



breadfortheworld  
INSTITUTE

# Ending U.S. Hunger and Poverty by Focusing on Communities Where it's Most Likely

by Marlysa D. Gamblin



Joseph Molteni/Bread for the World

**Bread for the World Institute** provides policy analysis on hunger and poverty, as well as strategies to end it.  
[bread.org/institute-insights](http://bread.org/institute-insights)

**“Ending hunger in America is a goal that is literally within our grasp.”**

— **Jeff Bridges**,  
founder, End Hunger Network

## SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS

Some people in the United States are at least twice as likely as the general U.S. population to be hungry and/or experiencing poverty. They belong to some of the country's major demographic groups: African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, households led by single women, undocumented immigrants, and people returning from prison. The United States has made a new commitment to leaving no one behind as the country moves toward a goal of ending hunger and poverty by 2030. Accomplishing this goal will require increased support for these groups, which is outlined in the recommendations below. To reduce hunger and poverty among these communities, Congress and the administration should:

- Prioritize communities most affected by hunger and poverty
- Strengthen the U.S. safety net
- Support policies that protect workers and enable them to become financially secure
- Eliminate “concentrated poverty” by 2025

*Marlysa D. Gamblin is domestic advisor for policy and programs, specific populations at Bread for the World Institute.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Our Context</b> .....	3
<b>What do we mean by hunger?</b> .....	3
■ <b>Table 1:</b> People in specific groups and communities are consistently at least twice as likely as the U.S. population as a whole to live below the poverty line and to be food insecure .....	3
<b>Section I. Understanding who is at greater risk</b> .....	4
Female-Headed Households .....	4
African Americans .....	4
People Returning from Incarceration and Others Involved with the Criminal Justice System .....	5
Latinos .....	5
Undocumented Immigrants .....	5
Native Americans .....	6
■ <b>Figure 1:</b> Building self-reliance and strong families .....	6
<b>Section II. Understanding why these populations and communities are most at risk of hunger and poverty</b> .....	7
■ <b>Figure 2:</b> Women's shares of the low-wage and overall workforces .....	8
■ <b>Figure 3:</b> Women earn less than men at every education level .....	8
A higher likelihood of working in low-wage jobs with no or limited benefits .....	8
Less access to quality, affordable health care and housing .....	9
■ <b>Figure 4:</b> Median weekly earnings of women, by race/ethnicity and level of education, 2015 .....	9
■ <b>Figure 5:</b> University of Washington study found that 70 percent of doctors who took a racial-bias test had a preference for white patients over black patients .....	9
■ <b>Table 2:</b> Trends in wages for black and white workers between 1979 and 2015 .....	9
Higher likelihood of being stopped, ticketed, or arrested .....	10
■ <b>Figure 6:</b> Student arrests .....	10
Less access to credit and other reputable financial products .....	11
Recap .....	11
■ <b>Figure 7:</b> Black and white arrests .....	11
<b>Section III. What It Will Take to End Hunger and Poverty in the Communities Most Affected</b> .....	12
Recommendation I. Prioritize communities most affected by hunger and poverty .....	12
Recommendation II. Hire senior officials who have shown commitment to eliminating racial and gender discrimination and disparities .....	13
■ <b>Table 3:</b> Agencies that most need committed and experienced leaders and staff .....	13
Recommendation III. Equip all federal government agencies to better implement and enforce laws against discrimination .....	13
Recommendation IV. Strengthen our current safety net .....	14
Recommendation V. Support policies that help workers become financially secure and protect them from dangerous or hazardous workplaces .....	16
Recommendation VI. Eliminate concentrated poverty by 2025 .....	18
<b>Section IV. Conclusion</b> .....	20

## Our Context

The beginning of the Trump administration and the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress come at a significant time: we now know that it is quite feasible to virtually end global hunger, and sooner than anyone used to believe. By 2030, in fact. Humanity’s ability to accomplish this has been demonstrated by the rapid progress against hunger made in the developing world during the years 1990 to 2015.

Accordingly, in September 2015, the United States and 192 other countries adopted the 2030 Agenda, which includes 17 interrelated Sustainable Development Goals. Two of these are to end extreme poverty and to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition. The administration should now develop a plan to achieve the goals and engage all stakeholders in implementing this plan.

At the heart of the 2030 Agenda and the goals is the principle of leaving no one behind as the world moves forward. A second key principle is to reach the furthest behind first.

From the origins of the United States up to the very recent past, specific events and policies and general public attitudes have shaped today’s reality. Most Americans would agree that some people, groups, and communities have been left behind in the past and largely remain left behind today.

As it turns out, people in specific groups and communities are consistently at least twice as

likely as the U.S. population as a whole to live below the poverty line and to be food insecure. (Food insecure is the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) term for a person or household that does not have regular, reliable access to the foods needed for good health. See Table 1.). These include households led by single mothers, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, undocumented immigrants, and people with criminal records.

Getting to zero hunger requires that we pay special attention to these six groups and provide targeted resources to ensure that not only do they catch up, but that they become far less vulnerable to being left behind again in the future.

## What do we mean by hunger?

The U.S. government does not use the term “hunger,” but it defines and regularly measures the incidence of two conditions related to it. One is “low food security,” or not always being sure of having enough money to pay for food. The other is “very low food security,” skipping meals or not eating for a whole day or longer because there is not enough money for food. The term “food insecurity” refers to households in either group. Bread for the World considers food insecurity to be hunger.

Americans frequently interpret “hunger” or “food insecurity” to mean that someone does not have enough food. And, of course, it’s true that not having enough food is hunger. But the two terms also encompass not just the number of calories available to people, but the nutrients they consume. Since nutritious foods tend to cost more and may be harder to access in low-income neighborhoods, people who live below the poverty line are too often forced to choose cheap foods that may be filling but do not provide the nutrients needed for good health. Their health—especially the health of children—can and does suffer as a result.

TABLE 1: **People in specific groups and communities are consistently at least twice as likely as the U.S. population as a whole to live below the poverty line and to be food insecure.**

	General Population	Female-Headed Households	African American Households	Native American Households	Latino Households	Undocumented Immigrant Households	Returning Citizens Households
<b>Food Insecurity</b>	12.7 percent	30.3 percent	21.5 percent	23 percent <sup>1</sup>	19.1 percent	24 percent <sup>2</sup>	91 percent <sup>3</sup>
<b>Poverty</b>	13.5 percent	30.4 percent	24.1 percent	22 percent	21.4 percent	Not Collected by Census	Not Collected by Census

Sources: Households Food Security in the United States in 2015. United States Department of Agriculture. September 2016; Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015. U.S. Census Bureau. Issued September 2016.

**“42.2 million Americans live in food insecure households, including 29.1 million adults and 13.1 million children.”**

---

**THE FIRST STEP** to ending hunger is ending food insecurity. However, eliminating hunger for good means that every household (1) has the means to purchase affordable healthy, fresh, and nutrient-rich foods for themselves and their children **while still being able to pay for safe housing, adequate health insurance, and other needed items**, (2) has access to fully-operating grocery stores (not corner stores) with healthy, fresh, and nutrient-rich foods in their neighborhoods that are within one mile (for urban areas) and 10 miles (for rural areas) of where they live, (3) has the means (income and savings) and access to other supports (quality health care, housing, etc.) to guard against experiencing hunger in the future, and (4) has access to a safety net when they go through rough times such as losing a job or becoming seriously ill. Ending hunger requires investing in people so they can grow to their fullest potential rather than being stifled by barriers that create and exacerbate food insecurity.

---

In this paper, we look at the most foundational level: do people have enough money to support themselves day to day and month to month? We must focus on concrete questions: how can people earn a decent living, buy enough nutritious food, have access to affordable health care, and so on. For more on the additional efforts that will be needed to complete the job of ending U.S. hunger and food insecurity, please see Bread for the World Institute's 2014 Hunger Report, *Ending Hunger in America*.



Laura Elizabeth Pohl for Bread for the World

Barbie Izquierdo with her son, Aidan. Barbie, a Philadelphia native and mother of two, has firsthand experience of hunger and poverty.

## Section I. Understanding who is at greater risk

### FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

More than 4.7 million low-income families are led by single women. Single mothers and their children are far more vulnerable to hunger and food insecurity than the U.S. population as a whole. Large numbers of jobs in the U.S. economy do not pay enough to support a family, and women are more likely to hold the lowest-paid jobs. Beyond this, the evidence suggests that there is a gender pay gap that cannot be fully explained by factors such as working longer hours or having more years of experience. Low pay, together with the soaring prices of housing and child care, explains why the food insecurity rate of single mothers and their children is 30.3 percent—far higher than the 12.7 percent rate of the whole U.S. population.

Households headed by single women who are African American, Native American, and/or Latina confront racial bias as well, which further lowers the average pay of workers in these groups. We don't have complete, publicly available food insecurity data that is disaggregated by race. But given the gap between the poverty rates of white single mothers and single mothers of color, we can say that food insecurity rates are higher among female-led African American, Native American, and Latina households than among female-led white households. A conservative estimate of food insecurity for single mothers of color and their children is 35 percent.<sup>4</sup> Remember, food insecurity means that people worry about running out of money for food.

### AFRICAN AMERICANS

African Americans are five times as likely as whites to live in neighborhoods and communities with poverty rates of 40 percent or more.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, concentrated poverty is on the rise. According to Bread for the World Institute's 2017 Hunger Report, the growth of concentrated poverty is due in large part to a resurgence of segregation in housing by race and ethnicity.

High-poverty communities have fewer job opportunities and thus higher unemployment, poorer performing schools, fewer full-service grocery stores and more fast food, more exposure to environmental toxins through substandard housing, and less access to health care and services that facilitate economic mobility. Their far greater likelihood of living in an area of concentrated pov-

erty helps explain why it is more difficult for African American households to make ends meet and put food on the table. As mentioned earlier, African American households are nearly twice as likely to live with food insecurity and poverty as American households in general (21.5 percent are considered food insecure, compared to 12.7 percent overall, and 24.1 percent live below the poverty line, compared to 13.5 percent overall).

## PEOPLE RETURNING FROM INCARCERATION AND OTHERS INVOLVED WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

In the past, some people thought of “ex-offenders” as a small group outside the mainstream of society. If this was ever accurate, it certainly is no longer true. The number of people who are or have been incarcerated has exploded since 1980. The facts are that *one in three adults in the United States has some type of criminal record*, and 2.3 million people are currently incarcerated. Every year, about 600,000 people are released from prison or jail. Since the vast majority of people who are currently incarcerated will ultimately rejoin society, many people believe that a more realistic and constructive way to see these hundreds of thousands of mostly nonviolent ex-offenders is as returning citizens.

The link between hunger and people in prison may not be immediately obvious, but there are several connections. The families of people who are incarcerated are far more vulnerable to hunger and food security—and it’s estimated that more than two-thirds of these families include children. Without the imprisoned person’s income, it is much harder to make ends meet. The children of the rapidly rising number of women in prison are perhaps the most vulnerable of all. Later, when people are released from prison or jail, nearly all immediately become extremely vulnerable to hunger themselves. A study by the National Institutes of Health found that 91 percent of individuals returning to the community reported being food insecure.

People of color, particularly African Americans, are more likely to be stopped, ticketed, and/or arrested than whites. They are also far more likely to be incarcerated, and for longer terms, than whites convicted of the same offenses. This is why inmates, people who have been released, and their families are all disproportionately people of color, and it is an important factor in why communities of color are disproportionately food insecure and poor.



Alma Hunt is a returning citizen in Washington, DC. Through the Jubilee Housing and Reentry Program, Alma and others returning to the community got a second chance for a job, a place to live, and greater economic security.

## LATINOS

There are 55 million Latinos in the United States, the majority of whom were born in this country. Others were born in Mexico, Central America, or South America. As a group, Latinos are more likely to be food insecure than others in the United States. The national food insecurity rate is 12.7 percent, while 19.1 percent of Latino-headed households are food-insecure. This number is quite a bit higher for female-headed Latino households—35 percent<sup>6</sup> of these households are considered food insecure.

Latinos are also more likely to live in high-poverty communities with fewer opportunities to obtain high paying jobs with good benefits. In addition, they are more exposed to environmental toxins in the places they work and live, which contribute to poorer health outcomes, pushing many deeper into hunger.

While hunger and poverty are more common among Latino citizens and permanent residents than other households in America, they are less vulnerable to being food insecure than those who are undocumented. At least 24 percent of households headed by an undocumented person are considered food insecure.

## UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

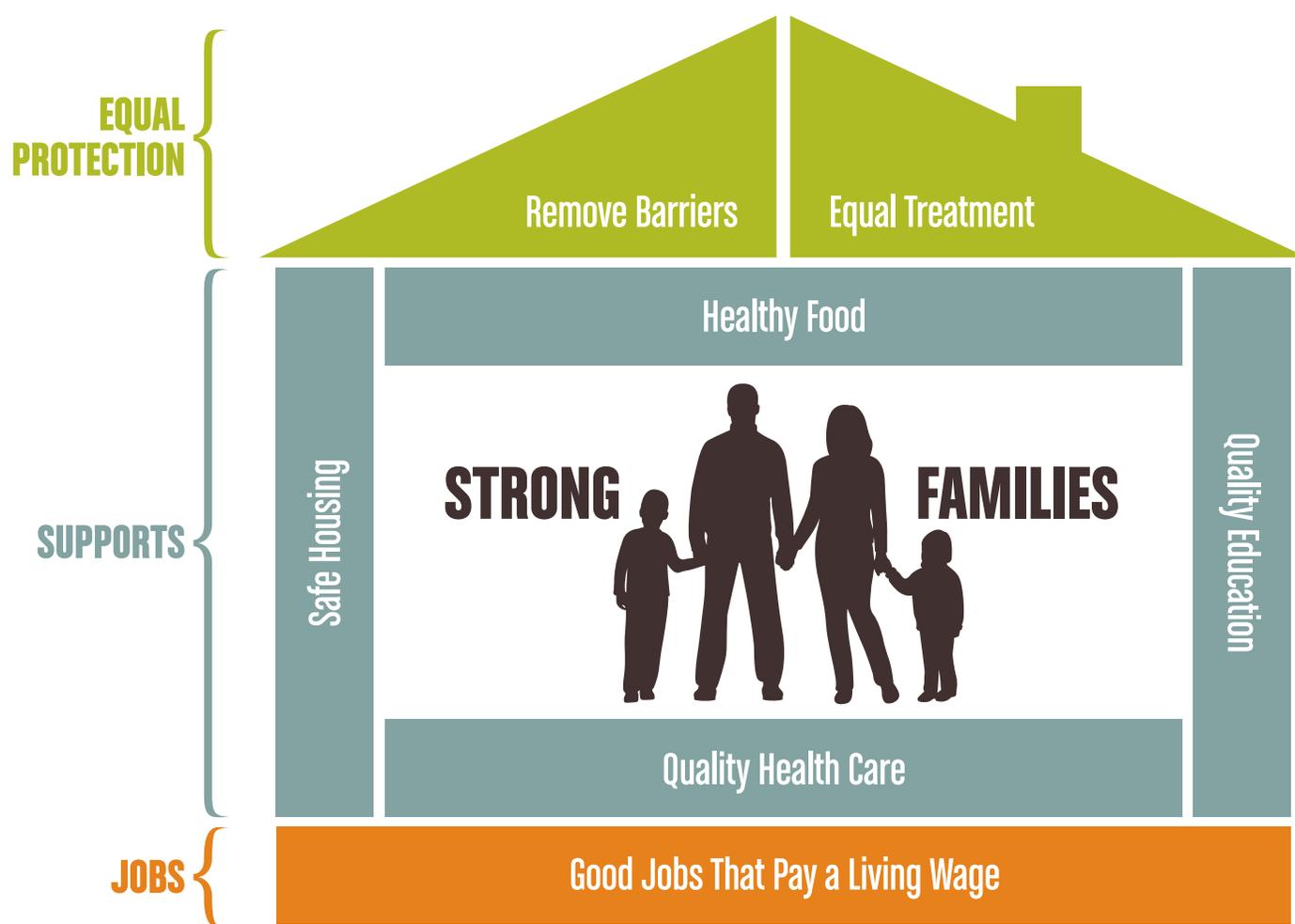
Between 11 million and 12 million undocumented immigrants live in the United States. Undocumented immigrants include people of brown, black, and Asian racial backgrounds, and are from many places, including Mexico, Central America, the Philippines, India, and more. Although they contribute significantly to the economy, including by paying taxes, undocumented people face legal barriers to working and, often, discrimination based on racial, gender, and immigration status as well. Most employers cannot legally hire them, which means that it is also very difficult for undocumented

workers to change jobs or to negotiate higher pay and better working conditions. The Pew Research Center found that the food insecurity rate of immigrants as a group (including documented and undocumented) is 24 percent<sup>7</sup>—about twice the rate of the entire U.S. population. Unfortunately, the U.S. government does not collect and analyze data on undocumented residents as a separate category. But with limited employment opportunities and few protections under the law, the food insecurity rate is very likely higher for undocumented immigrants than the 24 percent rate of immigrants as a whole.

### NATIVE AMERICANS

About 6.6 million people in the United States are Native American. In every state with a sizeable Native American population, Native Americans have hunger and food insecurity rates that are generally higher than those of other groups. Recent studies find that 60 percent of counties with a Native American majority have very high rates of food insecurity.<sup>8</sup> Low education levels, high unemployment rates, and poorer health contribute to high levels of food insecurity among Native Americans. Native Americans who live on reservations are often in areas of concentrated poverty that have very limited transportation services for school or work. According to a study done by Mathematica, 23 percent of the U.S. Native American population is food-insecure—almost twice the national average.<sup>9</sup> Many reservations have food deserts (areas far from any supermarket), which limit their residents' access to adequate healthy food.

FIGURE 1: **Building self-reliance and strong families**



Sources: Households Food Security in the United States in 2015. United States Department of Agriculture. September 2016; Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015. U.S. Census Bureau. Issued September 2016.

## Section II. Understanding why these populations and communities are most at risk of hunger and poverty

Communities with disproportionately higher hunger and poverty levels encounter barriers to accessing nutritious foods as well as barriers to quality jobs, education, and health care; affordable housing; and reputable financial products. Each of these barriers increases the risk of hunger, food insecurity, and poverty.

An integral part of ending hunger is that able-bodied people will become self-reliant. There are, of course, exceptions—for example, elderly people. These people may need to access social programs that help meet their basic needs.

Figure 1 illustrates the major elements families need to be able to support themselves.

The diagram illustrates what it takes to be self-reliant. While most can agree that strong protections, supports, and jobs can help a family move toward self-reliance, unequal protection and treatment can affect key areas in a worker's life and undermine this goal, leading to higher rates of hunger and poverty among the six identified communities. People from these communities are more likely to have low-wage jobs, less likely to have access to high-quality health care, and often have

**Most people can agree that everyone who can be self-reliant should have this as a goal. Being self-reliant means that people can provide for themselves and their families without publicly funded safety net programs. It includes being food secure and being able to save for the future.**

**Three elements that are essential if individuals and families are to become self-reliant are equal protection under the law, adequate supports, and good jobs.**

### EQUAL PROTECTION

Lack of equal protection is a main reason that communities experience high levels of hunger and poverty. These communities either face barriers (e.g., legal barriers to hiring a returning citizen) or experience unequal treatment (e.g., discrimination) that make it difficult to provide for their families and become self-reliant. A lack of equal protection prevents communities from attaining quality jobs, housing, and education, and weakens their ability to provide for themselves in the future.

Although some forms of unequal treatment are illegal, longstanding practices sometimes recur. For example, an employer may deny work to certain people because of conscious or unconscious bias. Having hiring practices that reflect equal treatment can help workers and their families. Supporting policies and practices that remove barriers and help ensure that everyone is treated equally can strengthen family units and help our country move forward.

### SUPPORTS

In order to succeed, all people need nutritious food and quality education, health care, and housing. Low-income families and workers also need affordable and accessible transportation and child care to thrive. Ensuring that these supports are in low-income neighborhoods, easy for residents to get to, and affordable for residents to purchase can help strengthen the family's ability to provide for itself. Making all of these available

in low-income neighborhoods may be challenging, but it is absolutely necessary to ending hunger.

Strong family and community ties, which can be strengthened by other kinds of supports, are invaluable. Household family units and community family units (neighbors, community organizations, and faith groups) are important in connecting both adults and children to resources and opportunities that can help families move toward self-reliance.

### JOBS

It is not enough to have a job; the job needs to pay enough to provide for a family and save for the future. Very few low-wage jobs meet workers' basic needs and enable families to be self-reliant. In this paper, we use the term "quality" jobs to mean jobs that pay a livable wage and include benefits. Benefits are essential to a quality job because without paid leave and health insurance, for example, workers and their families are vulnerable if someone gets sick. What might otherwise be a minor problem, such as a child who has a fever and cannot go to child care, can lead to parents' taking unpaid leave or even losing their job for not coming to work. Taking the child to a pediatrician if necessary is an additional expense that, without health insurance, the worker alone must pay. Losing a job, bringing home a smaller paycheck, and/or needing to pay medical bills can each cause a family to become food insecure.

fewer opportunities to save for the future. Ensuring that the supports in the diagram are in place can reduce food insecurity and allow more families to become self-reliant.

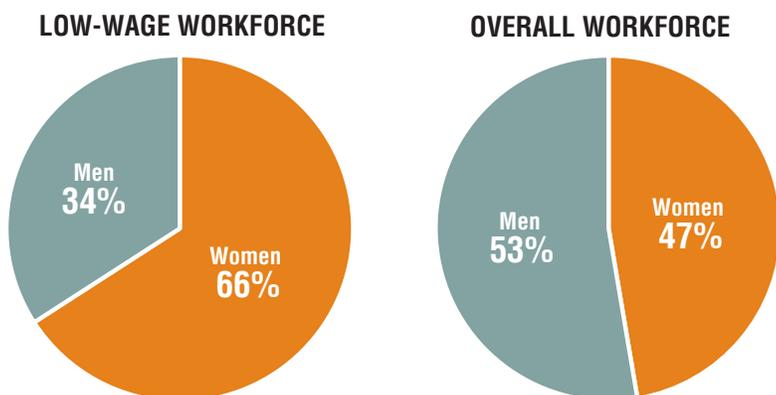
The next section looks at how barriers and unequal treatment make it more difficult for people to be confident that they can afford to put food on the table every day.

*\*NOTE: Due to space and data constraints, this section does not refer specifically to every group at higher risk. We use the term “people of color” to include Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinos.*

### A HIGHER LIKELIHOOD OF WORKING IN LOW-WAGE JOBS WITH NO OR LIMITED BENEFITS

Implicit biases based on race, gender, or citizenship status contribute to the fact that people of color and/or women are more likely to hold low-wage jobs. Unequal treatment means, for example,

FIGURE 2: Women’s shares of the low-wage and overall workforces<sup>10</sup>



Source: NWLC calculations based on IPUMS-CPS (2013). Figures are for employed workers. The low-wage workforce is defined here as occupations with median wages of \$10.10 or less per hour based on BLS, Occupational Employment Statistics.

that many women have jobs that are highly segregated. One result is that women are the majority of workers in the 10 lowest-wage occupations in the United States, which include domestic work, food preparation, and personal care services. Figure 2 shows that while women are 47 percent of the overall workforce, they make up 66 percent of the low-wage workforce.

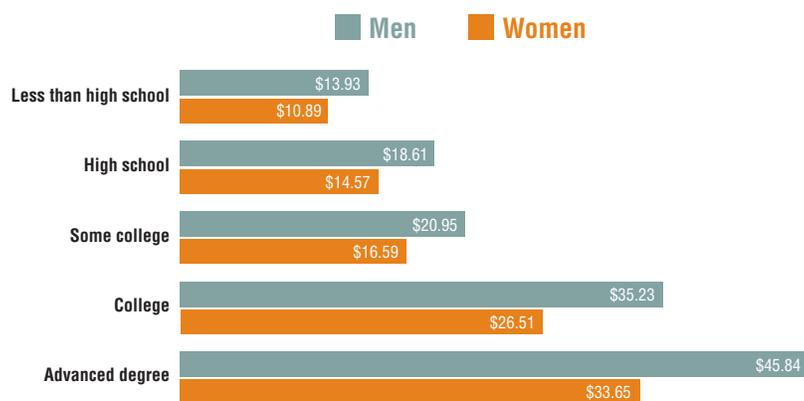
Women also represent the majority of workers in an especially disadvantaged category of low-wage jobs, known as “tip-paid” jobs. Workers in these jobs can legally be paid as little as \$2.13 an hour and are expected to earn the remainder in tips.<sup>11</sup>

The cost of living for the average U.S. family of four is more than \$60,000 a year. A single woman working full-time, year-round for minimum wage (\$7.25 an hour) has a gross income of about \$15,000. It would be nearly impossible for her to support herself and a child by working 40 hours a week. It’s even harder to imagine that a tip-paid worker, paid \$2.13 an hour and reliant on tips to reach the minimum wage, could make ends meet. A single mother of three children working for minimum wage would need to work 130 hours a week just to get by. Tip-based workers would likely need to work even more.

The facts about minimum-wage work and who fills these jobs help explain why food insecurity is much higher among female-headed households than in the United States overall—30.3 percent compared to 12.7 percent.

Women are paid less for the same work than men. As mentioned earlier, this is a reality which, although illegal, has been slow to change. On average, women are paid about 80 cents for every

FIGURE 3: Women earn less than men at every education level  
Average hourly wages, by gender and education, 2015



Source: EPI analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group microdata

dollar paid to men with the same amount of education.<sup>12</sup> This is true at all income levels, but, of course, we are concerned here with women in low-wage jobs, because for them, unequal pay can mean being pushed into hunger and food insecurity. Figure 3 shows these disparities at every education level.

When women confront these inequalities, so do their children. Lower wages mean less healthy food in the household and fewer opportunities available to children. The situation is worse for women without partners, since they only have one income.

While all women confront gender discrimination, Latino and African American women are also impacted by the added layer of racial discrimination, which significantly weakens their ability to provide for their families. Figure 4 shows the impact of racial discrimination on low-wage

mothers of color who are working to provide for their children.

People at equal educational levels, as mentioned earlier, are not protected equally in the workplace; certain groups are paid less for the same work. Men are paid more than women with the same educational background. White people are paid more than people of color with the same educational background. Women of color are paid less than men of their racial or ethnic group, and they are also paid less than white women with the same educational background.

On average, African American women, Latinas, and Native American women are paid between 55 and 60 cents for every dollar white men are paid. Particularly for low-wage workers, this makes a big difference. If not for racial and gender discrimination, female-headed families of color would have more than \$7,000 a year in additional income to help meet their basic needs. To earn as much as their white male counterparts, Latinas would need to work an additional 10 months,<sup>13</sup> Native American women an additional 9 months,<sup>14</sup> and African American women an additional 8 months.<sup>15</sup>

Table 2 shows the trends in wages for black and white workers between 1979 and 2015.

African Americans' average hourly wage has seen little change in 40 years—an additional \$2 an hour on average. White workers received an increase of nearly \$6 an hour over the same time period. **Notably, the 2015 hourly wage for black workers is still less than the 1979 wage for white workers—\$1.13 an hour less.**<sup>16</sup> It is less even after 40 years of increases in the cost of living. After disaggregating the data by educational level and career field, the Economic Policy Council reported that it found racial pay gaps at each educational level, including those with college degrees.

Looking at all this data, it is not surprising that there are higher levels of hunger, food insecurity, and poverty among families of color.

### LESS ACCESS TO QUALITY, AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE AND HOUSING

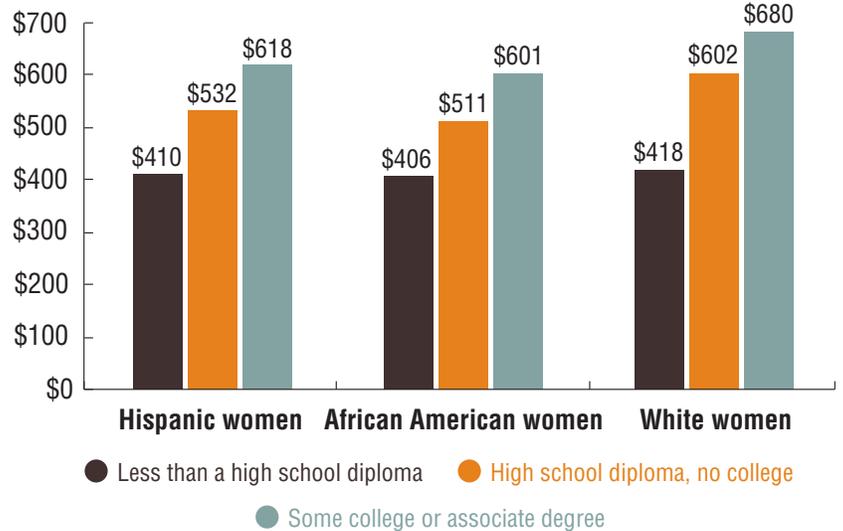
Figure 5 shows that households confront unequal treatment in the healthcare system. Unequal treatment can contribute to a greater likelihood of medical problems in groups and communities that are most affected by hunger, food insecurity, and poverty. To end hunger and poverty for these communities, it is necessary to address the implicit biases that impact the care that U.S. workers receive based on factors such as race and ethnicity.

FIGURE 5:

**University of Washington study found that 70 PERCENT of doctors who took a racial-bias test had a preference for white patients over black patients.**

Sources: <http://www.seattlepi.com/local/article/Doctors-treated-black-patients-worse-in-UW-study-3419063.php> and <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300621>

FIGURE 4: **Median weekly earnings of women, by race/ethnicity and level of education, 2015**

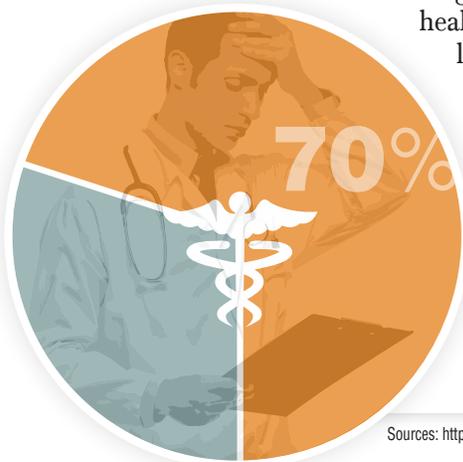


Note: Based on median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers, ages 25 and older, 2015 annual averages  
Source: The American Association of University Women (AAUW).

TABLE 2: **Trends in wages for black and white workers between 1979 and 2015**

Year	Average Wage by Race		Average Wage Gap
	White	Black	Black-White wage gap
1979	\$19.62	\$16.07	18.1%
1989	\$19.97	\$15.80	20.9%
1995	\$20.52	\$16.16	21.2%
2000	\$22.63	\$17.57	22.4%
2007	\$23.82	\$18.13	23.9%
2015	\$25.22	\$18.49	26.7%

Sources: Black-White Wage Gaps Expand with Rising Wage Inequality, Economic Policy Institute.



These communities also lack quality care that acknowledges the root causes of racial health disparities. Access alone has little effect on resolving some of the medical conditions faced by low-income communities of color. Quality of care that is not biased and takes into account the social determinants of health is also important. For example, a young child of color is treated for asthma,

but the doctor is unable to address the underlying factors that cause children of color to be more likely to have asthma than white children. So while the child can be treated for asthma, he or she will then return to housing that has a higher likelihood of containing lead paint.

In this example, the child has access to health care, but unfortunately lacks the full spectrum of quality treatment, which would address the realities of racial disparities in a holistic way. When the child goes back to a housing unit that

still contains the lead that contributed to the asthma, the prescription from the doctor will not be enough to fully treat his or her condition. Without an acknowledgment of racial disparities (in this case, the greater likelihood of living in substandard and unsafe housing), our health system will not take holistic approaches to address these health disparities—thereby widening them.

### HIGHER LIKELIHOOD OF BEING STOPPED, TICKETED, OR ARRESTED

Figure 6 illustrates the implicit bias that people of color encounter, some as early as preschool. The extremely high rates of suspension, expulsion, and being referred to law enforcement among young children of color are due largely to implicit racial bias. In a separate study, the Yale Child Study Center recently conducted a study of the root causes of such bias. Participants in the study were asked to watch videos featuring students of different races and genders and then to identify students with “challenging” behavior.

Forty-two percent of the teachers in the study identified black children, particularly black boys, as having behavioral problems. But in fact, the video did not show any of the children exhibiting problematic behavior. These results showed how the educators’ implicit bias against black students led them to consider their behavior more problematic than the same behavior among white students.

Racial bias also contributes to higher in-school suspension and school-arrest rates for students of color. Both of these make it more likely that students will be arrested and incarcerated or otherwise punished by the criminal justice system, not just their school.

To complicate matters, unequal protection results in the over-patrolling of various lower-income communities, which also increases the likelihood of these same students and their parents coming into contact with law enforcement.

Figure 7 shows examples of how racial bias contributes to higher arrest rates and longer sentences for black individuals compared to whites.

Unequal treatment by law enforcement can have severe and disproportionate financial repercussions for low-income households. If a low-wage worker is being held for questioning, whether on reasonable suspicion or not, and is unable to start a work shift on time, he or she could lose the job. The average household with an incarcerated family member owes about \$14,000 in court costs and fees—a total more than half the annual income of a family living at the federal poverty line.<sup>19</sup> The consequences of having traffic violation fines or other tickets can also be more severe for low-income families—taking money right out of the grocery store budget and pushing a family deeper into food insecurity.

Many low-wage African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos do not have employer-provided health coverage and have few resources to cover medical bills. **One in two** African Americans charges out-of-pocket medical costs on a credit card,<sup>17</sup> **one in three** Native Americans under 65 is uninsured, and **one in four** Latinos under 65 is uninsured.<sup>18</sup>

FIGURE 6:

African American students are  
**3½ times**  
more likely to be suspended or  
expelled by law enforcement than  
white students, for the same offense.



More than  
**70 percent**

of students involved in school-related  
arrests or referred to law enforcement  
were Latino or Black.

Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.

## LESS ACCESS TO CREDIT AND OTHER REPUTABLE FINANCIAL PRODUCTS

While the self-reliance diagram on page 6 did not mention this specifically, communities most affected by hunger and poverty live disproportionately in areas targeted by predatory lenders. Neighborhoods are saturated with financial products that take advantage of people’s poverty and immediate need—whether that’s a cash advance to pay rent, check-cashing services because a worker does not have a bank account, or something else. These loans and services come with high interest rates and other fees—making it nearly impossible for a low-wage worker to pay off loans without incurring charges that can double, triple, or quadruple the amount of the original loan.

For example, if a low-wage worker needed to pay an unexpected medical bill of \$375, but did not receive her paycheck until two weeks after the bill was due, a “payday lender” might charge \$50 in interest every two weeks. Since she also has other bills to pay, including rent, she is forced to pay off this loan in monthly installments. As a result of the very high interest charges that continue to accrue month after month, the original loan of \$375, might add up to \$875 by the time it is paid off—she ends up paying \$500 in interest. It’s not hard to see how substandard financial “services” add to the obstacles that keep families in poverty.

Issac, 3 years old, is the son of Heather Rude-Turner. Heather, a full-time worker, says that filing for the EITC helps her support her two children.

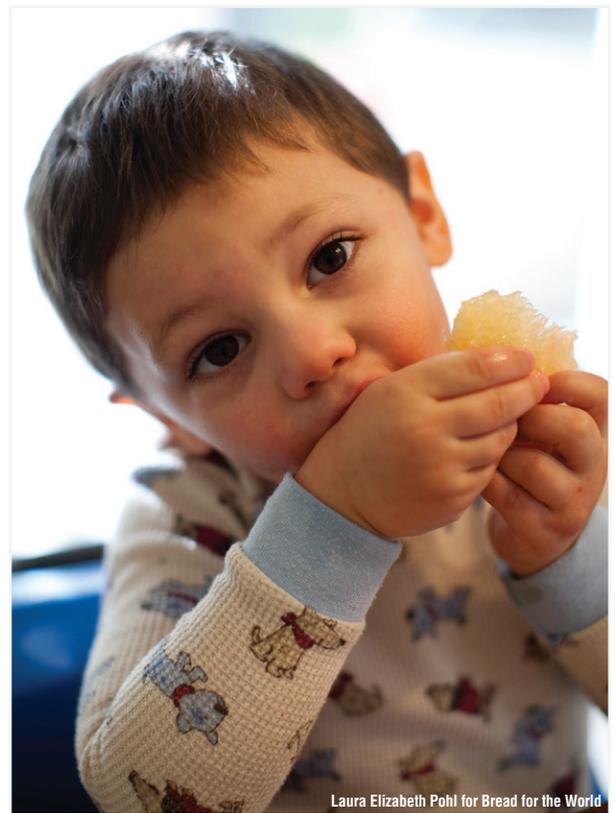
People of color are more likely to live in areas with poverty rates of 20 percent or higher and therefore are more at risk of being targeted by predatory lenders. Among people living in poverty, Latinos are more than three times as likely to live in such communities as whites, and blacks are almost five times as likely. Roughly two-thirds of African Americans and Native Americans below the poverty line live in high-poverty counties.<sup>21</sup>

### RECAP

Unequal protection under the law and unequal treatment in practice, whether intentional or unintentional, limits the progress that people most affected by hunger and food insecurity can make.<sup>22</sup> Unequal treatment in the labor force makes it harder for parents to earn enough to support their children. Unequal health care makes people more vulnerable to illness and the loss of income or even employment that often accompanies it.

It is particularly difficult for people who fall into more than one of these groups—e.g., single mothers of color. Being treated unequally for one aspect of a person’s identity can hurt a family’s ability to become self-sufficient. The analysis above highlights how living in the “intersections” of two or more of these groups (in this case, Native American and in a female-headed household) increases the probability of experiencing deeper and more chronic levels of hunger and poverty. These households are confronting unequal treatment based on two or more aspects of their identity (race, gender, status).

To end hunger in America, we need to acknowledge that people are treated differently based on race and gender. Without this acknowledgement, it is not possible to design policies and practices that are effective in removing the obstacles that unequal treatment and discrimination have helped to create.

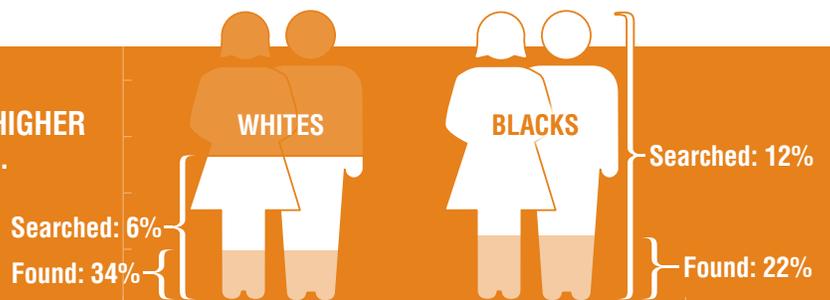


Laura Elizabeth Pohl for Bread for the World

FIGURE 7:

### BLACKS ARE ARRESTED AND SENTENCED AT HIGHER RATES THAN WHITES FROM THE SAME CRIME.

Whites had a **6 percent** chance of being searched and a **34 percent** chance that something illegal would be found, while blacks had a **12 percent** chance of being searched and a **22 percent** chance that something illegal would be found.



Source: <http://sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Black-Lives-Matter.pdf>

## Section III. What It Will Take to End Hunger and Poverty in the Communities Most Affected

Everyone in our country should have decent jobs, good health care and education, safe housing, and access to sufficient nutritious food. Recommendations to help achieve this vision must take into account the factors that have led to higher levels of food insecurity and poverty among women and communities of color.

Here we offer six recommendations that would enable the administration and Congress to begin to tackle hunger, food insecurity, and poverty among these groups. Embedded in these recommendations are more specific measures that address the unique challenges facing undocumented immigrants and people with criminal records.

All six recommendations are undergirded by the principles of the 2030 Agenda, particularly the motto of “leave no one behind.” Leaving no one behind requires both supporting communities most affected by hunger and poverty, and prioritizing the development of solutions to the root causes of these problems.

We recognize that these six recommendations alone will not permanently end hunger and poverty among these groups. Rather, these recommendations are the most pressing and, if implemented concurrently, will serve as an initial step toward significantly reducing hunger and poverty among communities most affected

and eventually achieving the 2030 goals.

*\*NOTE: All recommendations in this brief will support all the communities of color mentioned. However, due to issues of sovereignty and their relationship with the federal government, more specialized support will be needed to effectively reduce hunger and poverty in Native American communities.*

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO END HUNGER AND POVERTY AMONG COMMUNITIES MOST AFFECTED

- Recommendation I. Prioritize communities most affected by hunger and poverty
- Recommendation II. Hire senior officials committed to ending racial and gender discrimination and disparities
- Recommendation III. Equip all federal agencies to better implement and enforce existing anti-discrimination laws
- Recommendation IV. Strengthen the U.S. safety net
- Recommendation V. Support policies that protect workers and enable them to become financially secure
- Recommendation VI. Eliminate “concentrated poverty” by 2025

#### RECOMMENDATION I.

#### Prioritize communities most affected by hunger and poverty

The first recommendation focuses on shaping anti-hunger and anti-poverty efforts that place communities most affected at the forefront. Each component of these initiatives and policies from the administration and Congress should consider the barriers that face particular groups and communities. For example, communities most affected by hunger and poverty are more likely to be located in food deserts (areas with no full-service supermarkets). An initiative to end food deserts is likely to have several components. One of these might be to end USDA’s practice of counting corner stores as grocery stores even though they don’t carry fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables. This would make it easier to identify all food deserts. Another component might be to assess whether grocery stores are adequately connected with public transportation and, if not, what improvements could be made. A further idea might be to set up a program that provides supermarket or grocery companies with supports to open stores in low-income communities.

The most important aspect of the food desert initiative or any other is the principle of properly understanding the specific barriers of a particular community by looking holistically at the community and putting its needs first when planning programs. In addition, the administration should assess the impact of each measure on reducing hunger and poverty, and the results of these assessments should be made publicly available.

## RECOMMENDATION II.

### Hire senior officials who have shown commitment to eliminating racial and gender discrimination and disparities

Putting strong teams in place, and implementing the steps within this recommendation, will help the country reach the ideal of equitable treatment for all.

While many Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries of this administration have already been selected, agency heads should be asked to hire senior staff who share a commitment to ending racial and gender discrimination and disparities. Applicants should be assessed by their prior work experience in areas related to the job description as well as by any demonstration of their engagement during their career in ending racial and gender inequality in their respective fields. Agency heads should also hire senior officials committed to this vision in their respective agencies' legal teams, such as the Office of the General Counsel, the Office of Civil Rights, and other enforcement offices.

While ultimately, all federal government leaders and staff whose work impacts people most affected by hunger and poverty should be committed to equity and to ending hunger and food insecurity, Table 3 shows some particular agencies that most need committed and experienced leaders and staff.

TABLE 3: Agencies that most need committed and experienced leaders and staff

Agency
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Labor
Department of Education
Department of Justice
Department of Transportation
Department of Treasury
Department of Agriculture
Department of Homeland Security
All federal judges
The Environmental Protection Agency
The Office of Management and Budget

## RECOMMENDATION III.

### Equip all federal government agencies to better implement and enforce laws against discrimination

The significant size and stubborn persistence of racial and gender wage gaps show that it is still very necessary to strengthen enforcement of the existing legal protections for workers who are female and/or people of color.

To get to zero hunger among populations that currently have the highest rates, government staff and agencies as a whole need to understand both the concept of equity and how to apply it to reduce hunger and poverty. This will require that federal agencies and staff be fully equipped with the tools needed to: (1) understand and identify racial and gender inequality, (2) create policies and programs which dismantle these inequalities, and (3) enforce existing anti-discrimination laws in all sectors, including labor, housing, education, and health.

The recommendations below encourage the administration to create systems that identify disparities, train agency staff in developing supportive policies, and find alternatives to policies that potentially exacerbate disparities.

- **Require federal agencies and contractors to conduct pay equity audits and to work with states and private employers to develop and adopt similar processes.** One model might be Minnesota,<sup>23</sup> where gender pay audits of their public sector workers are mandated, once every few years. They identify where pay disparities exist and how large they are. Then, officials develop a plan to reduce them. In fact, women who work for the Minnesota state government are now paid on average 89 percent of what male peers are paid. That is a 20 percentage point improvement since 1976 when the state initiated the Pay Equity Act. It is also almost 10 percentage points higher than the current national average.<sup>24</sup>

Federal agencies and federal contractors should expand these kinds of audits and follow-up plans to include both gender and race/ethnicity, and refer to any lessons learned from the experiences of Minnesota and other states that have implemented these strategies. The next step will be for the federal government to create incentives for private employers and state legislatures to also conduct audits for gender and racial/ethnic pay equity. Some potential ways to accomplish this include initiating an incentive program, passing formal legislation, or incorporating equity audits into existing regulations.



Laura Elizabeth Pohl for Bread for the World

Arlene Barela, mother of two in southern California, writes letters to Congress to advocate for legislation that fights hunger and poverty.

- **The administration should mandate training in all federal agencies to understand race and gender biases and how these biases contribute to hunger, food insecurity, and poverty.** Both civil servants and political appointees should receive training that is contextualized to the agency where they work. This is critical because these staff propose, analyze, and implement policies that can either improve or worsen the economic and social situations of people and communities at greater risk of hunger. Agencies and individual staff who design, oversee, and implement policies and programs that most directly impact low-income families, communities of color, and women should receive ongoing training.
- **Each agency should identify policies and practices that either ignore or exacerbate racial or gender inequalities and disparities.** A team in each agency should be tasked with listing these and grouping them by priority. The next step is to begin the process of updating or replacing these regulations. Agencies should be accountable for implementing these plans and reporting on their progress.
- **Enforce the existing anti-discrimination laws in every sector,** including but not limited to employment, criminal justice, health, housing, and financial services. All allegations of violations should be thoroughly investigated by neutral parties.

An example of an existing law that, with increased enforcement, could significantly reduce hunger and poverty among many communities, is Title VII of the Civil Rights Law of 1964. This law prohibits discrimination in the workforce based on race, color, gender, or ethnic origin. If Title VII were more aggressively enforced, there would ultimately be less segregation in jobs, greater equality in wages, and improved food security.

Another example of an existing anti-discrimination law that is not vigorously enforced is Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. Instances of discrimination in employment, housing, criminal justice, or other programs and activities that fall under Title VI could put the responsible office or organization in jeopardy of losing federal funding. Increased enforcement of this law would bolster progress toward equal protection for many families and communities—effectively lowering hunger and poverty rates among these households.

#### RECOMMENDATION IV.

#### Strengthen our current safety net

Safety net programs provide additional support to families facing difficult times. A job loss, the death of a breadwinner, or a serious illness are just three of many examples of times people may need extra help. Safety net programs also provide for elders, people with disabilities, and others who are no longer expected or able to work.

The goal is to help families become self-reliant. But an economic downturn, cancer diagnosis, tornado, or other factors outside a person's control can derail anyone's individual efforts. People must have their basic needs met, both as a matter of human rights and the responsibility of a wealthy society, and as a practical matter if they are to get the education and skills that will enable them to get jobs that support a family.

Until families have the supports of good jobs that pay a living wage and access to affordable housing options, healthy food, and responsive health care, it will be vital to strengthen the programs in our nation's safety net to act as building blocks for families who need additional support.

In 2014, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) kept 10 million people out

of poverty, roughly half of them children. SNAP is the most important safety net program for several million people who live in extreme poverty, meaning less than \$2 per person per day in cash income. Counting SNAP benefits as in-kind income reduces the extreme poverty rate by half.

SNAP benefits are not enough to last the whole month, even when families skimp on nutritional quality. The lack of affordable healthy foods, and the limited benefits to purchase these nutrient-rich foods, contributes to children having shorter attention spans in school, and to higher obesity rates and poorer health outcomes throughout low-income neighborhoods. Good health and achievement in school contribute to children's self-reliance as adults. If children do not have access to a healthy diet that includes the nutrients needed for cognitive development and good school performance, we are not equipping them with the tools to become self-reliant adults.

Overall, our country's safety net should include stronger SNAP and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC—Recommendation V) programs. It should also preserve health services such as Medicare and Medicaid. None of these should be block granted.

We also support dismantling the following barriers, which make people returning from incarceration and their families far more likely to be hungry or food insecure.

- **Eliminate laws and policies that prohibit returning citizens from receiving SNAP, TANF, Pell Grants, and Medicaid/Medicare.** All of these have at least some restrictions on the participation of formerly incarcerated people, even though these individuals have, by definition, paid their debt to society and been released.

Twenty-six states have partial bans on SNAP for individuals convicted of drug-related felonies, while six states have complete lifetime bans. These bans harm the food security, not only of people who have returned and are trying to get on their feet and avoid committing further offenses, but of their families. SNAP benefits are calculated based on the number of people in a household, but anyone in the household who is banned because of a felony drug conviction is not included in the count<sup>25</sup>—leaving four people with benefits intended for three, or five people with a benefit level for four.

SNAP benefits are reduced and then ended as family income increases. The same family member whose nutrition needs are not considered in determining SNAP benefits is suddenly considered again when he or she begins working and contributing income to the household—potentially ending SNAP benefits for the household earlier than they would otherwise end.

The current policies that put restrictions on people with criminal records hurt families. About two-thirds of families that are impacted by the criminal justice system and become food or housing insecure include children. Children who live with family members who have criminal records are at an added risk of food insecurity.

Thirteen states have full bans on TANF for individuals with drug-related convictions, while twenty-three maintain a partial ban.<sup>26</sup> Partial and full bans have made it much harder for many returning home from prison to feed and shelter their children while they are looking for work. Social safety nets during this transition period reduce the likelihood of people resorting to crime out of hunger, or returning to drug or alcohol abuse out of despair.<sup>27</sup> It is an investment that benefits the individuals, families, and society as a whole.

Finally, lifting bans on receiving Pell Grants to help pay for college and bans on receiving help paying for medical care will help parents who want to make a better life for their families.

All of these issues go back to whether we, as a society, believe that people who have served their time and are returning home deserve a second chance to provide for their families and become self-reliant.



Andrew Wainer for Bread for the World

A worker at Broetji Orchard, near Prescott, WA, inspects and packs apples for shipment.



Because jobs are the most immediate way for families to put food on the table, we recommend a policy agenda that acknowledges the importance of protecting our workers, especially among those at greater risk of food insecurity, who are more likely to work in low-wage jobs and are particularly vulnerable to unsafe or unfair working conditions.

Having a quality paying job that covers the bills and allows a family to save for the future should be a universal goal. Yet the wages of most workers in the United States have remained relatively stagnant since the 1980s.<sup>28</sup> This stagnation is especially true for less-skilled workers and even more of a factor for Native American, African American, Latino, and female workers, as well as undocumented immigrants and people with criminal records. People of color and women fill the majority of low-wage jobs and are therefore more vulnerable to hunger and poverty.

A set of policies that will help combat wage stagnation and protect these workers from unequal treatment in the labor force include increasing the minimum wage, promoting unionization of our nation’s workforce, and expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

- **Increasing the Minimum Wage.** The federal minimum wage, and those of many states as well, is not enough for a family to meet its basic needs. We urge the administration and Congress to work together to raise the federal minimum wage, and/or to work with states and private employers to raise their minimum wage to meet regional living costs for workers across the nation.

{ The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. With the average cost of living in the United States for a family of four now at \$65,597, each parent would need to work 65 hours per week (130 hours total), assuming overtime pay, to be above this threshold.<sup>29</sup> }

- **Supporting Unionization.** Unions strengthen the income and benefits of low- and middle-wage workers. Unions raise the wages of their members by roughly 20 percent and raise total compensation by 28 percent when benefits are included.<sup>30</sup> In an environment where the minimum wage does not reflect a living wage and many low-wage workers have either limited benefits or none at all, supporting unionization can be critical to increasing a family’s ability to become self-reliant.
- **Expanding the EITC to childless workers.** Low-wage workers who are single adults under age 25 are ineligible for the EITC, while noncustodial parents or single adults over age 25 are only eligible for very limited EITC benefits. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that about 7.5 million low-income childless adults, ages 21 through 66, are taxed into, or deeper into, poverty—that is, paying their taxes brings the income of these workers below or further below the poverty line. We encourage the administration to work with Congress to increase the maximum tax credit and increase the income levels that childless adults can earn while still qualifying for some EITC credits. This will increase the incomes of low-wage childless workers and end the irony of the U.S. government taxing workers into poverty.

{ A 21-year-old is just starting out in the workforce and making poverty-level wages of about \$12,500 for manual labor. This worker has \$956 in payroll taxes deducted from his paycheck and pays \$214 in federal income taxes. Because the worker receives zero EITC (he is a childless worker under 25), after taxes, his income is \$1,170 below the poverty line. A 30-year-old woman being paid the same low wages in a retail store owes the same taxes. She does qualify for the EITC since she is over 25, but her credit is only \$184, with the result that she, too, is taxed into poverty because the benefit does not offset the taxes she has paid in. (Adapted from the CBPP)<sup>31</sup> }

- **Strengthening access to employment opportunities for people with criminal records.** Lack of employment prospects contributes to both high rates of hunger and food insecurity, and the likelihood of recidivism. We urge the federal government to take the following actions to help people with criminal records earn a living:

- **Work with local, state, and federal prisons and jails to provide returning citizens with proper state and/or federal identification before they are released.** Without an official ID, returning citizens are unable to apply for or accept employment, housing, or educational opportunities, or open a bank account. Eight states—Florida, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, and Wyoming—currently provide state-issued IDs to people who are being released. The federal government should do the same for federal prisoners and should work with the remaining states to issue IDs as well.

Many states require a birth certificate to issue a state ID, but many returning citizens don't have their birth certificates. In fact, it is not unusual for people to return home with no proof of identity at all. The birth certificate requirement can pose a significant barrier for people who are unable to travel to the county where they were born to pay for a new copy of their birth certificate.

- **Eliminate restrictions on work licenses and permits for returning citizens.** There are tens of thousands<sup>32</sup> of federal and state restrictions on occupational licensing that hamper returning citizens' efforts to rejoin the workforce. Particularly damaging are blanket bans that apply to all returning citizens without consideration for the type of work or the type of offense committed.

Having a criminal record is irrelevant to the ability to perform many jobs, but some of the most far-reaching restrictions affect jobs that fall into this category—for example, complete bans on becoming a cosmetologist or a plumber.

- **Provide incentives to public and private employers to hire people with criminal records as a percentage of their workforce.** People with criminal records have a difficult time securing employment. More than 60 percent of returning citizens are unemployed,<sup>33</sup> yet many who are unemployed are eager to work.

Enabling returning citizens to go back to work would allow them to contribute to their local communities in significant ways, including being able to pay local and state taxes. More than half of the individuals expected to be released from prison or jail are parents of minor children. So, employing parents both contributes to the local economy and reduces food insecurity among children.

- **Create a public jobs program focused on connecting workers who have barriers to employment with in-demand job skills.** In addition to offering incentives for public and private employers to hire returning citizens as a percentage of their workforce, creating a program specifically for workers with barriers will help many in this group who are eager to work.

Workers with barriers to employment might include parents who must care for their children with special needs, people with criminal records and people who lack work experience. Creating a program for workers with barriers can help more families fight hunger.

- **Issue comprehensive work permits and protections for all adult undocumented workers in the United States.** Ending hunger and poverty in America means supporting all of our workers. Research shows that immigrants, including those who are undocumented, are active in the labor force, pay taxes, and create businesses that generate jobs in their communities. This group could be even more productive if provided the right permits and protections, which would allow them to better provide for their families and reach self-reliance.

Providing work permits and protections would ensure that (1) undocumented workers are not being paid subminimum wages; (2) workers have legal and financial protection should they need to file complaints against employers who discriminate against or take advantage of immigrants; and (3) they benefit equally from the protections that other workers have (e.g., worker compensation, unemployment insurance). According to federal law, everyone, regardless of documentation status, has the right to the minimum wage, overtime pay, breaks, and tips and other forms of earned compensation.

An employer cannot legally refuse to pay workers because they lack work authorization papers. But if undocumented immigrants are fired for any reason, including asking for a raise, the legal status of requirements that they be paid for the hours they worked is uncertain. The law should be clarified and interpreted to require that workers be paid for all hours worked. The law should also clarify that undocumented workers are eligible for unemployment insurance. One point of contention is that workers must be “able” and “available” to work in order to receive unemployment benefits. Undocumented immigrants are often disqualified on the grounds that they are not “available” to work because they are not legally allowed to work.



## RECOMMENDATION VI.

## Eliminate concentrated poverty by 2025

**Not only is it important to implement federal policies to fight hunger and to provide protection for individuals (i.e., social safety nets), but it is also important to tackle hunger at the community level.** This is why our final recommendation is to eliminate areas of concentrated poverty. This way, all communities can be home to workers who earn enough to support their families and can be a source of support for residents who have fallen on hard times.

Since 2000, poverty in the United States has become dramatically more concentrated. It has become more common for people living in poverty to live in communities with poverty rates of at least 20 percent—this was true of 55 percent of all poor people in 2015. The likelihood of living in an area of concentrated poverty varies greatly by race and ethnicity. Among people living in poverty, Latinos are more than three times as likely to live in such communities as whites, and blacks are almost five times as likely.

According to Bread for the World Institute’s 2017 Hunger Report, 14 million people live in extremely poor communities in the United States, meaning that 40 percent or more of the residents live below the poverty line.<sup>34</sup>

Ending concentrated poverty requires a community or neighborhood approach. Affordable housing, proximity to good jobs, high-quality schools, safety, and access to other assets and supports are essential and interconnected elements of enabling residents to build better lives.

One major barrier is that many low-income families are cost-burdened by housing, defined as spending more than one-third of their income on housing costs. This, of course, leaves them less money for food, health care, and other expenses than they would otherwise have had. Sadly, 59 percent of U.S. households with annual incomes of less than \$20,000 spend more than half of their incomes on rent alone.<sup>35</sup> The shortage of affordable housing units—affordable enough for low-income families to spend 30 percent or less of their adjusted gross income on rent—is a major barrier to enabling low-wage workers to make ends meet.

We encourage the federal government to:

- **Provide housing assistance to all families whose incomes are less than 30 percent of the area’s median income.** Better access to affordable housing will help reduce pockets of concentrated poverty. The Bipartisan Housing Commission originally introduced this initiative in 2013. For example, in a community where half the families earn more than \$60,000 a year and the other half earn less, the vouchers would go to all households earning less than about \$18,000. In this example, the families earning less than \$18,000 would receive sufficient housing assistance to ensure that they do not have to spend more than one-third of their income on housing. Reducing the amount that households spend on housing can reduce the frequency of evictions for low-income families (particularly low-income female-headed households of color) and enable families to shift resources to food and other basic needs.
- **Improve the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.** TANF is a complex program, and this paper can only touch on it briefly. TANF is intended to provide modest cash assistance for a limited time, child care, transportation, and job training to single parents. Currently, TANF does not have sufficient funding to fulfill all of its objectives. Another weakness is that it does not demand strict accountability from states for how they spend federal funds for the program.

TANF has had mixed success in moving participants into jobs. Fluctuations in the economy generally have a significant effect on whether new workers can find and keep jobs. The Great Recession years were particularly difficult as the national unemployment rate climbed to 10 percent and even experienced workers were laid off.

The strict time limit on receiving TANF benefits and the lack of sufficient funding has limited the impact of the program on poverty. Efforts to improve TANF to ensure the program has adequate funding, increases its accountability, and reduces poverty can help more families rise above hunger.

- **Work with Congress to build support for efforts to reduce poverty in high-poverty areas.**

One example is the 10-20-30 formula proposed by Rep. James Clyburn (D-SC), which was designed to fight persistent poverty in counties across America. The formula would direct at least 10 percent of Rural Development investments to counties where 20 percent or more of the population has been living in poverty for the last 30 years.

Tackling persistent poverty is necessary. We encourage the administration and Congress to continue to be engaged in initiatives that could help. Adopting the Clyburn plan could bring some successes, particularly if not only persistently poor counties, but persistently poor urban areas are included. This way, the plan will include cities that have areas of persistent poverty but are located in counties whose overall poverty rates are relatively low. Two such cities are Los Angeles and Chicago.<sup>36</sup>

Any initiative should also consider both persistent poverty and concentrated poverty, how their causes and solutions are different, and what they may have in common.

An immigrant worker picks tomatoes on a farm in Fort Blackmore, VA.



Laura Elizabeth Pohl for Bread for the World

- **Require the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Census Bureau to collect data for households and individuals that has been disaggregated by gender, race, and social status.** For example, we know that female-headed households of color, Native Americans, undocumented immigrants, and people with criminal records are all at greater risk of living in areas of concentrated poverty. Yet information specific to these groups is not in the food security data collected by USDA or the poverty data collected by the Census Bureau. This data is necessary to ensure that those implementing programs have an accurate understanding of the situation and the scope of the problem, and as a baseline against which to gauge progress.
- **Support automatic expungements.** All told, there are more than 45,000 federal, state, and local restrictions on people with criminal records. These restrictions relate to employment, housing, education, safety net programs, and other areas. Criminal justice reform proponents point out that one efficient measure that would help many lower-level nonviolent ex-offenders at a low administrative cost is automatic expungement of the criminal records of people in approved categories after a given amount of time.

In addition to granting expungements to federal offenders, the federal government can provide incentives for states to follow suit. Good candidates for expungement of their records include nonviolent drug offenders and others considered not to pose a danger to society.

Without expungement, it will remain extremely difficult for people returning to society to get back on their feet and earn a living for themselves and their families.

The requirement to reveal any criminal history, regardless of its relevance or how long ago it occurred, has caused many returning citizens to lose job offers, be denied rental housing, and/or be barred from working in certain trades that enable people to be self-employed. For example, people with criminal records are currently prohibited from working as barbers.

School kids enjoying a healthy lunch.



## Section IV. Conclusion

Unlike in decades past, the United States has the tools and knowledge to put an end to hunger, food insecurity, and poverty—and we can accomplish this rather quickly, by 2030. We need only the leadership and the determination to do it.

We must reach the furthest behind first and remain committed to leaving no one behind. Groups at greater risk of hunger, food insecurity, and poverty face a complex mosaic of barriers. It is important to take a holistic and layered approach that will comprehensively address unequal protection on the basis of race, gender, and social status, as well as unequal treatment in virtually all sectors (work, health, education, health care, criminal justice, housing, and others).

The entire country will be stronger and more families will become self-reliant once we ensure equal protection under the law for all, increase opportunities for low-income families to help themselves, and bolster the resources provided to establish a more level playing field for people and groups at greater risk of hunger and poverty.

USDA

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Addressing Child Hunger and Obesity in Indian Country: Report to Congress. Mathematica Policy Research. January 12, 2012. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/IndianCountry.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> “Hunger and Poverty among Immigrants.” Bread for the World. August 2016. <http://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/immigrants-fact-sheet-2016.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Mass Incarceration and Over-Policing Are Hunger Issues.” Bread for the World. September 2016. [http://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/mass\\_inc\\_factsheet\\_sept2016.pdf](http://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/mass_inc_factsheet_sept2016.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> This estimate for food insecurity among Native, African American, and Latino female-headed households is based on the overall food insecurity rate for all female-headed households (30.3 percent). Our assessment is that food insecurity rates are significantly higher among Latina, Native, and African American female-headed households because poverty levels are much higher for these groups (37 percent, unknown but expected to be high, and 36 percent, respectively) than for all female-headed households (30 percent). We concluded that 35 percent is a valid conservative estimate of food insecurity among these groups.

<sup>5</sup> Hunger Report 2017: Fragile Environments, Resilient Communities. Bread for the World Institute. November 2016. <http://hungerreport.org/2017/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2017-hunger-report-full.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> This estimate of food-insecurity for Latina-headed households is based on the overall food insecurity rate for all female-headed households (30.3 percent). We estimate that this number is significantly higher among Latina-headed households since poverty levels are much higher for Latina-headed households (37 percent) than for all female-headed households (30 percent).

<sup>7</sup> “Hunger and Poverty among Immigrants.” Bread for the World. August 2016. <http://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/immigrants-fact-sheet-2016.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Map the Meal Gap 2015: Highlights of Findings for Overall and Child Food Insecurity. Feeding America. 2015. <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/2013/map-the-meal-gap-2013-exec-summ.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Addressing Child Hunger and Obesity in Indian Country: Report to Congress. Mathematica Policy Research. January 12, 2012. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/IndianCountry.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Underpaid and Overloaded: Women in Low-Wage Jobs. National Women’s Law Center. 2014. [http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final\\_nwlc\\_lowwagereport2014.pdf](http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final_nwlc_lowwagereport2014.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> “Hunger and Poverty in Female Headed Households.” Bread for the World. April 2016. <http://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/female-headed-fact-sheet-2016.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> “The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap.” American Association of University Women. Spring 2016. [www.aauw.org/files/2016/02/SimpleTruth\\_Spring2016.pdf](http://www.aauw.org/files/2016/02/SimpleTruth_Spring2016.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Observing, but Not Celebrating Latina Equal Pay Day. Center for American Progress. November 2016. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2016/11/01/291671/observing-but-not-celebrating-latina-equal-pay-day/>

<sup>14</sup> “Native Women Have to Work 9 Extra Months to Make the Same Salary as White Men Made Last Year.” Economic Justice Section. American Association of University Women. September 3, 2015.

<http://www.aauw.org/2015/09/03/native-women-gender-pay-gap/>

<sup>15</sup> “The Pay Gap Is Even Worse for Black Women, and That’s Everyone’s Problem.” Economic Justice Section. American Association of University Women. July 21, 2015. <http://www.aauw.org/2015/07/21/black-women-pay-gap/>

<sup>16</sup> Black-white wage gaps expand with rising wage inequality. Valerie Wilson and William M. Rodgers III. Economic Policy Institute. September 19, 2016. <http://www.epi.org/files/pdf/101972.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Hunger and Poverty in the African American Community.” Bread for the World. February 2016. <http://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/african-american-fact-sheet-2016.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> “Summary Health Statistics: National Health Interview Survey, 2014.” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Center for Disease Control. [https://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Health\\_Statistics/NCHS/NHIS/SHS/2014\\_SHS\\_Table\\_P-11.pdf](https://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Health_Statistics/NCHS/NHIS/SHS/2014_SHS_Table_P-11.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> “Who Pays? The True Costs of Incarceration on Families.” Ella Baker Center on Human Rights. September 2015. <http://whopaysreport.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Who-Pays-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> “Payday Lending in America: Who borrows, where they borrow and why.” The Pew Charitable Trust. July 2012. [http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/%20uploadedfiles/pes\\_assets/2012/pewpaydaylendingreport.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/%20uploadedfiles/pes_assets/2012/pewpaydaylendingreport.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> “The Concentration of Poverty is a Growing Rural Problem.” Tracey Farrigan and Timothy Parker. United States Department of Agriculture. December 5, 2012. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2012/december/concentration-of-poverty/>

<sup>22</sup> “Time for Justice: Tackling Race Inequalities in Health and Housing.” Dayna M. Matthew and Richard Reeves. Brookings Institute. October 19, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/time-for-justice-tackling-race-inequalities-in-health-and-housing/>

<sup>23</sup> “The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap.” American Association of University Women. Spring 2016. [https://www.aauw.org/files/2016/02/SimpleTruth\\_Spring2016.pdf](https://www.aauw.org/files/2016/02/SimpleTruth_Spring2016.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> “Summary: Pay Equity—The Minnesota Experience.” Legislative Office on the Economic Status of Women. Sixth Edition. February 2016. [http://www.oesw.leg.mn/PDFdocs/PE\\_Report\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.oesw.leg.mn/PDFdocs/PE_Report_Summary.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Effect of Denial of SNAP Benefits on Convicted Drug Felons. Issue Brief. The Network for Public Health Law. 2015. [https://www.networkforphl.org/\\_asset/1mvl2f/SNAP-drug-felony-bans-issue-brief.pdf](https://www.networkforphl.org/_asset/1mvl2f/SNAP-drug-felony-bans-issue-brief.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> “Six States Where Felons Can’t Get Food Stamps.” The Marshall Project. February 2, 2016. <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2016/02/04/six-states-where-felons-can-t-get-food-stamps#.HCk1BK606>

<sup>27</sup> “A Lifetime of Punishment: The Impact of the Felony Drug Ban on Welfare Benefits.” The Sentencing Project. Published November 2013. Updated September 2015. <http://sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/A-Lifetime-of-Punishment.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Black-white wage gaps expand with rising wage inequality. Valerie Wilson and William M. Rodgers III. Economic Policy Institute. September 19, 2016. <http://www.epi.org/files/pdf/101972.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Cost of Living Calculators. Career Trends. <http://cost-of-living.careertrends.com/l/615/The-United-States>. The same information can be calculated using the living wage data, which can be found at <http://livingwage.mit.edu/>.

<sup>30</sup> “How unions help all workers.” Matthew Walters and Lawrence Mishel. Economic Policy Institute. August 26, 2003. [http://www.epi.org/publication/briefingpapers\\_bp143/](http://www.epi.org/publication/briefingpapers_bp143/)

<sup>31</sup> “Strengthening the EITC for Childless Workers Would Promote Work and Reduce Poverty.” Chuck Marr, Chye-Ching Huang, Cecile Murray, and Arloc Sherman. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. April 11, 2016. [http://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/strengthening-the-eitc-for-childless-workers-would-promote-work-and-reduce#\\_ftn2](http://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/strengthening-the-eitc-for-childless-workers-would-promote-work-and-reduce#_ftn2)

<sup>32</sup> “Unlicensed and Untapped: Removing Barriers to State Occupational Licenses for People with Records.” Michelle Natividad Rodriguez and Beth Avery. National Employment Law Project. April 26, 2016. <http://www.nelp.org/publication/unlicensed-untapped-removing-barriers-state-occupational-licenses/>

<sup>33</sup> “Poverty and Opportunity Profile: Americans with Criminal Records.” Half in Ten, project of the Center of American Progress. 2014. <http://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Americans-with-Criminal-Records-Poverty-and-Opportunity-Profile.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Hunger Report 2017: Fragile Environments, Resilient Communities. Bread for the World Institute. November 2016. <http://hungerreport.org/2017/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2017-hunger-report-full.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> “The High Cost of Being Poor in the U.S.: Anti-poverty Programs Help Alleviate Costs, But More Must Be Done To Reduce Burdens.” Coalition on Human Needs. September 20, 2016. <http://www.chn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Final-CHN-Natl-Census-Poverty-Report-9.20.16-1.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> “Tackling Persistent Poverty: Three challenges with the 10-20-30 plan.” Brookings Institute. Elizabeth Kneebone. Tuesday, October 4, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/tackling-persistent-poverty-three-challenges-for-the-10-20-30-plan/>



**breadfortheworld**  
INSTITUTE

President, David Beckmann | Director, Asma Lateef

425 3rd Street SW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20024

Tel 202.639.9400 Fax 202.639.9401

[institute@bread.org](mailto:institute@bread.org) [www.bread.org/Institute](http://www.bread.org/Institute)

Find out more about **Bread for the World Institute** online. Get the latest facts on hunger, download our hunger reports, and read what our analysts are writing about on the Institute blog.