A Time to Change History

The number of low-income and poor families in the United States has risen as the cost of basic goods and services has increased, wages have stagnated, and unemployment has grown. Globally, rising grain prices, the economic recession, and the effects of climate change have caused a surge in the number of hungry and poor people.

Bread for the World has developed a plan for the next three years, 2010-2012, which is focused on the theme, “A Time to Change History for Hungry People.” The plan has two sets of goals. The first goal centers on pursuing policy changes in Congress that impact hunger and poverty. The second goal is to improve Bread as an organization so that Bread will be younger, more diverse, more technologically savvy, better known, and more vibrant at the grassroots.

Bread is about feeding hungry people; so strengthening policies for hungry people is Bread’s first policy goal. Bread will continue to push U.S. government leaders to reduce hunger and strengthen food security in poor countries. Bread for the World has been involved in the planning of major initiatives proposed by President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, USAID Administrator Raj Shah, and others that call for reducing world hunger, primarily by investing in agriculture in poor countries. Bread also will push for administrative reforms that clarify the goals of U.S. foreign assistance, and that make assistance responsive to what’s happening on the ground in specific countries.

A second policy goal is to end child hunger in America. In President Obama’s proposed FY 2011 budget, he included $1 billion per year for nutrition programs aimed at ending childhood hunger, reducing obesity, and improving children’s diets. Bread for the World will urge Congress to fully fund these programs. But as necessary as these programs are, they are not enough to end child hunger; families need additional ways to increase their income so they can provide for their children.

To that end, Bread for the World’s 2010 Offering of Letters focuses on the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, tax credits that put extra cash into the pockets of low-income working families.

THREE GOALS OVER THREE YEARS
- Push Congress to reduce hunger and strengthen global food security.
- End childhood hunger in America.
- Reform U.S. foreign assistance.

A third policy goal is more and better development assistance to make U.S. foreign assistance more effective. Among our goals are a revitalized USAID and the consolidation of aid programs that are currently scattered across the government. Bread also will work with its coalition partners to push for a doubling of U.S. poverty-focused development

assistance. Since 2000, such aid has tripled to $28 billion in FY 2010.

**The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**

Urge your members of Congress to protect and strengthen key tax credits that can make a big difference for low-income workers and their families.

EITC alone lifts more than 5 million Americans annually above the poverty line, including 2.6 million children.

In it’s 2009 report, “Hunger in America’s Classrooms,” the anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength offers a wake-up call from 740 teachers who work in rural, urban, and suburban areas of the U.S. More than 60% of the teachers reported that they regularly see children coming to school hungry because they are not getting enough to eat at home. Here is what the teachers say:

“The only meals that (Kimberly) was guaranteed were served at school. Anytime we had leftovers, she would always want to take them home…to her little brothers and sisters. She was a second-grader trying to make sure that her family got fed.”

Kate, teacher in San Antonio, TX

“I see kids asking for extra food at the end of the day before they go home…because they don’t know if they are having dinner or not.”

Tori, teacher St. Louis, MO

The fastest, most direct way to reduce childhood hunger is through national child nutrition programs. Child nutrition programs are effective only when they actually reach the children who need help. Strengthening the country’s nutritional safety net is a critical first step toward meeting the goal of eliminating hunger among U.S. children by 2015.

Congress passed a renewal of child nutrition programs in 2004, and reauthorization in 2009. Congress approved a temporary extension and expects to pass a five-year child nutrition reauthorization bill this year.
In the meantime, Bread for the World continues to educate members of Congress about the improvement we seek in the new legislation. Bread’s priorities are measures that increase low-income children’s access to and participation in critical nutrition programs.

Who are the 16.7 million American children that child nutrition programs seek to help?

- Half live in families headed by a married couple.
- Over half live in families with incomes above the federal poverty line.
- One in six live outside a metropolitan area.
- Whites are the largest racial/ethnic group.
- More than one in three African-American and Hispanic children live in families that do not always have enough money for food.

The numbers are growing. Between 2007 and 2008, the percentage of children in food-insecure households increased by 34%.

For families struggling to make ends meet and for our entire society child nutrition programs are an investment in the future. Children who experience hunger during the first three years of their lives can suffer damage to their health and development that is largely irreversible. Older children have difficulty concentrating and learning in school and are more prone to behavior problems. All of this can set up a destructive cycle that follows them into adulthood.

Childhood hunger is rooted in poverty: low-wage workers struggle to make ends meet and feed their children. Without the opportunity to create a financial cushion or accumulate other assets, low-income families remain vulnerable. Even minor emergencies such as the car breaking down or a child’s illness can consume the monthly grocery budget very quickly.

HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY FOR LOUISIANA RANKS 36 AT 11%

A long-term solution to childhood hunger certainly requires strong nutrition programs, but they are not enough. We need to also seek solutions that will put more money in the pockets of low-income workers. Bread for the World’s Offering of Letters urges Congress to protect and strengthen tax credits that benefit low-income families, particularly the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit. Visit bread.org/OL2010 to learn more.