

Conclusion: Ending Hunger by 2030

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Fragility Can Exist Anywhere

This 2017 Hunger Report shows that there are many fragile areas in the United States. Fragile areas are those with deep pockets of persistent poverty, a dearth of economic opportunities, and weak, or in some cases harmful, institutions. These conditions are not unlike those in fragile states in the developing world.

The report makes the case that pockets of persistent poverty are the long-term consequences of racism, coupled with a frayed safety net, unequal harm from economic downturns and unequal benefits from economic recoveries. Conflict and climate change also are drivers of the fragility in these areas. The conflict is often between residents and the institutions charged with their protection and well-being.

The similarities between fragile states in the developing world and here at home can be found in the lack of safe drinking water in Flint, Michigan and a city like Dhaka, Bangladesh, the lack of justice in Ferguson, Missouri and Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and the high level of food insecurity in Mississippi and Burundi.

Without the long-standing strength and support from local churches and neighborhood organizations, and the resilience and sharing of resources among the residents themselves, these fragile communities would be more destitute and subject to even greater harm.

Sustainable Development Goals: Leave No One Behind

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), endorsed by the United States and 192 other countries in September 2015, provide the call to action necessary to seriously address the issues facing fragile communities in the United States and around the world.

The 17 SDGs are interrelated and universal and address social, economic, and environmental issues. The goals call for ending hunger and poverty, ensuring good health, providing quality education, decent work and economic growth, ending inequality, ensuring gender equity, creating sustainable cities and communities, and building strong institutions and partnerships to ensure peace and justice.

All countries have committed themselves to meeting the goals by 2030, including the United States. The interrelated-

ness of the goals necessitates the breaking down of barriers, not only between and among programs and funding sources, but also between and among sectors—government, business, foundations, faith-based and other nonprofit organizations, other members of civil society and the people themselves.

The overarching goal of the SDGs is to leave no one behind. With only 14 years left to meet our shared mandate, it is imperative that plans be developed and actions taken to drastically lower the rates of poverty in our fragile communities. As the goals prescribe, to do so will require addressing the needs of these persistently poor communities holistically. Separate programs targeting separate problems will be insufficient to lower poverty and increase opportunity in our most fragile, left-behind areas.

Overhauling How We Work

The beauty and the challenge of the goals is the need and opportunity to fundamentally overhaul how we as a country work together to meet common goals that support our shared beliefs. Those beliefs embrace the view that one's zip code should not determine one's destiny and that each and every one of us should have the opportunity to develop our talents and pursue our dreams.

The responsibility for achieving the goals does not fall entirely to government. Government must lead, but all sectors of society must play a part in achieving the goals. According to the report, *Business and the United Nations: Working Together Towards the Sustainable Development Goals*, “multi-stakeholder partnerships

among governments, companies and civil society organizations will be central for setting common policy agendas, mobilizing necessary resources, and ensuring shared accountability; private sector investments and market-based solutions, as well as philanthropic contributions and blended finance or hybrid models, will be needed to achieve scale and sustained impact in many sectors; and country-level leadership, prioritization and ownership of outcomes will be essential for driving transformative or systemic change.”¹

Nonprofit organizations, foundations, and corporations all must incorporate work on the goals into their organizations' strategic plans and engage residents of the fragile communities in developing plans. All parties must be prepared to fundamentally rethink their own organizational structures and programs and be willing to reconfigure internal structures and goals. All sectors must be willing to abandon their comfort zones and reach out to

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nontraditional partners. This work is already underway, but must be universally embraced and vigorously pursued in the months and years ahead.

Nonprofit organizations must work with the federal government and foundations to restructure funding from individual programs to a more comprehensive, integrated set of programs focused on meeting the goals. Goal-focused funding would foster cooperation and collaboration rather than competition among organizations and better serve the target populations.

Advocacy organizations must re-examine their support for programs based on outcomes and impacts, be willing to abandon programs with marginal benefit toward meeting the goals, promote expansion of programs with proven positive outcomes, and work to create new programs to address root causes, not simply address symptoms.

Foundations, too, must restructure their programs and funding to align better with the goals. The Council on Foundations is working with its members to expand their collaborations and engagements with grassroots leaders, cultivate a willingness to take risks, and leverage resources to align their domestic grant making within a global development framework.²

Businesses must begin mapping their performance against the goals and using them in developing their business strategy. A recent survey by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, FleishmanHillard and the United Nations Foundation found that 65 percent of business executives support SDG 8, promoting sustained economic growth and decent work and SDG 5, promoting gender equity, but only 47 percent of respondents said their company's executives understand the opportunity the SDGs present to business, while 55 percent needed more information.³

What's at Stake?

The SDGs provide the framework not only to clearly illustrate the connections between issues such as jobs and poverty and hunger and health, but also to highlight the interconnectedness of everyone. For all of us to survive and thrive as individuals, we all—rich and poor alike—need clean air and clean water, and to survive and thrive as a country, we all need safe, functioning communities where everyone has an equal opportunity to reach their potential.



Joseph Moller / Bread for the World

Bread for the World trains young people in anti-hunger advocacy before visiting their representatives in Congress on Capitol Hill.

The costs range from lost opportunities for individuals to lost contributions for communities and lost economic output for the nation as a whole. For example, the cost of failing to address food insecurity in the United States results in at least \$160 billion in annual unnecessary healthcare expenditures,⁴ and the cost of failing to address poverty reduces the country's gross domestic product by at least 3.8 percent.⁵

We Can Do It

Fifteen years ago, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provided a similar opportunity for the developing world, and the developing world, with some assistance from donor countries, responded. In the developing world, the proportion of the population living below the extreme poverty line dropped by half between 2002 and 2012, from 26 to 13 percent; and the proportion of the population suffering from hunger declined from 15 percent in 2000-2002 to 11 percent in 2014-2016.⁶

The SDGs provide an even greater opportunity for both the developing and now the developed world, not only to reduce poverty and hunger, but to go even further. The SDGs call for the elimination of extreme poverty and the end of hunger and all forms of malnutrition—to truly leave no one behind. There is no reason why it cannot be done.

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