



# Oxfam Fact Sheet | Food for all

*Read. Learn. Change the world.*

OCTOBER 2010

You've seen the numbers: more than 925 million hungry. But hunger is not about too many people and too little food. Our rich and bountiful planet produces enough food to feed every woman, man, and child on earth. Hunger is about power. Its roots lie in inequalities in access to resources. The results are illiteracy, poverty, war, and the inability of families to grow or buy food.

Let's look at Guatemala, which exports millions of dollars in pineapple, sugar cane, and bananas each year. Yet the country's poorest people, mostly indigenous Maya, can't afford to buy food for their families. A history of forced relocation and discrimination means that many struggle to grow enough food to eat—and that the malnutrition rate for indigenous children is close to 70 percent. In late 2009, 350,000 families in the Baja Verapaz region faced a crisis when a lack of rain destroyed over 80 percent of their crops.

Meanwhile, in summer 2010 the Sahel region of West Africa made headlines when over 10 million people in seven countries experienced a food crisis, triggered in part by erratic rainfall that led to a drop in grain production. Though food was available for sale in these countries, people didn't have the funds to buy it.

Years of underinvestment in agriculture had left many farming households vulnerable to shocks like drought, so most families had exhausted their assets months before—for them, food was simply out of reach.

## We believe no one on earth should go hungry

Oxfam America 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 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."

To find out how you can join the movement today, go to [actfast.oxfamamerica.org](http://actfast.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

## Oxfam America

We're an international relief and development organization that creates lasting solutions to poverty, hunger, and injustice. We are part of Oxfam, a confederation of 13 organizations working in more than 90 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 [oxfamamerica.org](http://oxfamamerica.org).

**Above:** Alima Mariko, secretary of the Fala village Saving for Change group in southwestern Mali, waters her vegetable garden. Oxfam America's Saving for Change groups act as community banks, giving rural women in Mali a safe place to save and easy access to loans. As a result, women like Mariko can access the funds they need to buy seeds and plant gardens to protect their families against hunger.  
*Rebecca Blackwell / Oxfam America*

## Get the facts...then educate others

- 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.
- More than 925 million people suffer from chronic hunger. By 2050, 50 million more people will be at risk as a result of climate change.
- More people die from hunger each year than from AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined.
- According to the UN 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.
- The best solutions to hunger are local and long-term. In the short term, we can make food aid more efficient by buying food locally (or giving households cash to purchase their own food) rather than shipping food from the US. In the long term, we should invest in local agriculture to create lasting solutions. In Guatemala, for example, two Oxfam America-supported nongovernmental organizations are working with indigenous people to build irrigation systems, use organic fertilizer and insecticide, and plant native seeds—all of which help farmers grow more food at lower cost.

## Today, you can help fight hunger

Because of you and thousands like you, we've launched a movement. No matter who you are, or how busy you are, you can make a difference. You'll find these and other easy ways to help at [actfast.oxfamamerica.org](http://actfast.oxfamamerica.org):

- **Host or attend an Oxfam America Hunger Banquet®.** Unique and memorable, few experiences bring to life the inequalities in our world more powerfully than an Oxfam America *Hunger Banquet* event. Organizers and participants alike can experience first-hand how our decisions affect others in the world.
- **Skip a meal for Oxfam.** Join the tradition with a simple, but powerful, act. Skip one meal—on the Thursday before Thanksgiving, or another day—and donate the money you save to help Oxfam fight hunger.
- **Take action online.** Sign up for Oxfam America's online community and make your voice heard. Together, we can influence legislators to change the laws and practices that keep people in poverty.

### What do you believe?

Find the issue that moves you. Hear from others who are taking action. And get all the tools you need to make a difference in your community and beyond.

Join the movement at [actfast.oxfamamerica.org](http://actfast.oxfamamerica.org).



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There are so many injustices in the world. But rather than waste my energy being frustrated ... I find motivation knowing that my time and voice can make a difference, even a small one.

Megan Ferreira, Oxfam Action Corps volunteer, San Francisco, CA

**Above:** Women like Juana Reyes, of Xinacati II, Guatemala, are among those on the front lines—fighting hunger in rural communities. When her family lost most of their corn crop during a drought in 2009, Reyes, 67, had a strategy: “I am a woman who likes to work—any work to earn money so we can survive.”  
*James Rodriguez / Oxfam America*

## Working together to end poverty and injustice

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