



Defending dignity.
Fighting poverty.

ISSUE BRIEF

FROM AID TO IMPACT

Food for All: Tackling Hunger and Food Insecurity

It's time to think differently about hunger. The time is ripe for United States leadership on global food security.

The U.S. should:

- Allow organizations like CARE to choose the most appropriate, cost-effective way to respond to any given hunger crisis, either through the use of imported food aid, purchase of food locally or regionally, or use of cash transfers and vouchers. This would improve the effectiveness of U.S. government emergency and long-term food aid programs and also shorten the response time needed to provide food during emergencies.
- Consolidate and coordinate U.S. government food security policies into a coherent national strategy to better leverage valuable resources.
- Focus on programs that address the needs of women farmers and help them to increase the value of their goods, and to gain access to resources including education, credit and land tenure.
- Fund cost-effective, productive safety nets that prevent communities from falling into crisis in the first place while also contributing to long-term development.

Addressing these causes requires U.S. leadership to set common goals and promote coordinated action among national governments, international institutions and agencies, implementing partners and communities. And the time to act is now.

Practical and Flexible Approach to Food Aid

In order to maximize the effectiveness of U.S. efforts to reduce hunger, interventions should be carefully balanced and flexible to meet emergency and long-term needs. It starts with a common-sense approach to sourcing food resources. Shipping food from the United States to developing countries overseas is expensive, slow and unpredictable. **Sixty-five cents of every dollar spent goes to pay for transportation.**

When the U.S. government allows the local or regional purchase of food commodities, humanitarian organizations like CARE can do more good with less money. And in the current fiscal climate, everything possible must be done to reduce costs and improve the effectiveness of food aid. Simply put, local purchase – whether by an organization or through cash or vouchers to residents – reduces delays and stimulates local development. It's a solution for today and tomorrow.

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Issue in Focus

The State of Global Hunger

It is easy to get the impression that outbreaks of acute hunger (often called “famines”) are isolated calamities that simply result from crop failures, natural disasters or conflicts. In reality, there is a deeper problem underlying these events. What appear to be isolated disasters are really symptoms of a systemic crisis.

Women must be at the heart of any response to end global hunger and food insecurity. **Rural women produce half the world’s food yet they own only one percent of the farmland.** Women and children comprise the majority of the world’s chronically hungry people. Men usually eat first; women and children eat smaller amounts, and often are allotted the least nutritious food. When food is short, families are forced either to eat less, or spend less on other essentials – like education and medicine.

In 2000, 189 nations, including the United States, pledged to cut the proportion of people suffering from hunger in half by 2015, as part of the Millennium Development Goals. Today, despite those pledges, **there are more than one billion hungry people worldwide. Hunger and malnutrition are the number one risk to global health, killing more than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.**

Rising Food Prices and the Global Economy

The picture was already grim, even at the end of more than a decade of extraordinarily low food prices and sustained global economic growth. From 1974 to 2005, world food prices fell by 75 percent in real terms. Since



2005, this trend has been completely reversed. In 2008, global food prices were 75 percent higher than they had been in 2005, eroding the purchasing power of poor people, many of whom already spend most of their income on food. This triggered a global surge in hunger, and made it more expensive to deliver international food aid to the hungry.

With the global financial crisis, commodity prices have dropped moderately, providing some relief to consumers. But at the same time, unemployment in many countries has surged and remittances have plummeted. This is the background to rapid shifts in patterns of poverty and food insecurity in places as diverse as Mexico, Kyrgyzstan and China, and further evidence that reform is needed to address hunger before it reaches crisis levels.

Productive Safety Nets Keep Communities Out of Crisis

Instead of rebuilding livelihoods, productive safety nets focus on preventing livelihoods from being destroyed in the first place. The principal targets of these programs are families that face food insecurity, but have not yet had to resort to selling productive assets. **Aid is delivered early, before conditions become dire, and is comparatively small in relation to the amount of aid needed after they’ve fallen into crisis.** These programs also make important contributions to long-term development.



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