

THE
HUNGER
PROJECT

*Unleashing
the Human
Spirit*

Principles and
Methodology
of The Hunger
Project

Effective Strategy
and Action
for a Future Free
from Hunger

May 1996

Confronting the Challenge of Ending Hunger

- **Hunger persists:** Each and every day, 35,000 people die as a consequence of chronic, persistent hunger. Between 750 million and 1 billion people live in conditions of poverty so severe that they are unable to obtain enough food to meet their daily requirements. This is not the kind of hunger that makes headlines, as in a famine, but a silent holocaust that continues day after day, month after month.
- **Hunger can be ended:** This waste of human lives is all the more tragic in that it can be ended. The world produces more than enough food for everyone and, if we act wisely, can continue to do so for future generations. The world community possesses the financial and technical resources necessary to end hunger.
- **The world has committed itself to this goal:** At the 1990 World Summit for Children and at a series of global conferences, including the Earth Summit in Rio, the Population Conference in Cairo, the Social Development Summit in Copenhagen and the Women's Conference in Beijing, the world community has committed itself time and again to meeting a series of goals by the year 2000 that would result in the end of hunger on our planet.
- **A moral imperative/a practical necessity:** These conferences have stressed that ending hunger is not only a moral imperative, but a practical necessity. Ending hunger is central to resolving an entire nexus of issues, such as population growth, civil unrest and environmental destruction, that will increasingly threaten the quality of life for everyone.
- **A human issue:** Today, ending hunger is not primarily a technical or a production issue, it is a *human* issue. Hunger persists because we, as human beings, have failed to organize our societies in ways that assure every person the chance to live a healthy and productive life.
- **Limits to the conventional approach:** Ending hunger is a highly complex challenge. It is increasingly clear that charitable responses and traditional bureaucratic programs, as useful as they may be, are insufficient to carry the day. More importantly, people increasingly recognize that conventional approaches are based on a *framework of thinking* that is inconsistent with what actually must be done to achieve the end of hunger on a sustainable basis.

- **The commitment of The Hunger Project:** The Hunger Project is committed to the *end* of hunger. This means that we are committed to empowering people to create permanent, society-wide solutions to the problem, and not content ourselves with charitable actions that only benefit a few. We are committed to identifying and utilizing an accurate framework of thinking, and pioneering strategies and actions that will enable humanity to create a new future — a future free from hunger.

The Need for a New Set of Principles

- The Hunger Project believes that the strategies and actions required to end hunger must emanate from a new set of principles. These principles are derived from an authentic *confrontation with the commitment to ending hunger*, and from a *deeper examination of what it means to be human*.
- **Discovered in action:** The principles of The Hunger Project are not created in a philosophical vacuum and then applied. They evolve and are refined in the action itself. The formulation of our principles changes as our experience grows. In this way, there is no room for arrogance. On the contrary, the work of ending hunger is a rigorous teacher of a complex subject, constantly requiring a spirit of humility and openness to discovery.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE HUNGER PROJECT

Who We Are as Human Beings

The persistence of hunger is a human issue. Therefore, the principles of The Hunger Project begin with the recognition of two essential elements of what it means to be human.

- **The human spirit:** The Hunger Project recognizes that in addition to survival needs, every human being has a fundamental need to lead a life of dignity, meaning and purpose — to know that our lives make a difference.
- **Interconnectedness:** Our actions are shaped by and affect all other people and our natural environment. Our responsibility extends beyond our immediate lives and families to the entire human family. Issues of hunger and poverty are not problems of one country or another but are global issues, and we must solve them as global citizens.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE HUNGER PROJECT

Creating a New Future

Ending hunger requires a true break with the status quo. It will not happen in the course of “business as usual.” To resolve humanity’s oldest and most pernicious problem requires four essential ingredients:

- **Vision:** Given who we are as human beings, what is critical to our progress is vision — seeing a future that can be achieved and is worth achieving. The vision that calls forth The Hunger Project is a sustainable future for humanity, a future in which all people have the opportunity to live healthy and productive lives in harmony with nature. We call this “the end of hunger.”
- **Commitment:** Commitment is what allows individuals to encounter obstacles, frustrations and failures on the pathway to achievement and still keep going. It is increasingly clear that achieving the future we envision will not just happen. It must be made to happen, and this will require extraordinary commitment. Calling forth that commitment, and keeping it focused and sustained to fulfill the vision, is a vital responsibility of The Hunger Project.
- **Leadership:** Leadership is critical to every great human achievement. Ending hunger requires committed leadership at all levels of society — from the village

to the district, state, nation and the international community — that can call forth vision and commitment, and mobilize people to take effective action.

- **Strategy and action:** Meeting a challenge as complex and daunting as hunger in a world of finite resources requires brilliant strategy and high-leverage action. It requires inquiry, analysis and allocation of resources consistent with achieving the goal. Every action must be designed to take a quantum leap forward toward the goal. There must also be extraordinary flexibility of action. One must move down a pathway with sufficient intentionality to make progress, yet be willing at every moment to let go of one approach to take a better pathway.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE HUNGER PROJECT

A Paradigm for Success

The Hunger Project recognizes that creating truly effective strategies and actions for the end of hunger requires a new framework of thinking, that is, a new paradigm — a paradigm consistent with the end of hunger. The key elements of that new paradigm are

- **Self-reliance:** Conventional approaches have treated hungry people as the problem instead of the solution, as beneficiaries rather than the primary actors, working for their own self-reliance. All individuals have the right and the responsibility to be the authors of their own lives and their own development. The work of ending hunger must build from people's own creativity — their own skills, resources and decision-making.
- **Enabling environment:** People's ability to express their self-reliance is a function of the opportunities provided by the society. The work of ending hunger is therefore not feeding people. It is the work of creating an enabling environment in which people have the opportunity and empowerment they need to build lives of self-reliance.
- **Empowerment of women:** Women and girls are the most affected by hunger and poverty. Traditionally, women bear the primary responsibilities in the most relevant areas — food production, nutrition, family planning, primary health and education. Yet most development inputs continue to go to men. A central component of effective strategy must be the empowerment of women in ways that enable them to achieve improvements in all key areas that affect their lives and those of their families.

- **Global responsibility, partnership and investment:** Hunger is a global issue. All of us have the responsibility to stand in partnership with hungry people, committed to their success. The achievement of this goal represents a new future, not only for those who are hungry but for all people. Realizing this new future for all humanity requires investment, not charity.

The Campaign to End Hunger

- **Not a program, but a phenomenon:** The work of ending hunger cannot be accomplished by any one organization, or even any conceivable network of organizations. The end of hunger will not be a series of well-managed projects. It will be achieved through millions of actions, most of which will never be recognized, and will certainly not be monitored and measured.
- The end of hunger will be a *phenomenon* — an unleashing of the creativity and productivity of hundreds of millions of hungry people, and hundreds of thousands of effective strategies and actions that create the enabling environment for them to succeed.
- **Catalyzing that phenomenon:** The phenomenon of strategy and action will not happen on its own. Individuals must take responsibility for making it happen.
- **A movement, not an organization:** For this reason, The Hunger Project can never be accurately thought of as merely an organization. It must be thought of as a *movement*, a campaign of individuals and organizations committed to taking strategic action to mobilize self-reliant development and transform the policy environment at every level so that people can succeed.
- **Galvanizing the campaign at every level of society:** The campaign for ending hunger starts with the creativity of hungry people — respecting them as the primary authors and actors of the work to end hunger, awakening them to a possibility for a better life, and working to clear away the obstacles to the success of their self-reliant actions.
- Building upon the self-reliant efforts of hungry people, the campaign to end hunger must take action at every level of society — from the local level up to the national government, and to the level of the international community.

- **Extend the process, don't replicate the solution:** One of the failures of development has been the belief that the way to end hunger is to find a workable solution and replicate it. This fails because the *source of the success is the human creativity* that resulted in the solution, not the solution itself.
- Ending hunger will be achieved by extending the process of human empowerment, not by finding a model that works and replicating it.
- In every village where hunger persists, human beings must be empowered to discover their own vision, express their own leadership, create their own solutions and work together to achieve their own success. At every level of society, the commitment of government officers, researchers, business people and citizen activists must be mobilized into a common front, transforming policies and structures so that all people have the chance to lead healthy and productive lives.
- The principles and methodology of The Hunger Project are applicable at all levels of society. They are derived from what it means to be human, and designed to facilitate human beings working together effectively.
- Discovering, applying and mastering this approach — being a catalyst in the worldwide phenomenon of ending hunger — is perhaps the greatest opportunity of this generation. From this perspective, one discovers that ending hunger is not fundamentally a problem to be solved, but a profound opportunity for unleashing the human spirit.

Strategic Planning-in-Action — a Methodology for Accomplishment, Focus and Breakthrough

To meet the challenge of ending hunger requires a methodology that will break up old patterns of action, that will foster new ways of thinking and empower people to achieve concrete breakthroughs in health, education, nutrition, food production, incomes and the empowerment of women.

The methodology developed by The Hunger Project to achieve this is called *strategic planning-in-action*. Wherever we work, from the villages to the highest policy levels, we apply this methodology:

- **Mobilize and empower committed indigenous leadership:** The first step in our work is always to enlist the leadership of individuals of great commitment, complete integrity and the stature to have access to anyone in society necessary to ending hunger. Leadership for action in a village must come from that village; leadership for action in a nation must come from that nation. These individuals must become completely clear about and committed to utilizing the principles and methodology of The Hunger Project.
- **Bring together all sectors of society:** Ending hunger cannot be accomplished by government alone. We bring together leadership from all key sectors — business, academia, NGOs and government agencies — forming councils to create and lead our strategies in co-equal partnership.
- **Build a shared understanding:** For people to work together effectively, they must achieve a comprehensive shared understanding of the prevailing conditions, the effectiveness of existing programs and the priority areas where action is required. Bringing all the information together, and making it clear, finite and confrontable, has been one of the most empowering contributions of The Hunger Project since its inception.
- **Commit to achieving a strategic intent:** Individuals working with The Hunger Project must develop a powerfully articulated, unifying and achievable vision — a strategic intent — and clear strategic objectives appropriate to solving the problem, society-wide. We must never be content with helping a few, but rather must commit ourselves to transforming conditions throughout society so that *all* people can build lives free from hunger.

- **Commit to playing a strategic, catalytic role:** Once people are committed to actually achieving the goal, they must then recognize the possibility of taking catalytic, high-leverage action that can affect the “big picture” — breaking bottlenecks to progress, improving existing programs, mobilizing and making better use of resources, effecting structural changes in society that can unleash the creativity and productivity of hungry people.
- **Identify what’s missing:** Our work is always guided by the question, What’s missing? What, if provided, would allow for a breakthrough? This is very different, and far more powerful, than the more common questions, What’s wrong? Why isn’t it working? These latter questions tend to call forth blame and paralysis, not action and cooperation. The Hunger Project respects the work of other organizations; by focusing on what’s missing, we avoid duplicating work being done by others.
- **Take immediate action** to catalyze “what’s missing” being provided. Take action first where it can succeed and produce near-term results.
- **Create a momentum of accomplishment:** One must constantly assess and sharpen the strategy. Each accomplishment gives a new landscape: new leadership, new obstacles, new openings for catalytic action. Each failure can lead to a deeper understanding of the nature of the challenge. Creating and sustaining this campaign mentality and style of working is crucial to breaking the mind-set of resignation and unleashing the human spirit.

Examples of The Hunger Project's Work

The Hunger Project is a global, strategic organization committed to the sustainable end of world hunger. Using a methodology known as Strategic Planning-in-Action (SPIA), The Hunger Project carries out a two-pronged strategy: mobilizing grassroots people to take effective action; and mobilizing high-level, committed leadership that can cut red tape and change government policies, so that people's self-reliant efforts can succeed.

Confronting the Subjugation of Women. Hunger affects women the most, and hunger persists to a large degree due to the economic, social and political subjugation, marginalization and disempowerment of women. The Women's Initiative for Ending Hunger is designed to catalyze the breakthroughs required to ensure that women gain the opportunities required for hunger to be ended.

Africa. Working in partnership with Africa Prize laureates, The Hunger Project has been expanding its work in West Africa. Women in remote villages of northern Senegal have learned to read, and have started businesses enabling them to achieve self-sufficiency. Projects in Ghana are increasing family incomes in both rural and urban areas. A village action program was launched in 1997 in Benin to translate new government rural development policy into results. In Burkina Faso, initiatives in women's credit and increased food production, begun in 1997, are being expanded to more regions of the country.

South Asia. Hunger Project councils in 11 states of India have launched dozens of initiatives to create "hunger-free zones," so that all the people within an area can lead healthy and productive lives. Hunger Project volunteers in 50 of Bangladesh's 64 districts are mobilizing thousands of people to achieve better health, incomes, education and environmental sustainability.

Latin America. Through Radio ACLO in Bolivia, training in literacy, agriculture and health is being provided to remote Andean villagers. Hunger Project volunteers in Mexico are mobilizing villagers for self-reliant action, and providing SPIA training to government agencies involved in poverty and hunger eradication. In Peru, The Hunger Project is empowering people of the Central Amazon to rebuild their local economy following years of terrorist destruction.

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Detailed information on The Hunger Project is available on the Web: www.thp.org