

Oxfam Fact Sheet | Hunger and poverty

Read. Learn. Change the world.



Oxfam
America

SUMMER 2009

One in six people worldwide now suffers from chronic hunger. Over a billion women, men, and children. By the time a family knows hunger, their poverty is extreme. And inequality—coupled with the global economic downturn—is driving up the numbers of people in poverty.

The facts

- Forty percent of the people on our planet—more than 2.5 billion—now live in poverty, struggling to survive on less than \$2 a day.
- In 2008 alone, rising food prices forced an additional 40 million people into hunger.
- According to the UN's World Food Program, the number of global food emergencies has increased from an average of 15 per year during the 1980s to more than 30 per year since 2000.
- If you were born in the US, you can expect, on average, to live nearly 78 years. If you live in Zimbabwe, you have only a 43 percent chance of surviving past 40.
- Poverty limits access to education. Globally, 771 million people lack basic literacy skills; two-thirds of them are women.
- Every day, 25,000 children under the age of 5 die, mostly from preventable causes.
- While the US is one of the wealthiest countries on earth, over 39 million Americans live in poverty.

What can one person do? ACT FAST.

The trend can seem unstoppable, but one person can make a difference. When you pledge to ACT FAST with Oxfam, you're joining a movement to beat poverty that could grow even faster than poverty. From our work around the world, we know that what starts small—with one person, one idea, a few dollars—can quickly become a force for widespread change.

Each person who takes the pledge brings us closer to our goal of beating poverty. *See the other side to learn what it's all about.*

Oxfam America

We're an international relief and development organization that creates lasting solutions to poverty, hunger, and injustice. We are part of Oxfam International, a confederation of 13 Oxfams working in more than 100 countries. Together with individuals and local groups in these countries, we save lives, help people overcome poverty, and fight for social justice. Learn more about us at www.oxfamamerica.org.



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Everyone on earth has the same basic needs; it is only our circumstances—where we live and the culture into which we are born—that differ. Some are born into relative prosperity and security, while millions, through no choice of their own, are born into poverty.

From the Oxfam America Hunger Banquet® event script

Above: Families in the Honduran community of Copan used to survive on two or three small meals a day, but with support from Oxfam and a local partner organization, they now grow a wide variety of nutritious vegetables. To learn about the Oxfam America Hunger Banquet® event and the links between hunger and poverty, go to www.oxfamamerica.org/actfast. *Gilvan Barreto / Oxfam*

ACT FAST with Oxfam to beat poverty

When you pledge to ACT FAST with Oxfam, you agree to do three things. Each step builds on the power of numbers.

Sign 1. Add one name—yours—to the ACT FAST with Oxfam pledge, and signal your commitment to help us beat poverty.

Tell 10. Educate 10 people about Oxfam's work and the need to ACT FAST. It's easy to get the word out even if you're pressed for time. Send an email to 10 friends or, if you have the time, host an event. The more people who hear about our growing community, the faster the movement to beat poverty will grow. Go to www.oxfamamerica.org/actfast for more ideas and tools.

Raise 100. Raise \$100 for Oxfam's work to beat poverty. If time's short, make a donation at www.oxfamamerica.org/actfast/donate. If money's tight, how about inviting 10 friends to each pitch in \$10? Go to www.oxfamamerica.org/actfast for more ideas and tools.



A history of working together for change

Oxfam supporters have a long history of standing up for what they know is right. In 1970, a group of volunteers founded Oxfam America in response to the humanitarian crisis created by the fight for independence in Bangladesh. Then, on the Thursday before

Thanksgiving 1974, something quite remarkable happened. Responding to Oxfam's call, 250,000 people nationwide participated in the first Oxfam America *Fast for a World Harvest*; they fasted for the day or for a meal, raising awareness about hunger and donating their food money to Oxfam. So began a national movement to alleviate hunger and poverty in our world. And that's how we first understood the power of "acting fast." Starting today, we've launched a movement to take it all to the next level.

Beating poverty, one by one

Your donations to Oxfam's emergency and long-term work can make a difference in people's lives:

- If you take the pledge, that's \$100—enough to help a fisherman, a basketweaver, or other entrepreneur start a small business.
- If 10 of your friends take the pledge, that's \$1,000—enough to stock two "cereal banks" with a supply of grains, like corn and millet, that a community can rely on if crops fail.
- If each of them gets 10 friends to pledge, that's \$10,000—enough to buy 350 farmers seeds, farm tools, and plants to increase and diversify their crops and feed their families.

1, 10, 100: You're part of something bigger.
Take the pledge today at www.oxfamamerica.org/actfast.



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Massive poverty and obscene inequality are such terrible scourges of our times ... that they have to rank alongside slavery and apartheid as social ills. ... Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made, and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.

Nelson Mandela, at a public event organized by Oxfam

Above right: Marina Nyandwi, 70, says, "I make mats; I sell them to get money to feed my two grandsons" (pictured here with her). Nyandwi and the boys are among the survivors who have taken refuge in Mugunga camp, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. To learn about Oxfam's work in Congo, go to www.oxfamamerica.org/drc. Rankin / Oxfam

Working together to end poverty and injustice

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Sources include the World Bank's World Development Indicators 2007, the World Bank PovcalNet database, the World Food Program, and UNICEF. List of additional sources available by contacting actfast@oxfamamerica.org.

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