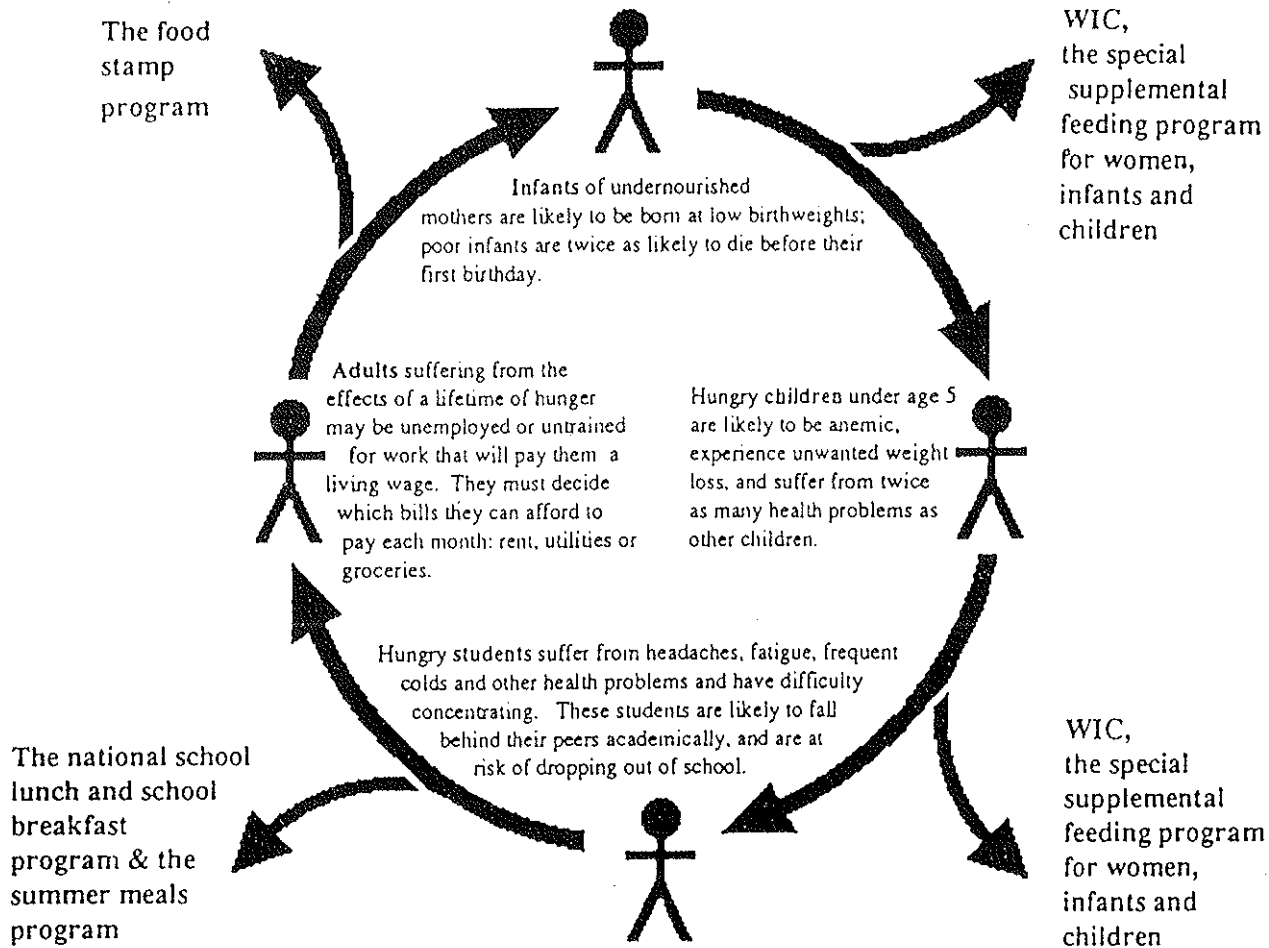
Theresa never gets a headache from hunger. At 30, she's been on welfare much of her life and feeds her four kids by faking residents in several Massachusetts towns, so that she can use their emergency food programs. "I'm street smart," she says. She knows that the Salvation Army in Salem is generous, and that St. Mary's Church in Lynn gives out fresh bread on Mondays, but the food pantry is stingy. Often Theresa and her children take home so much food they end up feeding leftovers to the birds. Even the family's pet iguana is provided food -- it gets shredded carrots and escarole. People like Theresa make it tough for hunger activists to argue for increased



federal funds. "You could never spend your way out of this problem," says Robert Rector, a policy analyst for family and welfare issues at Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, who is a strong critic of federal antihunger programs. He maintains there is no evidence for widespread hunger or undernutrition in America, and dismisses the results of the Second Harvest study as a "pseudodefinition" of hunger. "The more programs you have that hand out food for free, the more people will use them," he says.

"There is some welfare fraud," agrees J. Larry Brown, director of the Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy at Tufts University in Medford, Mass. But he believes it's the economy that prompts most people's visits to food programs, not their desire for free red gelatin. "We could end hunger in a matter of six to eight months," he says, by expanding the food stamp program and increasing funding for such targeted programs as WIC (Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children). Research backs up Brown's view. WICC, for instance, has successfully reduced the incidence of iron deficiency among low-income children -- a deficiency that can lead to cognitive disabilities. But everyone who knows the faces of American hunger knows that food alone isn't enough. Georgette Lacy, a Chicago welfare mother, remembers seeing two boys, 3 and 5, scavenging for something to eat in her building's garbage incinerator. "Their mother was strung out on rock cocaine," she says. Valdimiroff of Second Harvest acknowledges that supplying dinners is only a temporary solution to a problem rooted in poverty and often entangled in social chaos. "Feeding people is one thing, and ending hunger is another," she says. Her real goal is the latter.

# Federal Food Programs Break the Cycle of Hunger



## Food Stamps

The food stamp program helps low-income families stretch their limited food budgets. More than half of all food stamp recipients are children. Yet benefits are so low (less than 70 cents per person per meal on average) that most families run out of food well before the end of the month.

## School & Summer Meals

The national school lunch and school breakfast program provide the most nutritious meals many low-income

children receive all day.

The summer meals program provides nutritious meals to children over the summer when the school lunch program ends. Yet thousands of Minnesota children who are eligible to participate in these programs cannot because they lack access to meal sites.

## WIC

The special supplemental feeding program for women, infants, and children provides health screenings, nutrition counseling, and supplemental foods to low-income women, infants, and children

at nutritional risk.

Studies show that WIC reduces Medicaid expenditures on women and infants. A recent USDA study has shown that every \$1 spent to serve pregnant women through WIC saves \$1 to \$3 in Medicaid costs for low-birth weight infants in the first sixty days after birth.

WIC improves the nutritional status of children under age 5 by providing them with nutritious foods like milk, juice, and cereal. Yet in Minnesota, nearly half of those eligible for WIC cannot participate because of insufficient program funding.



# Understanding the Causes and Pervasiveness of Hunger

*Topic Two for Teens/Grades 9-12*

## *Background Information for Teachers and Teen Leaders*

Unlike developing countries which may face a shortage of food due to famine or war, there is more than enough food for everyone in the United States. In fact, much edible food is thrown away. Hunger in our country is usually due to a lack of money to buy food. Common reasons for hunger include:

- unemployment (often caused by illness, injury, or lay-offs),
- underemployment (working at a job which is only part-time or temporary),
- high housing costs which may take up to 70 percent of a family's income, and
- high medical costs not covered by insurance, and high child care costs.

In addition, people may go hungry because of a lack of access to reasonably priced food, unawareness of federal food programs, inability to take advantage of federal food programs because they are under-funded and under-promoted, poor budgeting skills, or inappropriate use of

food money to support an addictive habit.

Children, or other people unable to care for their own needs, may be neglected or isolated from others. Some people, such as the elderly or physically challenged may have sufficient funds but cannot shop and/or prepare

food without assistance. Many senior citizens are too proud to ask for help. Instead, they try to get by on Social Security. Women make up 75 percent of the elderly who live in poverty. Many of these women survive on \$3,000 to \$5,000 per year in Social Security payments.

To provide a safety net for those people who are poor, the U.S. government sets a poverty line each year. The poverty line is based on the cost of a basket of food that the government determines will provide a "minimally adequate diet." The government will help people living below the poverty line to obtain food. People and/or families who fall below this line are eligible for federal and/or state assistance in the form of food, housing, and health care. In 1995, the U.S. government set the poverty line at \$7,470 for a single person, \$10,030 for two persons, \$12,590 for a family of three, and \$15,150 for a family of four. More than 32 million people live below the poverty line in the United

*When you sit in council think not of yourselves nor even of your generation. Think of those yet unborn even unto the seventh generation, making all decisions with those generations in mind.*

*—The Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy, Circa 1000 AD*



States. At the current minimum wage, which is less than \$5.00 per hour, a single working person can rise just above the poverty line but two people cannot. People living in poverty do not have enough money for basic necessities.

### Suggested Activities

1. To focus on the lack of money as a cause of hunger, divide the group into "families." Give each family the Food Pyramid Guide. Hand each family a slip of paper with their food budget for the week. At least one family should receive a large amount to purchase necessities and extras.

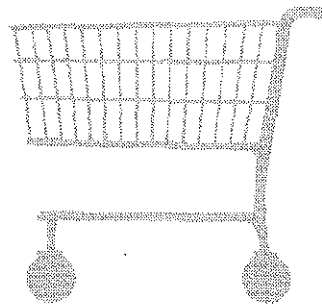
Another should receive a sufficient amount for necessities. A third family should receive too little money to purchase what they need.



Check out prices at a local grocery store, provide grocery store ads, or share a food price list which you have created. Set a time limit for the families to "shop." Ask each family to tell what they bought. Then ask:

- Were you able to buy what was on your shopping list? Why or why not?

- How did you feel about shopping for food if you had enough money? How did you feel if you did not have enough money?
- If your family group did not have enough money to buy what you needed, what kinds of foods were you unable to afford?



2. To recognize that family decisions about spending for food are shaped by the total family budget, consider several families with very limited resources, e.g. a father (earning \$6.50 an hour, \$1,040 a month, with no health insurance) and his teenage son; a mother receiving AFDC payments (\$517 a month plus food stamps and Medicaid) with one teenage daughter and a twelve-year-old son; a mother and father (laid off, with \$1,300 a month in unemployment compensation income, no health insurance) and three preschool children.

The YWCA of Greater Milwaukee interviewed families regarding costs of living in the Milwaukee area ("Living on the Edge: A Public Policy Report on the Living Wage and Single Female Heads-of-Household in Milwaukee," YWCA of Greater Milwaukee, March 1990). They offered examples of very low-range expenses for families. Examples of costs are shown below:

Expense	Monthly Cost
Rent	\$420
Used car	\$163 (payments, gas, maintenance)
Auto insurance	\$50 (\$301 every 6 months)
or bus	\$37
Licensed day care	\$300 (for 2-5 yr. old)
Clothes	\$58/person (\$700 per adult person per year)
Health insurance	\$120-151 (\$725 every 6 months for 2 children; \$906 for 3 children)

Figure what you would spend for each category. How much would a teenager need for clothes (including shoes, winter jackets) each month? How much would you need for school supplies? In addition, how much money would you want to spend on entertainment (movies, TV)? Would you have a phone?

Determine how much the family you've selected can spend this month on food. How much is that



per week? Suppose someone in the family gets sick and they must pay \$195 for medicine and a doctor's bill. What can't they afford this month? What would they have to do without? What might happen to this family?

3. To help teens empathize with hungry people, ask them to work in teams to plan one day's worth of nutritious meals for a mother and her two school age children. Tell them they have 68 cents per person per meal (the average amount of money families coming to emergency food programs have available for food). Use the Food Guide Pyramid for nutrition information and grocery newspaper ads to determine the cost of the food. Ask each team to report back to the group. Listen for ideas teens suggest to stretch their food dollar, such as participating in the School Breakfast and Lunch Program, shopping with coupons, looking for sales and buying in bulk. Talk about what foods they wanted to buy, but couldn't afford.

4. Ask youth to plan a meal for a family celebration (birthday, wedding anniversary, high school graduation, birth of a baby) which

includes a dinner. Decide which relatives and friends you would want to invite and plan a menu for the event. How much would you need to spend?



Discuss what happens in families with very low incomes when their teens want to spend money eating out with friends or they want to have a special family celebration. What kinds of choices do families have to make? Do you think this is "fair" or "just"?

5. To understand the social pressures placed on teenagers and families who live in poverty in America, discuss the sociological concepts of absolute poverty and relative poverty (See following discussion).

#### ***Absolute and Relative Poverty***

Poverty can be defined in two ways: absolute or relative. Using the absolute approach, the "poor" are separated from the "non-poor" using an objective standard to measure

the minimum costs of life's necessities including food, clothing, and shelter. In this approach, income is used as a basis for establishing a poverty line. It is assumed that a family or individuals need a certain income in order to pay for their basic needs. If their income is below this "poverty line," the family or individual is considered to be "poor."

Our federally established poverty level (which is based on income and family size) uses the absolute approach. The present method for doing this was developed in 1965 by Mollie Orshansky who worked for the Social Security Administration. She estimated the total income a family needed based on the cost of food. Orshansky found that the average low-income family at the time spent one-third of its total income on food, and so she multiplied the costs for a nutritious minimum food budget by three to arrive at a poverty level income. Since 1969, yearly revisions in the federal poverty level have been based on increases in the consumer price index (the government's main measure of inflation). However, inflation has been higher for the basic necessities that poor people buy rather than for luxuries. The poverty line today





is actually lower than it was under Orshansky's standard.

The relative approach to poverty holds that people are poor if they have significantly less income and wealth than the average person in their society. In 1956 Victor Fuchs proposed that any family whose income was less than half the national median family income should be classified as poor. Many experts claim that the relative position of the poor in society in comparison to the wealthy is more important than an absolute standard. They see poverty not only in terms of material goods, but also in terms of the psychological effects of being worse off than the people around you, thereby feeling isolated and alienated from society. Contrary to the Orshansky formula or any set income standard, the relative approach implies that poverty will exist as long as unequal income distribution exists.

Most poor people in this country in absolute terms, do not face the desperate lives the majority of poor people in less technologically developed nations face. Yet poverty in this country can be far more stigmatizing, than in other nations where poverty is the norm. In relative terms poor people in the United States are often judged harshly and blamed for their condition. Many people believe that even during periods of economic depression and high unemployment anyone who works hard can be successful. It is generally believed that "there is always room at the top" for hardworking, capable individuals. It is also often believed that "poor folks have poor way." Because the poor are blamed for their condition, a stigma is attached to poverty, especially to those who receive welfare and other forms of government assistance.

After reviewing the different perspectives on poverty, ask:

- How do you think the problems of relative

poverty have increased in the television age? What values do you think are promoted in modern advertising? How does this relate to issues of absolute and relative poverty?

- What are the special pressures placed on teenagers who don't have as much money as their friends or other kids in the school?
- How do teens (and their parents) cope with the problems of relative poverty?
- What responsibilities do we have as a society to deal with poverty?
- What kinds of obligations do you think others in the community have for children and families who don't have enough money to survive above poverty?
- What kinds of obligations do you think others in the community have for children and families who don't have enough food?



# Food Guide Pyramid

## A Guide to Daily Food Choices

Fats, Oils & Sweets

**USE SPARINGLY**

such as salad dressings and oils, cream, butter, a margarine, sugars, soft drinks, candies and sweet desserts.

### KEY

● Fat (naturally occurring and added)

▼ Sugars (added)

These symbols show fats, oils and added sugars in foods.

Milk, Yogurt & Cheese Group

**2-3 SERVINGS**

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs & Nuts Group

**2-3 SERVINGS**

Vegetable Group

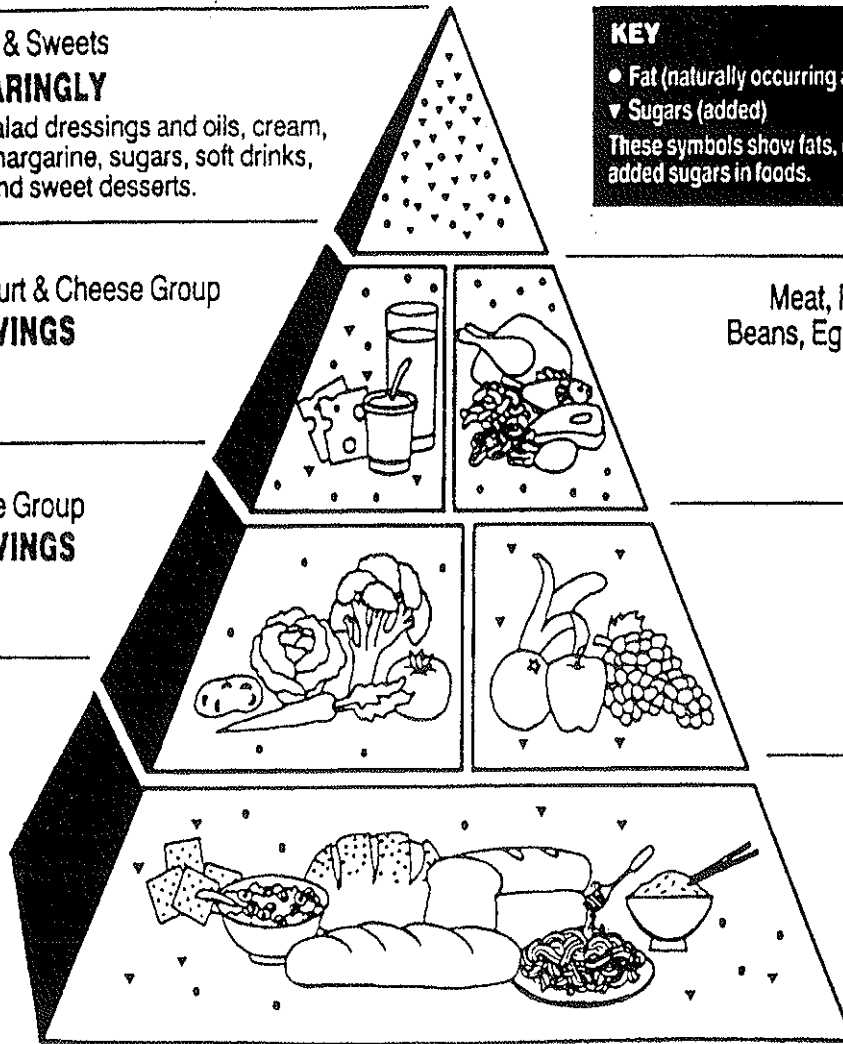
**3-5 SERVINGS**

Fruit Group

**2-4 servings**

Bread, Cereal, Rice & Pasta Group

**6-11 SERVINGS**





# Recognizing the Uneven Distribution of Food and Resources in the World and in the United States

Topic Three for Teens/Grades 9-12

## Background Information for Teachers and Teen Leaders

Millions of people in the world are chronically hungry and suffer dreadful, and often life-threatening problems due to malnutrition. In the poorest countries and in a number of countries suffering from famines and serious political conflicts, large numbers of people face mass starvation. Oxfam America ("Hosting a Hunger Banquet," Oxfam American, 1991) has summarized the important statistics about world hunger listed below:

- The world grows more than enough food to feed everyone, Yet more people are hungry today than ever before — one in five worldwide.
- Each day, 60,000 people die of hunger and related diseases — 40,000 are children under age five.
- One of every three children is chronically malnourished — too hungry to lead an active, productive life.

- Here in the United States, we enjoy a daily per-person caloric supply of 3,645, more than twice that in Ethiopia (1,749 - fewer than the minimum number of calories needed to maintain a healthy life).

The roots of hunger lie in poverty, war, and the unequal distribution of resources — NOT in:

- Overpopulation: Many of the world's well-fed countries are far more densely populated than hungry ones. Holland has over 1,000 people per square mile. India has less than 700; the United States has 67, Mozambique 48.
- Natural disasters: Five years of drought in California have resulted in no direct loss of human life. During five years of drought in Ethiopia over a million people died.

*When I die, don't build a monument to me. Don't bestow on me degrees from great universities. Just say I tried to clothe the naked. Say that I tried to house the homeless. Let people say that I tried to feed the hungry.*

— Martin Luther

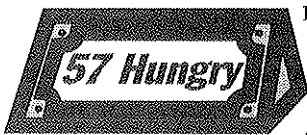
## Suggested Activities

1. To understand the distribution of resources and population in the world organize a "One Hundred Hungry People" activity (from Making a World of Difference: Creative Activities for Global Learning. New York: Friendship Press 1990).



Ask several teens to set up tables for the world's population. On the first table place 57 cups, to represent 57 percent of the world's population which lives in Asia. On the second table place 17 cups representing the population living in Europe and the former USSR. On the third table place 11 cups representing 11 percent of the world's population which lives in Africa. On the fourth table, place 9 cups for the 9 percent living in Latin America and the Caribbean. On the fifth table, place 6 cups for the 6 percent living in the United States and Canada.

Prepare a sign for each table. The sign for table one



reads, "57 Hungry People in Asia." The

sign for table two reads, "17 Hungry People in Europe and the former USSR" etc. Assign teen "guests" to tables in approximate proportion to the number of empty cups (i.e. population) distributed throughout the world.

After the guests are at their tables, a leader should pour cereal (or peanuts or M&Ms) into the cups to

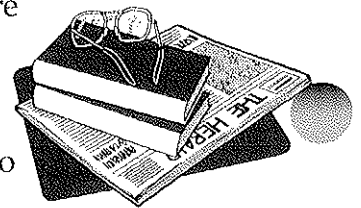
represent how the basic resources of the world are actually distributed among people. The leader uses a cup measure to pour out 18 cups of cereal for the first table the people of Asia - because Asia uses only 18 percent of the world's resources. For this table, the cups will only be about 1/3 full. The leader pours 45 cups of cereal for the second table for the people in Europe and the former USSR. For these people, the cups will be overflowing and there will be lots of extra cereal on the table. The third table, the people of Africa, will receive 3 cups of cereal, slightly less than a cupful each. The fourth table, the people of Latin America and the Caribbean, will receive 5 cups of cereal or about half of a cupful each. The fifth table, the people of the United States and Canada, will receive 29 cupfuls of cereal. Since this is almost five times their share of the population, the cups will be overflowing and lots of cereal will be available in the middle of the table. Before any actions are taken ask the fifth table (United States and Canada) to develop a more accurate distribution of their own wealth since 1/5 of the

people in the United States control so much of the nation's wealth.

Give the group an opportunity to discuss how they felt during this activity and what they have learned. Discussion questions could include:

- How much cereal does each person and group have? Is the global distribution of wealth fair? Why or why not?
- What is meant by "fair" or "just"? Who determines this?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where something was distributed so unevenly? How did you feel? What did you do?
- What would the group like to do about this uneven distribution?
- Is wealth distributed evenly in your community? How does your community compare with the global mix-distribution of wealth?

2. To identify the causes of hunger in areas of the world where there is widespread starvation, ask teens to collect





newspaper and magazine articles on hunger in the world. What are the immediate causes of food shortages identified in the articles? What are the long term causes of world hunger. What should be the role of the United States and the United Nations in assisting in these countries? Have we had a role in creating the problems?

3. The following chart on Effects of Skewed Land Distribution (Catholic Relief Services, 1991) may help stimulate discussion on long term causes of hunger and starvation. Are there parallels with the situation of small farmers in the United States?

#### Effects of Skewed Land Distribution

- landlessness leading to poverty and hunger.
  - migration to already overcrowded cities with high rates of unemployment.
  - frustration among the landless poor leading to armed conflict.
- destruction of rain forests by people who desperately need land.
  - deforestation leading to soil erosion and extinction of species.
  - overcultivation of existing croplands.
  - exploitation of tenant farmers and sharecroppers who work for large landowners.

4. To understand how parts of the world use resources and products from other places, ask teens to identify foods they eat and where they are grown (check out a candy bar wrapper's list of ingredients to initiate the activity). Ask them to look at their clothes and products in their home and school to find where the products they use made.



Discuss:

- To what extent does international production exploit workers and families - at home, in other countries?
5. To consider how our life styles relate to the rest of the world and to problems of hunger and starvation, trace the "Journey of a Blouse," in the support material at the end of this chapter.

First introduce the activity by asking each teen to find a label in a piece of their clothing and identify where it was made. Select eight readers, who will each read the paragraph on their location's role in producing the blouse. Use string or a marker to trace the "journey of the blouse" on a world map. After the activities, ask teens to share what they learned and thought about the exercise.

6. Ask teens to develop principles for fair use of food and resources in the world. What steps can they begin to take to further these principles?





# Journey of the Blouse

## **El Salvador**

Workers in this war-torn province harvest cotton on long, hot days. They earn about two dollars a day. The government has diverted millions of pesos from health and literacy programs into weapons.

## **South Carolina**

The cotton is ginned and shipped to South Carolina by a U.S. corporation whose bargaining position vis-a-vis the Salvadoran landowner is ridiculously strong. In South Carolina, the cotton is sold to one of the largest United States textile companies for its spinning mills.

## **Venezuela**

Polyester is made from petroleum. Workers in the oil fields off Venezuela's coast toil under hot skies for about six dollars per day. Without the federal safety standards U.S. oil workers have won, the job is dangerous and disfiguring accidents are not uncommon. After pumping and refining the oil, the Venezuelan state company sells it to a U.S. petroleum company, which controls processing, marketing and final distribution of petroleum, the most lucrative parts of the production chain.

## **Trinidad**

This same U.S. oil company drops the oil off at one of its refineries in Trinidad and Tobago. Here, in conditions as dangerous and unhealthy as Venezuela, refined petroleum is further processed into petrochemicals.

## **New Jersey**

Our U.S. oil company now ships the petrochemicals to a chemical factory in New Jersey where they are propelled through machines and emerge as miles of continuous filament.

## **North Carolina**

The polyester filament is taken to North Carolina, site of low-wage textile mills where, on high-powered looms, it is combined with the cotton yarn from the plant in South Carolina. The filament and yarn are woven into long sheets of fabric ready for the cutting table. At this state a U.S. retailer chain that eventually sells the blouse, buys the cloth.

## **Haiti**

The cloth is transported to small, Haitian-owned and Haitian-run sweatshops. Women being paid by the piece earn about three dollars a day. They bend over sewing machines for long hours stitching seams. They have no union and talk about creating one may result in dismissal or worse.

## **New York**

The finished blouses leave the Third World for the final time and arrive in New York where they are sealed in plastic and sent to mail order buyers around the country.

*This activity is excerpted, with permission, from "Making A World of Difference: Creative Activities for Global Learning (New York: Friendship Press, 1990). This book, which includes many, many challenging learning activities, is available for purchase from Friendship Press Distribution Office, P.O. Box 37844, Cincinnati, OH 45222-0844 (phone 513-948-8733). A poster of this journey can be purchased from Seeds Magazine, 222 East Lake Drive, Decatur, GA 30030.*



# Seeking Solutions to the Problem of Hunger in Our Community

*Topic Four for Teens/Grades 9-12*

## *Background information for Teachers and Teen Leaders*

As the gap between rich and poor widens in the United States, we are developing a two-tiered system to obtain food. Traditional places, such as grocery stores and restaurants, are used by people who have sufficient funds. People with limited incomes, however, must increasingly rely on federal programs such as food stamps, local food shelves and soup kitchens to obtain an adequate supply of food for themselves and their families. Some people need food just a few days each month until a paycheck, unemployment check, or public assistance funds arrive. Other people, including those who are homeless generally need food from shelters or soup kitchens each day. Volunteer agencies, such as soup kitchens, which began as stop-gap measures to fight hunger on a short term basis, are becoming long term community institutions. More and more people are depending upon soup kitchens and food pantries to meet their basic needs.

A **food shelf** is a place where people who have no food can get a three to five day supply of free food to take home and cook. Many houses of worship and community centers have food shelves. People who have the ability donate food to the shelf often through food drives, to give to others.

A **soup kitchen** is a place people can go to and eat a meal for free. Some soup kitchens are only open on certain days. Soup kitchens are often found in houses of worship and community buildings. Volunteers run most soup kitchens. Youth are also able to receive meals through federal food and nutrition programs (School Lunch and Breakfast) at their schools, child care institutions, and houses of worship. During the summer months, youth are able to participate in the Summer Food Service Program at a variety of locations throughout their community.

*A hundred years from now it will not matter what your bank account was, the sort of house you lived in, or the kind of clothes you wore, but the world may be much different because you were important in the life of a child.*

*— Author unknown*

Many families are in a chronic state of crisis due to insufficient family, community and economic support. Shelf staff and volunteers understand that providing a bag of food is only a short term temporary solution that does not address the multiple and often complex needs of people who come to them for help. An increasing number of people using emergency food programs are working poor




families whose income falls below the federal poverty level and who find themselves unable to provide adequate food for their household. At the same time they also struggle to meet their housing utility, and medical needs.

The need for emergency food is evident throughout Minnesota. In 1996 Minnesota's 305 food shelves distributed over 23 million pounds of food to 1.34 million individuals. It is estimated that 1 in 16 Minnesotans received help from a food shelf in 1996.

Be sensitive to the possibility that teens in your group may use some of these agencies. A few of these teens may volunteer information about their experiences, while others will not want anyone to know about their situation.

### *Suggested Activities*

1. Read aloud  "The Parable of the Babies in the River." Before you begin, explain that a parable is a fictitious story told to teach a truth. When you have finished, ask questions such as:

Who was more effective in addressing the problem of babies in the river: the rescuers pulling them out of

the water, or the person who went upstream to find the source of the babies? (Make sure that teens understand that both kinds of effort were necessary.) Which of these two approaches would you take? Why?

Shift the focus of the discussion to hunger by saving: Instead of the fictitious situation of the babies in the river, let's think about people in Minnesota who are hungry. Some hunger fighting organizations are like the townspeople who helped pull the babies from the river. These groups provide short term immediate help to people experiencing hunger. Other organizations are looking at the source of the problem of hunger. Like the person who went upstream, these organizations are searching for root causes of hunger so that they can bring about long term, permanent solutions.

2. Ask the teens to list efforts to help hungry people. Record their answers on a chalk board of chart paper, which has been divided into two categories: Short Term Efforts to Relieve Hunger and Long Term Efforts to

Provide Food Security. After the students have given their answers, be sure to add any of the following efforts which have been omitted from the list. Be sure each term is defined.

### *Short Term Efforts to Relieve Hunger*

A **food shelf** is a place where people who have no food can get a three to five day supply of free food to take home and cook. Many houses of worship and community centers have food pantries. People who have food give it to the pantry, often through food drives.

A **food drive** is an effort to collect non-perishable food. Often a drive is sponsored by religious organization, grocery store, media or food bank.

A **food bank** is a public or charitable organization that distributes food to food shelves, feeding centers and soup kitchens.

A **meal program** is a place where people (often senior citizens) gather to eat meals offered for free or at low cost.

A **soup kitchen** is a place people can go and eat a meal for free. Some soup kitchens are only open on certain days.





Soup kitchens are often found in houses of worship and community buildings. Volunteers run most soup kitchens.

Government assistance programs, such as **food stamps**, **school and summer meals**, and **WIC (Women, Infants and Children) nutrition program** are short term efforts that can have long term effects by helping to break the cycle of hunger.

#### *Long Term Efforts to Provide Food Security*

**Farmers markets** link food growers with families in urban areas. We can support farm stands in low-income communities, encourage use of food stamps and WIC coupons for fresh farm produce, and make vacant land available for urban gardening programs.

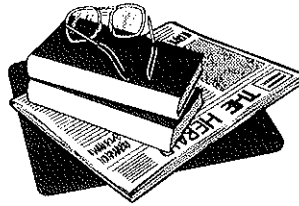
**Food Share programs** enable families to receive some dollar amount of fresh food and groceries bought at wholesale and pay for it with a combination of cash or food stamps and a certain number of hours of work in the program.

Working through the democratic process by means of letters or phone calls to elected officials and testimony at public hearings can help to

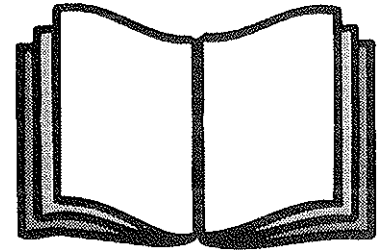
enact long term change through legislation.

3. Encourage teens to volunteer to serve in soup kitchens, food pantries or other hunger fighting organizations in the community. Religious and service groups often staff such agencies on a rotating, volunteer basis. Afterward share what you've learned from the experience.

4. Have teens collect newspaper and magazine articles about hunger relief and food security efforts. If appropriate, encourage teens to respond to the articles by sending letters to the editor.



5. Ask students to interview a person working to relieve hunger or provide food security. The group could write interview questions. The results of the interview could be written as an article. Or, the interview could be audio taped or videotaped, with permission, and used as a means of educating others about hunger.



6. If the teens participate in a tutoring program with elementary school children, recommend that they read "Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen" (by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan, published by Morrow Junior Books of New York, 1991) to the students with whom they work. The tutors may want to create questions about the book.

7. Consider a group project to start a vegetable garden to provide produce for teens and their families. Organize a way to share a portion of your crops with other families through local food pantries, community organizations, religious groups, or farmers markets.

8. To become aware of common attitudes in our society toward relieving hunger and providing food security, have teens stage a talk show debate about hunger. Here are three positions which are often voiced:

1. *Pull Yourself Up by Your Own Bootstraps*. Each one



of us should be capable of taking care of ourselves and our families. When you give people hand-outs, like free food, you actually hurt them rather than help them. You teach them to be helpless and dependent.

2. *Sometimes people really need to hit bottom.* They need to find themselves with no place to live, no money, and no food before they "wake up" and realize they have to go to work and get a job. People who don't work for what they get have no self-respect. We waste our tax dollars if we spend them to give out free food.
3. *America is the land of opportunity for those who are willing to work.* Families should provide for their own members who are so seriously debilitated that they cannot work.

WIC (the Supplement Nutrition Program for Women Infants, and Children) does not meet real needs for food and shelter. The level of government benefits has not kept pace with the high cost of living. Families run out of food stamps before the end of the month. Housing costs are so

high that families often have little left for utilities, food, clothing, and medical bills. America has an obligation to help its citizens in need. We need to have more canned food drives and to open more food pantries and soup kitchens to feed people experiencing hunger.

### ***Long Term Solutions to the Problem of Hunger.***

We want a future in which hunger is no longer a problem. To make a hunger-free future, we need to develop plans to stop hunger before it starts.

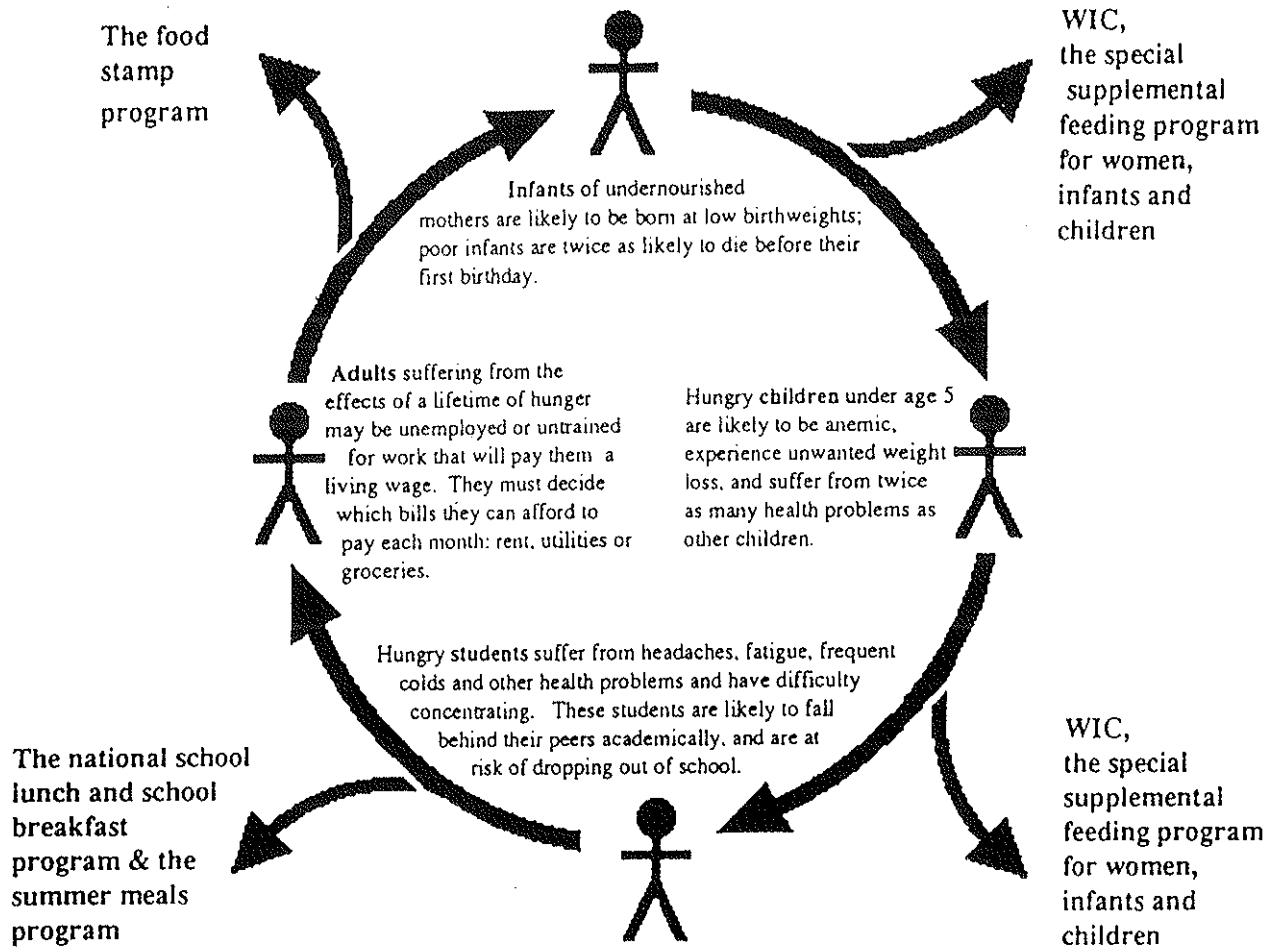
- We need to enable people to be physically and mentally equipped to hold jobs that will pay a living wage.
- We need to create more jobs that pay well and educate people to fill those jobs.
- We also need more affordable housing so that families do not have to choose between paying the rent and purchasing food.
- We must break the cycle of poverty and hunger so that people can become more self-reliant and independent. If we only feed people today we simply stand still and make no progress toward ending hunger in our state. But if we give them

a hand up instead of a handout, if we help them gain self-esteem and job skills, we move forward toward ending hunger permanently.

Let teens choose the position they will defend. Or, assign them roles and positions, such as a person who is financially secure (Bootstraps), a person who works several jobs but must still turn to food pantries for help (Food First), a person who was seriously injured in a car accident and can no longer work (Long Term), a politician who campaigns against welfare (Bootstraps), a senior citizen who lives on Social Security (Food First), a person whose company laid off a large number of workers (Long Term).

Allow students time to prepare for the debate by writing ideas about their own position in their journals. They can refer to the articles they have collected, the Newsweek article on "How Hungry is America?" (*Newsweek* March 14, 1994, reprinted with permission at the end of this chapter) and their experiences at the food pantry or soup kitchen. Stage the debate with six teens. Choose a talk show host who will introduce the topic of Hunger in Minnesota.

# Federal Food Programs Break the Cycle of Hunger



## Food Stamps

The food stamp program helps low-income families stretch their limited food budgets. More than half of all food stamp recipients are children. Yet benefits are so low (less than 70 cents per person per meal on average) that most families run out of food well before the end of the month.

## School & Summer Meals

The national school lunch and school breakfast program provide the most nutritious meals many low-income

children receive all day.

The summer meals program provides nutritious meals to children over the summer when the school lunch program ends. Yet thousands of Minnesota children who are eligible to participate in these programs cannot because they lack access to meal sites.

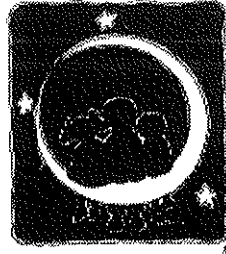
## WIC

The special supplemental feeding program for women, infants, and children provides health screenings, nutrition counseling, and supplemental foods to low-income women, infants, and children

at nutritional risk.

Studies show that WIC reduces Medicaid expenditures on women and infants. A recent USDA study has shown that every \$1 spent to serve pregnant women through WIC saves \$1 to \$3 in Medicaid costs for low-birth weight infants in the first sixty days after birth.

WIC improves the nutritional status of children under age 5 by providing them with nutritious foods like milk, juice, and cereal. Yet in Minnesota, nearly half of those eligible for WIC cannot participate because of insufficient program funding.



## **The Parable of the Babies in the River**

Once there was a lovely town with a river flowing through it. One day a citizen of the town was out jogging along the river bank when he noticed a baby floating downstream. He jumped in and rescued the baby. As he climbed out, he flagged down another jogger to take the baby because he noticed another baby in the river.

As the days passed, more and more babies came floating down the river. The townspeople set up rescue groups. They devised a system for distributing the babies among families. The town leaders devoted many hours and resources to rescuing and caring for the babies. Everyone in town was so involved that the needs of the babies began to take priority over all the other needs in the town.

Eventually, one person suggested going up the river to find the source of the babies and perhaps stop their floating down to the town. The people thought the idea was a good one, but they were afraid to stop the rescue efforts, even for a moment, because some babies might not get rescued. Only one person set out to find the source from which the babies were coming. This person wanted to stop the problem.



*The Problem and Its Solutions:*

After the panelists have had a chance to state their views, the host should ask for questions and comments from the audience. Panelists should be given an opportunity to respond to the audience's remarks. After the talk, show has ended ask the teens:

- What new insights did you gain from this discussion?
- Did you change your mind any positions you had previously held?
- Did one argument seem more convincing to you than another! Why?
- Is there any one solution to the problem of hunger in Wisconsin, or do we need to approach the problem from many angles? If so, what angles would you suggest?

9. Ask teens to develop a plan for food security in their community. To do this, teens will need to understand why people in their community are hungry. Use the "Reinvesting in America Hunger and Poverty Wheel" in Appendix A-18 to consider factors which contribute to local poverty and hunger. Divide the group into teams and have each team consider the distribution of resources in their community, how this affects hunger and levels of poverty in the community, and based on this analysis what plan each team recommends to create a hunger free community. Teens may want to collect more information about resources in

their community to help them plan.

The "Food Security Worksheet" lists six components of food security (availability, ready access, adequate income, freedom of choice, confidence in the quality, understandable information) and questions to address in developing a plan of action. Teams may use these as a guide or develop their own planning guide. Ask each team to report on its plan of action and the reasons it chose that direction. Compare the plans each team develops. What are the strengths and limitations of each approach? Are there parts of the plans your group wants to advocate for at this time?





**MFSA**

Minnesota Food Shelf Association

## Food Shelf Facts

305 food shelves in Minnesota.  
23,000,000 pounds of food  
in 1996.

51% of clients are  
children.

32% of families are  
employed.

12% are seniors.

25% of children are  
skipping meals.

53% of their parents  
do, too.





*This article appeared in the March 14, 1994, Newsweek magazine.*

## **How Hungry is America?**

*Health: A new study says that one out of 10 Americans — many from working-class families — make use of food banks to get enough to eat.*

Eileen is nervous. But she's hungry, too. She downs a plateful of American chop suey and two dishes of red gelatin. This isn't what she's used to -- eating dinner at a soup kitchen in Lynn, Mass. -- but neither is much else in her current life. Eileen, 34, grew up in the comfortable Boston suburb of Belmont, "with a silver spoon in my mouth," she says. A year ago she had a \$42,000-a-year job as a hospital lab technician. Since then she has lost job, apartment and boyfriend. She and her 13-year-old daughter went on welfare and moved into public housing. In January, Eileen signed up for food stamps. "It's very humiliating," she says. Each month she gets \$130 in food coupons, but now there are two weeks to go until the next allotment, and no food in the house. Already this month she has picked up groceries from a Salem food pantry - soup, hot dogs, noodles, crackers, beans and peanut butter. But it's hard to stretch the food when her daughter's friends visit constantly, and constantly eat. So here they are. Her daughter was reluctant to eat at a soup kitchen because she was afraid it would be full of bums. Now she pushes away her tray after eating half her dinner and says she's not very hungry. Eileen is frantic. If the girl gets hungry at home later, there won't be anything to give her. "Next time you have to make sure you eat every drop," she says angrily.

And that's the end of the story - except for all the other people in it. This week Second Harvest, a nationwide network of food banks, is releasing a major new study on hunger in America. The results show that more than 25 million Americans, nearly half of them under 17, now make use of food pantries, soup kitchens and other food-distribution programs. That's one out of 10 Americans forced to eat at least occasionally on the dole -- a startling statistic for one of the world's richest countries. Some poverty experts are skeptical. "I don't believe that many people are hungry," says Robert Haveman, an economist at the University of Wisconsin's poverty-research institute. "People living in poverty are getting food stamps. Maybe they visit a food bank once a year, but that doesn't mean that food banks are meeting a nutritional need in the population."

But people at the front lines of hunger relief say that the study confirms what they see daily: the effects of widespread unemployment and underemployment. According to the survey, nearly a third of the households making use of emergency food programs have someone working full or part time. "People don't have the money to pay the rent and the heating bills and buy food," says Shoshana Pakeiarz, executive director of Project Bread, which funds emergency feeding programs in Massachusetts. Second Harvest's results jibe with previous hunger surveys by organizations like the Urban Institute and the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), as well as poverty statistics.



Christine Valdimiroff, executive director of Second Harvest, says it's time for Americans to put aside their assumptions about hunger. "The face of hunger has changed," she says. "It's no longer just the single man on the street. It's children, mothers, the newly unemployed, the working poor." And it's families like the Williamses -- all 12 of them. Easte rand Nathaniel Williams of Chicago, both 41, and their children, ages 1 to 19, could teach a thing or two about managing hunger to newcomers in ranks. Around the third week of the month, for instance, when food stamps run out, you start letting everyone sleep late. Then you can combine breakfast and lunch, says Esther. Brunch is rice or maybe oatmeal: dinner is rice or beans. "The trick is to feed them late with a lot of water, then put them to bed," she says. When supplies dwindle, she and Nathaniel skip meals; occasionally the older children do, too.

American hunger has no poster children, no skeletal famine victims clutching tin plates. Certainly the children in the waiting room of Dr. Deborah Frank's clinic in Boston City Hospital look healthy and cheerful, if a bit skinny, as they munch on peanut butter and graham crackers. But the giggly toddler isn't a toddler at all, she is 6 years old. And the 9-month-old baby weighs as much as an infant of 12 weeks. Frank's clinic, which treats severely malnourished children, is one of eight in Massachusetts, set up in 1984 after a state survey found that 10 percent of low-income children under five showed signs of malnutrition. "The kid's whole future is at stake here," says Frank, who runs her own food pantry so that families can take home the high-calorie foods their children need to catch up. Similar clinics are opening across the country.

But most hungry children don't show it. "It's a silent problem," says Christin Driscoll of FRAC, which surveyed children nationally and found 5.5 million underfed. "Maybe they're just a few pounds underweight, or a little shorter. It won't show up in physical exams, but even short-term undernourishment can cause concentration problems. These kids are going to school. But they're falling behind." At Lundhurst Elementary School in Baltimore, where more than half of the children eligible for a free school breakfast, hunger is visible chiefly when school has been closed for a while. "With all the snow days this year, we're sure the children aren't eating well," says Lula Sessoms, a regional cafeteria manager. "The day the children came back to school, breakfast was like, 'Give me something to eat!'" Stephanie Lambert, 10 says she always gets up in time for school breakfast: on a recent morning it was juice, Frosted Flakes, milk, toast, and a fried "breakfast bar" of potatoes, ham and egg. If she doesn't eat, she says, "I don't feel like doing my work. I get a headache and my stomach starts hurting."

Theresa never gets a headache from hunger. At 30, she's been on welfare much of her life and feeds her four kids by faking residents in several Massachusetts towns, so that she can use their emergency food programs. "I'm street smart," she says. She knows that the Salvation Army in Salem is generous, and that St. Mary's Church in Lynn gives out fresh bread on Mondays, but the food pantry is stingy. Often Theresa and her children take home so much food they end up feeding leftovers to the birds. Even the family's pet iguana is provided food — it gets shredded carrots and escarole. People like Theresa make it tough for hunger activists to argue for





federal funds. "You could never spend your way out of this problem," says Robert Rector, a policy analyst for family and welfare issues at Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, who is a strong critic of federal antihunger programs. He maintains there is no evidence for widespread hunger or undernutrition in America, and dismisses the results of the Second Harvest study as a "pseudodefinition" of hunger. "The more programs you have that hand out food for free, the more people will use them," he says.

"There is some welfare fraud," agrees J. Larry Brown, director of the Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy at Tufts University in Medford, Mass. But he believes it's the economy that prompts most people's visits to food programs, not their desire for free red gelatin. "We could end hunger in a matter of six to eight months," he says, by expanding the food stamp program and increasing funding for such targeted programs as WIC (Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children). Research backs up Brown's view. WICC, for instance, has successfully reduced the incidence of iron deficiency among low-income children -- a deficiency that can lead to cognitive disabilities. But everyone who knows the faces of American hunger knows that food alone isn't enough. Georgette Lacy, a Chicago welfare mother, remembers seeing two boys, 3 and 5, scavenging for something to eat in her building's garbage incinerator. "Their mother was strung out on rock cocaine," she says. Valdimiroff of Second Harvest acknowledges that supplying dinners is only a temporary solution to a problem rooted in poverty and often entangled in social chaos. "Feeding people is one thing, and ending hunger is another," she says. Her real goal is the latter.

# Food Security Worksheet

(Adapted from C. Campbell, 1993)

Components of Food Security	Questions To Address				
	What's happening in our community?	What do we need to know?	With whom do we need to work?	What kind of resources do we need?	What policies are needed?
1. Availability of a variety of foods at a reasonable cost					
2. Ready access to grocery stores or other foods sources					
3. Sufficient personal income to purchase adequate food to meet nutritional needs for each household member					
4. Freedom to choose personally acceptable food					
5. Legitimate confidence in the quality and safety of food availability					
6. Easy access to understandable and accurate information about food and nutrition					



# Taking Action Against Hunger

*Topic Five for Teens/Grades 9-12*

## *Background Information for Teachers and Teen Leaders*

Teenagers are often concerned about the needs of others and want to find ways to help people in need. They will likely suggest some excellent ways that they be part of the solution to the problem of hunger. Short term projects will enable teens to develop skills as action oriented volunteers. Opportunities to give input to long term solutions, which often requires legislation or major structural change at the institutional level, will allow youth to experience themselves as political and social change agents. Teens will recognize that their opinions and actions are important and can make a difference.

The school, community group or house of worship itself can also help by involving parents in the fight against hunger. One way to do this is to enlist their support for fundraising or food collection activities. You may want to publish in your school or community newsletter recipes of the month that are tasty nutritious

and affordable. Another way is to develop partnership projects throughout the community where families can share their talents and resources. Encourage teens to discuss that they have learned about hunger and their community with their parents and family.

*Recent research shows that many children who do not have enough to eat wind up with diminished capacity to understand and learn. Children don't have to be starving for this to happen. Even mild undernutrition — the kind most common among poor people in America — can do it.*

*— Carl Sagan*

## *Suggested Activities*

1. Have teens brainstorm ways they can help to relieve or end hunger in Minnesota. Record their responses on chart paper or the board.

Ask:

- Now that we have learned about hunger in Minnesota and in our community, what are we going to do with our knowledge?
- How can we help hungry people now?
- What should we do to help end hunger?
- What should we do to build a stronger more caring community?

Encourage the teens to divide their suggestions into categories such as: providing food to hungry people, ensuring that all people in the community have food security, and educating others about hunger.

2. To enable the teens to turn their ideas into actions, have them work in teams of three to five to devise ways to implement their suggestions. Let each group choose



the project they want to plan. Several groups may work on the same project since their approaches will likely be different. Give each group a copy of the Hunger Project Planning Guide. Tell them to answer as many questions as they can. Allot fifteen to twenty minutes for this activity. Ask each member of the group to play a role such as leader (keeps group on task), coach (encourages everyone to make contributions), recorder (writes down the group's decisions), reporter (shares

the group's ideas with the class), and researcher (records group's questions).

Have each group present their project to the organization or class. Discuss together the feasibility of carrying out one or more projects. Encourage the group to decide which project(s) they would like to undertake. Schedule time to complete the plans, do the project, evaluate it, and celebrate success. The group may want to review the sheet "Thirty Ways You Can

Fight Hunger" at the end of this chapter.

3. Organize a Hunger Banquet at your school, club, or house of worship. The Hunger Banquet is a way to experience the unequal distribution of resources and to raise awareness of the problems of hunger and the need to unite as a world community. The materials from Oxfam America, at the end of the chapter, describe how to organize a Hunger Banquet and give suggestions for activities during the meal.



## Hunger Project Planning Guide

Project Name:

Team Members:

Describe what you will do:

Why is this project needed:

Whom will it serve?

What specifically will be accomplished in terms of

number of persons to be served:

location of persons to be served:

frequency of service (e.g. once a week):

duration of service (e.g. six months):

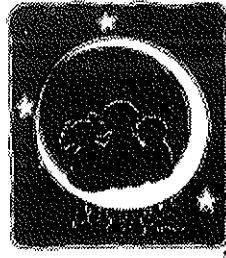
How will you determine the success of the project (both for others and for yourselves)?

Project Plan:

Major tasks to be accomplished	By whom	By when
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

What help will you need? Who might provide it?

What materials, resources (including money) will you need? Where will you get them?



## 30 Ways You Can Fight Hunger

1. Educate yourself. Read relevant news articles, works or fiction etc.
2. Save the money you would spend on snacks for a week. Give that money to a hunger relief organization.
3. Organize a hunger fast. Have the participants donate their food money to a hunger relief organization.
4. Clean out your closet of any clothes you have not worn in two years. Donate those clothes to a local organization.
5. Educate others.
6. Write a letter to your senator or representative expressing your concern about hunger.
7. Volunteer.
8. Donate to a foodshelf or shelter.
9. Organize a food drive.
10. Walk in a hunger walk.
11. Vote for candidates who are concerned about alleviating hunger.
12. Recycle.
13. Commit to missing one meal each month. Give the cost of a meal or the food you would eat to a local organization.
14. Eat less meat. Other sources of protein (vegetables, beans and rice, etc.) cost less, have less cholesterol and fat, and require less arable land to produce.
15. Eat fewer processed foods. The additives in these products are not beneficial and raise the cost of the food.
16. Reduce your consumption of coffee, sugar and alcohol. These products do not benefit you and require land that could be used to grow food.
17. Start a garden in your backyard or in your community.
18. Avoid waste by better planning and shopping, and by serving smaller portions.
19. Sew and mend your clothes rather than throwing them away.
20. Organize a clothes swap at your place of worship or club.
21. Walk or ride a bike.
22. Use mass transit. Carpool.
23. Notice advertising. Be aware of its effects on your purchasing habits.
24. Encourage your school cafeteria to serve better meals and donate leftovers.
25. Give to a food drive.
26. Teach someone to read.
27. Have a yard sale and donate the proceeds to a hunger relief group.
28. Look around your bedroom. Categorize the items by things you need and things you want to have. Do the same each time you make a purchase.
29. Keep a diary of food eaten for a week to raise consciousness about your diet.
30. Talk to your parents about their choices in charitable donation.

## GLOBAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION CHART

Region/ Country	% of under-5 suffering from underweight (severe) 1980-1993	% of under-5 suffering from wasting (moderate and severe) 1980-1993	% of under -5 suffering from stunting (moderate and severe) 1980-1993	% of population with access to safe water 1980-1993 urban	% of population with access to safe water 1980-1993 rural
<b>Africa (sub-Saharan)</b>	0	7	49	73	35
Ethiopia	16x	8x	64x	91	19
South Africa	..	..	..	..	..
Rwanda	6	4	48	75	62
<b>East Asia &amp; Pacific</b>	..	..	..	91	57
China	3x	4x	32x	99	60
Philippines	5	6	37	85	79
Vietnam	14	7	60	39	21
<b>South Asia</b>	24	12	63	84	74
India	27x	..	65x	85	78
Nepal	5x	14x	69x	67	39
Pakistan	14	9	50	85	50
<b>Latin America &amp; the Carribean</b>	2	3	21	90	55
Cuba	..	1	..	100	91
Colombia	2	3	17	87	82
Mexico	..	6	22	94	66
Uruguay	2	..	16	85	5
<b>Middle East &amp; North Africa</b>	..	6	25	93	61
Egypt	2	3	24	95	86
Iran	..	..	..	100	75
Saudi Arabia	..	..	..	100	74
<b>Industrial Countries</b>	..	..	..	..	..
Germany	..	..	..	..	..
Japan	..	..	..	..	..
USA	..	..	..	..	..

.. Data not available

All information from: Cohen, Marc J., ed. *Countries in Crisis*. Silver Spring, MD: Bread for the World Institute, 1995.

x Data that refer to years or periods other than those specified in the column heading, differ from the standard definition, or refer to only part of a country.



## ***RESOURCES/REFERENCES***

### **Articles, Studies, and Other Resources:**

Catholic Relief Services, "Chart on the Effects of Skewed Land Distribution," 1991

Food Research and Action Center, "Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project," July, 1995

Nash, Billie "What Will You Do?" 1994

National Education Association, Study on Hunger

Newsweek "How Hungry is America?" March 14, 1994

New York Friendship Press, "One Hundred Hungry People," Making a World of Difference: Creative Activities for Global Learning 1990

Oxfam America, "Hosting a Hunger Banquet," 1991

United States Department of Agriculture, "Food Guide Pyramid," 1992

University of Wisconsin-Madison, "Fighting Hunger in Wisconsin" 1994

Van Berkum, Carla "Hungering for Justice," Office on Global Education





## CHILDREN'S BOOKS

1. "Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z" (by Lois Ehlert, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989). Delightful drawings of fruits and vegetables, from apricot and artichoke to yam and zucchini. Includes a glossary of fruits and vegetables and identifies the area of the world where they originated.
2. "Gregory the Terrible Eater" (by Michael Sharmat, illustrated by Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey. New York: Four Winds Press, 1980). Gregory, a goat, won't eat tires and tin cans but eats only good food, so his parents think he is odd.
3. "Stone Soup" (illustrated by Martha Brown. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947). A community learns that they can make soup from a stone if everyone brings ingredients to share.
4. "Growing Vegetable Soup" (written and illustrated by Lois Ehlert. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987). A father and child grow vegetables and then make them into a soup.
5. "The Milk Makers" (by Gail Gibbons. New York: Macmillan, 1985). Explains how cows produce milk and how it is processed before being delivered to stores.
6. "Corn is Maize: The Gift of the Indians" (written and illustrated by Aliko. New York: Crowell, 1976). A simple description of how corn was discovered and used by the Indians and how it came to be an important food throughout the world.
7. "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" (by Eric Carle. New York: Philome! Books, 1979). Follows the progress of a hungry little caterpillar as he eats his way through a varied and very large quantity of food until, full at last, he forms a cocoon around himself and goes to sleep.
8. "If You Give a Goose a Muffin" (by Laura Joffe Numeroff, illustrated by Felician Bond. New York: Harper Collins, 1991). Chaos can ensue if you give a goose a muffin and start him on a cycle of urgent requests.
9. "What Happens to Hamburger?" (by Paul Showers, illustrated by Anne Rockwell. New York: Harper & Row, 1985). Explains the processes by which a hamburger and other foods are used to make energy, strong bones, and solid muscles as they pass through the digestive system.
10. "Chicken Soup with Rice" (by Maurice Sendak. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1962).



11. "Junk Food: What It Is, What It Does" (by Judith S. Seixas, illustrated by Tom Huffman. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1984). An introduction to facts about junk food -- what it is, where it is found, and how it affects the body -- with suggestions for snacking more nutritionally.
12. "The Plants We Eat" (by Millicent E. Selsam, photographs by Jerome Wexler and others. New York: Morrow, 1981). Discuss the development of the most common food plants, and their changing uses. Includes sample directions for growing some of the plants at home.
13. "How My Garden Grew" (by Anne & Harlow Rockwell. New York: Macmillan, 1982). With pride and pleasure, a little girl describes growing a garden all by herself.
14. "Bread, Bread, Bread" (by Ann Morris, photographs by Ken Heyman. New York: Mulberry Books, 1993). Celebrates the many different kinds of bread and how bread may be enjoyed all over the world.
15. "Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs" (by Judy Barrett, illustrated by Ron Barrett. New York: Atheneum, 1978). Life in a town where it rains soup and juice, snows mashed potatoes and blows storms of hamburgers.

### **BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS**

1. "Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen" (by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1991). A boy spends the day with Uncle Willie in the soup kitchen where he works preparing and serving food for the hungry.
2. "Fly Away Home" (by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Ron Himler. New York: Clarion Books, 1991). A homeless boy who lives in an airport with his father, moving from terminal to terminal and trying not to be nice, is given hope when he sees a trapped bird find its freedom.
3. "Tight Times" (by Barbara Shook Hazen, pictures by Trina Schart Hyman. New York: Viking Press, 1979). A youngster isn't sure why a thing called "tight times" means not getting a dog.
4. "The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest" (by Lynne Cherry. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990). The many different animals that live in a great kapok tree in the Brazilian rainforest try to convince a man with an ax of the importance of not cutting down her home.
5. "The First Strawberries: A Cherokee Story" (retold by Joseph Bruchac, pictures by Ana



- Vojtech. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1993). A quarrel between the first man and the first woman is reconciled when the Sun causes strawberries to grow out of the earth.
6. "Everybody Cooks Rice" (by Norah Dooley, illustrations by Peter J. Thornton. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1991). A child is sent to find a younger brother at dinnertime and is introduced to a variety of cultures through encountering the many different ways rice is prepared at the different households. visited.
  7. "Dumpling Soup" (by Jama Kim Rattigan, illustrated by Lillian Hsu-Flanders. Boston: Little Brown, 1992). A young Hawaiian girl tries to make dumplings for her family's New Year's celebration.
  8. "Tree of Life: The World of the African Baobab" (by Barbara Bash. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1989). Text and pictures document the interconnectedness of life as seen in the baobab tree of the African savannah. Portrays the animals and people this tree helps to support.
  9. "The Sacred Harvest: Ojibway Wild Rice Gathering" (by Gordon Regguinti, photographs by Dale Kakkak. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1992). An 11-year-old Ojibway Indian boy in Northern Minnesota goes with his father to harvest wild rice, the sacred food of his people.
  10. "Voices from the Fields: Children of Migrant Farmworkers Tell Their Stories" (by S. Beth Atkin. Boston: Little, Brown, 1993). Photographs, poems and interviews with children reveal the hardships and hopes of Mexican American migrant farm workers and their families.

#### ***CURRICULUM GUIDES, RESOURCES AND IDEA BOOKS***

1. "Food First Curriculum: An Integrated Curriculum for Grade 6" (by Laurie Rubin. San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1984). An excellent multidisciplinary approach to issues of cooperation, our food system, hunger and addressing hunger. The guide includes 35 activities designed to involve youth in the issues addressed.
2. "Children Hungering for Justice: Curriculum on Hunger and Children's Rights" (by the Office on Global Education, Baltimore, Maryland). Three levels of curriculum (K-4, 5-8, 9-12) designed to introduce students to issues of world hunger and children's rights. Includes suggestions for classroom and group activities, handouts on world hunger, and case studies of children from around the world living in poverty or under oppression.



3. "Look What We've Brought You From Mexico: Crafts, Games, Recipes, Stories and Other Cultural Activities from New Americans" (by Phyllis Shalant, illustrated by Joanna Roy. New York: Julian Messner, 1988). Introduces Mexico's cultural background with games, folk tales, recipes, puppets and crafts.
4. "Look What We've Brought You From Vietnam: Crafts, Games, Recipes, Stories and Other Cultural Activities from New Americans" (by Phyllis Shalant, illustrated by Joanna Roy. New York: Julian Messner, 1988). Introduces Vietnam's cultural background with games, folk tales, recipes, puppets and crafts.
5. "Foodworks: Over 100 Science Activities and Fascinating Facts That Explore the Magic of Food" (from the Ontario Science Centre, illustrated by Linda Hendry. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1987).
6. "The Multicultural Cookbook for Students" (by Carole Lisa Albyn and Lois Sinaiko Webb. Phoenix, Ariz.: Oryx, 1993). Presents a collection of recipes from over 120 countries and briefly discusses the culture and culinary habits of each country.
7. "Grandmother's Path Grandfather's Way: Hmong Preservation Project, Oral Lore, Generation to Generation" (by Lue Vang and Judy Lewis. San Francisco, Calif.: Zellerbach Family Fund, 1984). Reference book on Hmong folktales and traditions, developed in the Folsom-Cordova Unified School District.
8. "The Hmong in America: We Sought Refuge Here" (by Peter and Connie Roop. Appleton, Wis.: Appleton Area School District, 1990). Designed to help students learn more about the history and culture of the Hmong immigrants to the United States.