



The Global Food Crisis: The Facts

In spring 2008, massive shocks to the world food markets highlighted shortages and inequities in food availability and distribution. As a result, more people worldwide are experiencing chronic hunger. This situation is pushing vulnerable people into riskier actions and livelihoods in order to survive and provide food for their families. World Vision is working to enhance the work already under way to address the critical short- and long-term food needs of children, families, and communities.

The factors contributing to rising food prices include the following:

- Rising fuel and transportation costs
- Political turmoil and conflict
- Growing populations and increased consumption of meat
- Climactic variations, including droughts, floods, and storms that have destroyed harvests
- Poor environmental care
- Increased demand for food crops for use in producing biofuels
- Speculation and hoarding of food commodities
- Long-term issues such as unfair trade

When food supplies are low, children are always the most vulnerable. The statistics are overwhelming:

- 53 percent of all deaths of children younger than 5 are linked to hunger.
- 5.1 million children die from hunger each year. That is 14,000 children a day, or one child every seven seconds.

Even if a child does not die directly from starvation, malnutrition makes children more prone to—and likely to die from—illnesses such as pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria, and measles. The current crisis is exacerbating an already unacceptable situation. Increases in food prices could push another 100 million people deeper into poverty; 35 million of them will be children.

Even a small increase in food prices hits the poor hard. The poorest people in developing countries can spend up to 75 percent of their income on food, leaving little left for things like education and health care. While the world produces more than enough to feed its entire population of some 6.5 billion, more than 850 million people go hungry every day. This is a grave injustice, and we can no longer claim ignorance to the plight of our brothers and sisters around the world.

(Sources: “Malaria and Children: Progress Intervention Coverage,” UNICEF, 2007; “Nutrition for Health and Development,” WHO, 2007; “State of the World’s Children,” UNICEF, 2008; and The World Bank.)

REFLECTING ON THE CRISIS

With the current economic turmoil, people may turn away from giving. When money is tight, it is hard to care about the suffering of those living so far away. You may be struggling to make ends meet yourself. But do you ever wonder if you will have food to eat tomorrow? Have you ever tried to survive on just one meal every few days? Can you imagine watching your child starve to death? The truth is that although there is a great deal of suffering in America, we rarely experience true starvation. There are so many safety nets in the form of shelters, food stamps, soup kitchens, etc. Very few of us know what it is like to be completely dependent on our own crops and have to watch our children suffer when the rainfall is scarce or the land fails to produce.

As we begin this Lent season, it is important to remember that we do not give things up for the sake of tradition, ritual, or guilt. We give up so that we may be free to give. We may choose to give up watching TV so that we can use the time saved to tutor kids, or we may give up buying clothes so we can put the money toward helping someone. Part of the sacrifice is often giving our attention to God. When we let go of the things that consume our thoughts and time, we are freed to turn our thoughts toward God. The hope is that as we begin to loosen our grip on our “stuff” and turn our attention toward God, we will be open to sharing more and loving more.

Reflect on the following questions:

- Before starting this study, were you aware that there is a global food crisis? Do you feel motivated to make a difference, or does the crisis seem so immense and distant that it is hard to believe that your efforts will have any impact?
- Have you ever participated in Lent before? If so in what ways? Do you believe it is important to engage in Lent? If so, why?
- Why do you desire to go through this Lenten study?
- Think of something that would be difficult for you to give up during Lent. Why would this be difficult?

ACTION

During this shortened week, create a “Living Simply Jar.” This jar will be referred to often in the weekly action section of this study. Take a jar, coffee can, shoe box, or any other type of container and decorate it however you wish (use pictures, quotes, colorful paper, Scriptures, etc.). Place a marking on it that says “living simply so that others may simply live,” and use it to store money saved during Lent. At the end of Lent, donate the money toward the global food crisis. Consider using the jar throughout the year and donating to the same or different causes each month. This is a fun activity to do on your own or with a family or small group.

WHERE TO GIVE

During this Lenten season, let us turn our eyes toward the global food crisis. Let us reflect on, pray about, and respond to the desperate needs of so many. If you desire to give toward the global food crisis, you’ll want to refer to the “Help Care for Hungry Children” handout, which can be found at the end of this resource. There you will find instructions on how and where to send your donations.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

As preparation for the Easter celebration, consider reflecting on the Stations of the Cross. The stations have been spread out over six weeks, so you can take time each week to reflect, meditate, and pray as you read through the story of Christ’s journey to the cross.

Week One:

- Jesus on the Mount of Olives: Luke 22:39–46
- Jesus, betrayed by Judas, is arrested: Luke 22:47–48

Week Two:

- Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin: Luke 22:66–71
- Peter denies Jesus: Luke 22:54–62

Week Three:

- Jesus is judged by Pilate: Luke 23:13–25
- Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns: Luke 22:63–65; John 19:2–3

Week Four:

- Jesus takes up the cross: Mark 15:20
- Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross: Luke 23:26
- Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem: Luke 23:27–31

Week Five:

- Jesus is crucified: Luke 23:33, 47
- Jesus promises his Kingdom to the good thief: Luke 23:39–43
- Jesus on the cross; his mother and his disciple: John 19:25–27

Week Six:

- Jesus dies on the cross: Luke 23:44–47
- Jesus is placed in the tomb: Luke 23:50–54; Mark 16:1–4