

Power of Hunger

A photograph of a loaf of bread and a hand-shaped piece of bread on a wooden surface. The hand-shaped piece has a small gold coin resting on its palm. The background is a wooden cutting board with some bread crumbs.

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Explore:

- Realities and myths about hunger
- Food, culture, and modern food industry
 - why we eat as we do
- Personal impact on each of us
 - awakens our reverence and our sense of connectedness
- Choices that are powerful

Nothing has re-shaped our planet as much as agriculture

“Eating is an agricultural act” W. Berry

“It is also an ecological act, and a political act, too.”
M. Pollan

I would add that: It is a spiritual act.

It is our “communion” with the world we inhabit.

- We absorb the earth, water, and elements and are eventually re-absorbed by them.

Mahatma Gandhi called **hunger**
the greatest of all violence

Do you ever feel it?

When you think about “world hunger”,
what are the first images that come to
mind?

Famine

accounts for less than 10% of world
hunger

Famine is a natural or man-made
“emergency”

So it gets into headlines & TV news
as the kind of hunger we know (see?)

How do we really know hunger?

The other 90%

Chronic, persistent hunger

Doesn't look like "famine"

Chronic hunger

Not enough of the right kind of food
over a long period of time

Unlike famine, chronic hunger is
invisible and silent -
even when you are looking right at it.



854 million folks
roughly 1 in 7 people

Today and everyday,
Today and everyday,
Today and everyday,

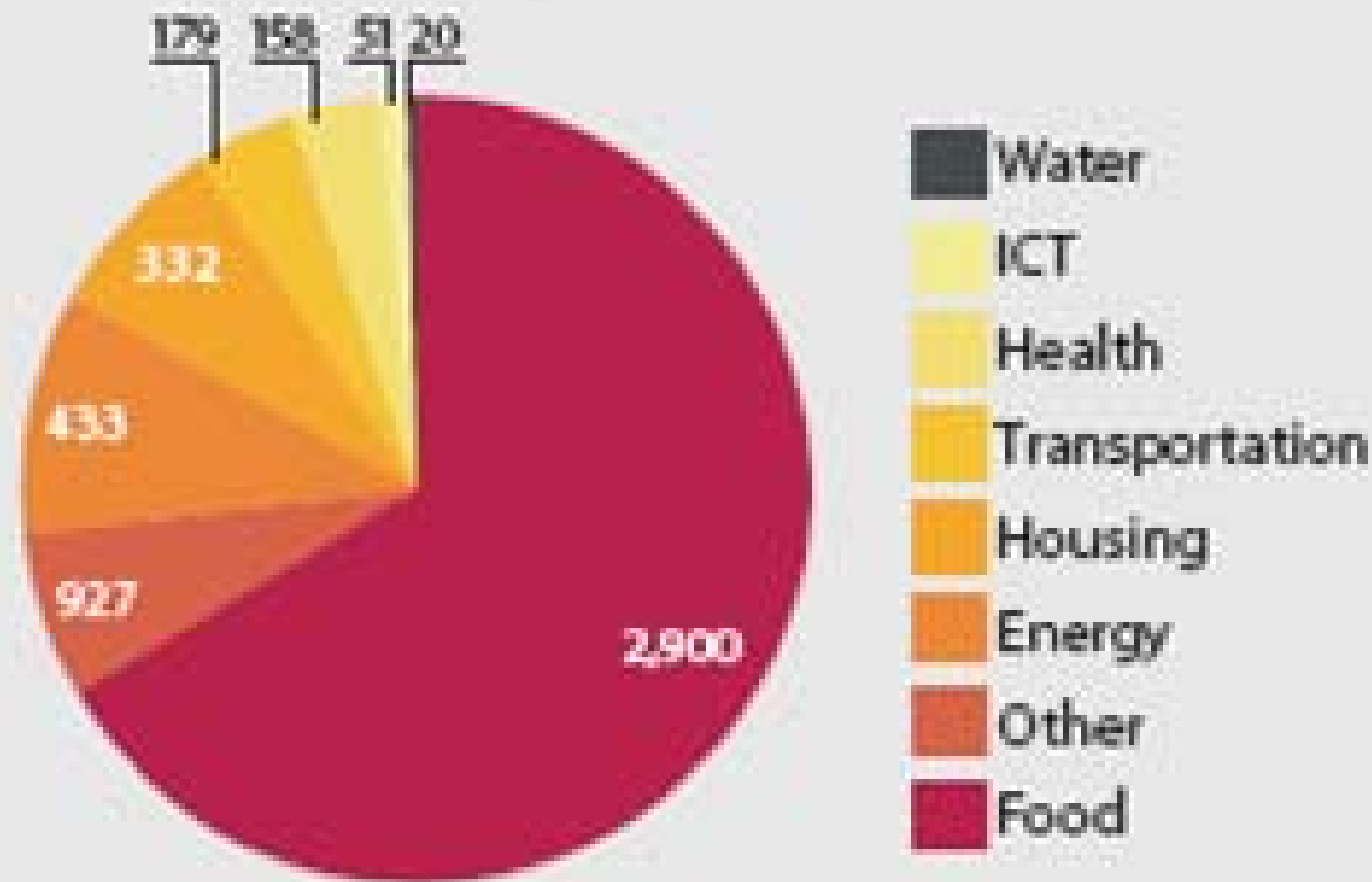
about 7 million children alone will die as a consequence of
chronic hunger this year - most under 5

14 children on each of the 1440!

Not all from starvation directly

but from diarrhea, flu, and other basic illnesses that we survived because we were not chronically malnourished.

Figure 1.2. How poor consumers spend their money



Note: Poor consumers are here defined as people living on less than \$5 a day.
Source: Adapted from Hammond and others 2007.

Poorest pay most for food and water

- People in the slums of Jakarta, Manila and Nairobi pay 5–10 times more for water than people in high-income areas of those cities...
- and more than consumers in London or New York.

Who is hungry?

- Of the world's 1.1 billion extremely poor people, about 74 % (810 M) live in marginal areas and rely on small-scale agriculture
- 35% in South Asia
- 29% in sub-Saharan Africa (highest proportion)
- 1/3 in the rest (even in US)

mostly women, indigenous people, children

Worsening malnourishment

- Food security in Africa has become much worse since 1970.
- The number of malnourished people has grown threefold

Who is hungry?

34M households or eleven percent of **U.S. households** are food-insecure at some time during the year

...and requests for emergency food assistance rose by 14%

...mostly children, women, indigenous

- Why do you think we have such hunger

Where does our food go?

11 percent of the world's corn and soybean crop is fed to cars and trucks, in the form of biofuels

40 percent of the world's grain output today is fed to animals

Nature is to Blame for Hunger & Famine ?

- Homeless in America?
- Humans (our institutions and policies) determine who eats and who starves and make people increasingly vulnerable.
- Food is always available for those who can afford it ...starvation hits only the poorest.
- The real culprits may be a society that places economic efficiency over compassion.

Too Weak/Hungry to Fight for Their Rights

- Bombarded with images of poor people as weak and hungry, we lose sight of the obvious: for those with few resources, mere survival requires tremendous effort.
- If the poor were truly passive, few of them could even survive (i.e. Zapatistas in Chiapas, farmers' movement in India)
- People will feed themselves, if allowed to do so.

Too Many People ?

- Population growth and **hunger** are endemic to societies where land ownership, jobs, education, health care, and old age security are beyond the reach of most people.
- **Neither population growth or density explain hunger.** For every Bangladesh we find a Nigeria, Brazil or Bolivia, where abundant land and food resources coexist with hunger.

The Environment vs. More Food ?

**a tradeoff between our environment and food
is not inevitable**

- Consumer demand for cheap & exotic foods drive pollution
- U.S. pesticides mostly for a blemish-free
- Most pesticides in Third World applied to exports.
- Cuba's virtually chemical-free agriculture helped it overcome food crisis.

Not Enough Food to Go Around ?

- Past 40 years, p/c world food production has grown by 17-20%
- Food supplies p/c have increased and real prices are about 40% lower.
- There are 4.3 pounds of food per person a day worldwide

- How do you think we resolve hunger?

Technology is the Answer ?

- Advances of the Green Revolution are no myth – but..
 - Production has climbed, while hunger has persisted. (India, Mexico, Philippines)
 - Hybrid seeds & long-term soil degradation
 - Biotech revolution threatens to further accentuate inequality and risk.

We Need Larger, More Efficient Farms ?

- Small farmers = greater productivity
- Without land ownership, millions of tenant farmers have little incentive
- Land redistribution to small farmers has increased most forms of food production (in countries as diverse as Japan, ex Soviet Republics, Zimbabwe, Mexico, and Taiwan)

The Free Market Can End Hunger ?

Trade liberalization as a remedy

- In the early 1960s, developing countries had annual agricultural trade surplus of almost \$7 billion
- Since beginning of the 1990s they have generally been net importers of agricultural products with a deficit (for e.g. \$11 billion in 2001)
- Post-NAFTA & hunger is on the rise in both US & Mexico

Consider India

- A net exporter of food for decades
- Today has more than 40 million tons of grain in storage
- AND today - 47% of all children in India are malnourished worse than Africa

More Financial Aid Will Help the Hungry?

- Emergency, or humanitarian aid makes up 5% of total - most aid is used to provide arms
- Most aid works against the hungry
- Foreign aid tends to reinforce, not change, the status quo where governments answer to elites

What can we do?

We Benefit From Their Poverty

- The advancement of the hungry is a threat to the well-being of Americans.
- Low wages mean cheaper stuff for us.
- Yet, enforced poverty in the Third World jeopardizes U.S. jobs, wages and working conditions as corporations seek cheaper labor abroad.

Famine is...

Fundamentally an issue of food –

Chronic hunger is fundamentally
NOT an issue of food

Hunger is not simply about more production

Eroding **natural resources** and reduced **productive capacity** combined with inadequate **purchasing power** and little **access** to markets keep millions of people hungry.

Conflict, discrimination against females, and policies of greed (agro-industrial subsidies) contribute as well

Can we End Hunger?

If food is not the answer, then?

Chronic hunger is best understood
as an issue of opportunity

It occurs when people lack the opportunity
to translate a full day's work into enough:

- Food
- Money
- Education
- Health care
- Voice in decisions affecting their lives

Question: Why is this opportunity so diminished where chronic hunger persists?

1996 study commissioned by UNICEF

The high rates of malnutrition in South Asia are rooted deep in the soil of inequality between men and women”

severe discrimination
against women and girls gives rise to
“a cycle of malnutrition”

EMPOWER and create

- One failure of development: belief that to end hunger is to find a 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.
- **Extend the process, don't replicate the solution or create a model.**

...What it means to be human

How do we connect to those opportunities?

How do we relate to food ?



How we relate to food

Corporate
vs.
Local

Eating defines us

“What is perhaps most troubling, and sad, about industrial eating is how thoroughly it obscures all these relationships and connections. To go from the chicken to the Chicken McNugget is to leave this world in a journey of forgetting that could hardly be more costly.

But **forgetting**, or not knowing in the first place, is what the industrial food chain is all about, the principal reason it is so opaque, for if we could see what lies on the far side of the increasingly high walls of our industrial agriculture, we would surely change the way we eat.”

The reality of resources

- Water is a critical resource in many rural areas.
- Growth of livestock production in poorest countries.
- Pastoralists efficiently and sustainably convert grasses and plants to meat... and permit livelihoods in otherwise marginal areas
- Intensive livestock operations are quite a different story. According to a leading US trade association, producing 1 pound of beef requires at least 5 pounds of grain and between 2,500 to 5,000 gallons of water.

The reality of resources

Resource	Quantity	Yields
Land	1 acre	165 pounds of beef
	1 acre	20,000 pounds of potatoes
Water	25 gallons	1 pound of wheat
	2,500 gallons	1 pound of meat
Energy	2 calories	1 calorie of soy protein
	fossil fuel 70calories	1 calorie of beef protein

Are we divorced from reality?

Wingspan of average Leghorn chicken: 26 inches

Space given in egg factories: 6 inches

Number of 700lb plus pound pigs confined to space the size of a twin bed in typical factory farm: 3

Today's veal is tender: Calves never allowed to walk and fed an anemia producing diet

So, how did we get here?

Our diet was fairly austere....

From Ed Brown "Tomato Blessings
and Radish Teachings"

So, how did we go beyond?

- Conscious of our blessings...that we have enough
- Conscious of this sacrament...our wellbeing
- Conscious of our choices...that others may have enough too
- Compassionate when we forget...but not too often

Be sustainable NOW


- Action starts at your kitchen table
- Tonight, not tomorrow night
- Local food, local shops, farmer mkts, CSA
- Organic, Fair trade, RA, FSC, MSC, etc.
- Support conscious firms
- Sharing ...invite friends to collaborate
- Innovate new practices

thp.org

foodfirst.org

strength.org

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Great love and great
achievements involve
some risk.