



United Nations
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UN's World Food Day

♦♦ 16 October ♦♦

CONFRONTING HUNGER IN OUR WORLD

At some point in our lives, we have all experienced hunger, for an hour, a day or perhaps even consistently for weeks at a time. Whether we experience it as contracting gut aches, a growling stomach, light-headedness, irritability or tiredness, it is an unpleasant feeling we all know.

What if you lived in a country that didn't have food that was readily accessible? Or support systems like food banks and social services that help close the gap if you are unable to afford food for your family? Or basic health care for when you get sick as a result of inadequate or poor nutrition?

Every day, millions of people around the world eat only the bare minimum of food to keep themselves alive. Sometimes, not even that. And while the vast majority of these people live in the developing world, 2% – 19 million – of them live in developed countries like Canada. Every night, regardless of where they live, they go to bed hungry and uncertain as to whether there will be enough to eat tomorrow.



UN Photo: M. Dormino (Haiti)

A hungry person is weak, tired, unable to concentrate, work, study or effectively contribute to their community. They have a weakened immune system and so are more vulnerable to illness. With chronic hunger, their body deteriorates, eventually leading to starvation and death.

They are starved not only of nutrition, but also of hope and joy. Their entire focus on life is about basic survival, day after day. If they are not working long hard hours to earn enough money to get by, they

Hunger Facts

- Hunger kills more people every year than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined
- 925 million people regularly go to bed hungry. That is more than the combined populations of Canada, the USA and the European Union
- 1 out of 4 children – 146 million – in developing countries are underweight due to acute or chronic hunger
- 6.5 million children under five die from malnutrition and hunger each year
- Women are the world's primary food producers, yet often eat last. They make up a little over 50% of the world's population yet account for over 60% of the world's hungry.
- 90 million people in 73 countries are fed by the World Food Programme every year. On average, 5 million metric tons of food is distributed to the chronically hungry.

Source: United Nations

Canada and Hunger

- Food bank use in Canada skyrocketed by 26% between 2008 and 2011
- In an average month, 850 000 Canadians receive food from a food bank. 38% of those turning to food banks are children and youth
- Of food purchased by Canadians, only about 71% of the calories are consumed. The remainder is wasted or spoils.

Sources: Food Banks Canada & Statistics Canada

may be walking miles to find food and fresh water. Often families must move, or split up, to follow seasonal work. Children are pulled out of school to help earn a little money, farm the land, scavenge dumps for scraps, gather twigs for cooking, or fetch water from distant often contaminated water pools.

Those who are at most risk are the impoverished and the victims of catastrophes – both natural disasters and armed conflicts – that cause widespread destruction and force people to abandon their homes, their jobs and their existing support systems.

For millions facing this unimaginable despair, the United Nations is their source of hope.

- ◆ The UN's **World Food Programme** is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger. Not only does it ship food to the famished, but it supports "food for work" projects that improve community infrastructure, implement irrigation, terracing and soil and water conservation, and help set up gardening businesses.
- ◆ The **Food and Agricultural Organization** improves agricultural productivity, provides simple sustainable tools and techniques to increase crop yields, and helps people and nations to help themselves.
- ◆ The **International Fund for Agricultural Development** combats hunger and poverty in developing countries through low-interest loans and direct assistance to small-hold farmers.
- ◆ Other agencies like **UNICEF**, **World Bank** and the **UN High Commissioner for Refugees** get involved when hunger falls within their respective mandates.



UN Photo: Kibae Park

The "right to food" is at the heart of many UN efforts. Not only is it a basic human right, but when people do not have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life, we all suffer. When people lack hope and opportunity, their desperation and unrest can threaten sustainable peace and security.

Whether experienced in Canada or in developing countries, hunger is not a matter of charity. The suffering of any human being diminishes us all. **World Food Day** encourages participation of and cooperation among nations and organizations around the causes of hunger, and strengthens solidarity in the struggle against hunger.

At present, a hunger-free world is still a dream. It is up to all of us to play a role in ending hunger. Join our movement of "*We the Peoples...*" and help us to transform lives and build hopeful futures. A better world starts with YOU.

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