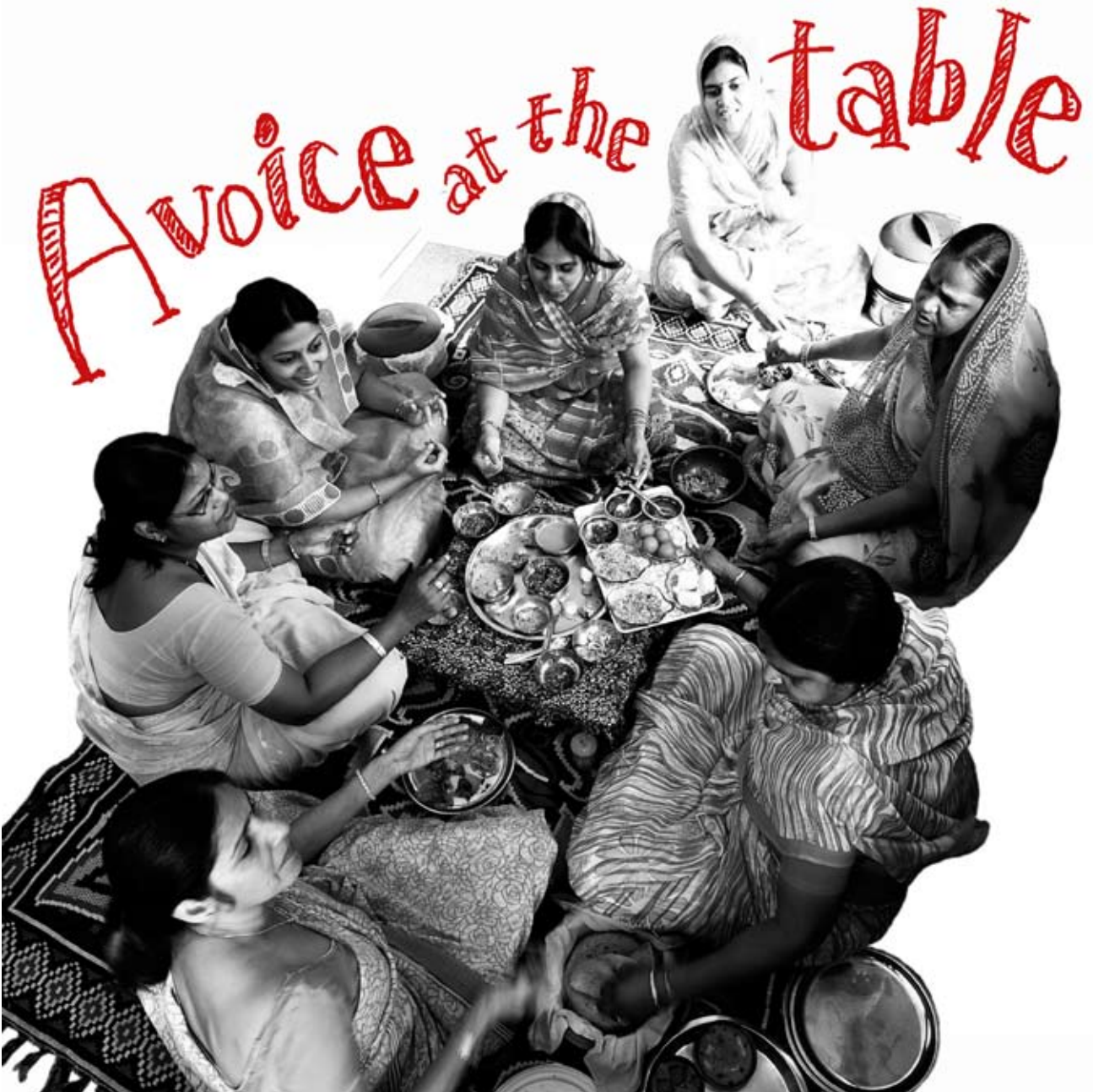


A guide to ending
hunger through
advocacy

END HUNGER 

A voice at the table



A voice in support of 'our neighbour'

The Bible contains inspiring examples of advocates—people who spoke out on behalf of others. They spoke for those who had no voice themselves, but were greatly affected by decisions made by powerful people.

Esther, an Israelite chosen to live as queen in the royal court of ancient Persia, learned about a dreadful plot to exterminate the Jews. With the prayers of the Jewish people supporting her, she risked her own life as an advocate for her people. Informed of the plot by her uncle Mordecai, her courageous intervention ended up saving countless lives.

Moses doubted his ability to effectively advocate for his people, who suffered under slavery and oppression in Egypt. He gave numerous reasons for why he was not the right person, but God kept on asking him to act. Moses eventually was instrumental in leading the Hebrew people out of Egypt.

In these stories God calls people—many times through an observance like fasting—to an awareness of an injustice. These people went on to speak out on behalf of others.

After fasting in the desert, Jesus went on to advocate for impoverished or marginalized people in his public ministry. His teaching and example gave us the command “love your neighbour as yourself,” which calls us to extend our compassion to neighbours throughout the world. Advocating in support of people affected by hunger—a truly biblical call—is needed to achieve food justice.



What is food justice?

Food justice exists when all people have dignified and regular access to adequate food. We can raise our voices to ensure actions are taken to fairly meet short-term and long-term food needs.

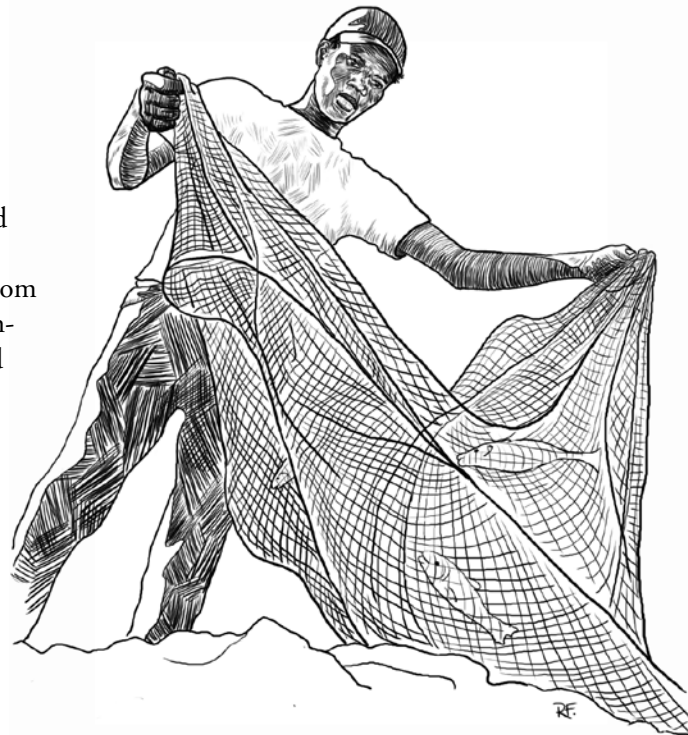


Give a man a fish, and he'll eat for a day.

So the saying begins. And for many people, food assistance is exactly what is needed when a drought, flood, conflict, or other disaster disrupts their lives. Governments must make sure there are systems in place to meet immediate food needs for people.

Teach a man to fish, and he'll eat for a lifetime.

The long-term vision is food security, which means that all people have access to adequate food at all times. Programs and policies designed to help the most vulnerable—many of whom are small-scale farmers throughout the world—should uphold the goal of people being able to feed themselves.



Teach a woman to fish, and the whole family will eat for a lifetime.

In many developing countries women are both food providers (farmers) and food preparers. Women are responsible for household nutrition, and so striving for gender equity delivers benefits to the whole family.

But what if they don't have access to the pond?

Or what if the water is polluted by others? The rules about how food and other resources are shared often make things more difficult for the many people who experience chronic hunger. We can speak up and influence decision makers to ensure that our trade and aid policies don't make it harder for others to feed themselves. Often, these decision makers have the power to create or change policies that could have a positive impact on many people.



Does advocacy make a difference?

To make positive changes in policy, we need to communicate with politicians and officials who are involved in making them. Food policy work at Canadian Foodgrains Bank involves discussion at various levels of government, but there is also often a need for public support. With this support, we have influenced policies with measurable benefits to those affected by hunger.

“Untying” of Food Aid

For many years, Canada’s policy required that government-funded food aid programs purchase at least 90% of the food in Canada. This often resulted in slower food aid responses or inappropriate foods for people in developing countries. In other words, international food aid was “tied” to domestic farm policy. After years of advocacy by organizations like the Foodgrains Bank this policy was changed, permitting food aid to be purchased wherever it makes sense, often as close as possible to those who are hungry.



>> A policy change in 2008 to “untie” food aid ended up saving thousands of dollars in transport costs, reducing delivery times for food aid in crisis situations, supporting local production, and providing more appropriate foods to those in need.

Aid for Agriculture

By 2008 the world had witnessed 25 years of declining support for agriculture in the form of aid. The alarm was sounded by Canadian Foodgrains Bank and other organizations that could see the connection between lack of aid for agriculture and ongoing poverty. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) responded to this call by making food security one of its three main priorities.

>> Ongoing advocacy is required to prioritize aid for agriculture and increase support to small-scale farmers in developing countries.



For whom do we advocate?

We focus on policies affecting people who experience hunger, many of whom are small-scale farmers. This includes increasing financing from the Canadian government for adaptations to climate change, promoting more and better aid for agriculture, and measures—such as food reserves—to protect vulnerable people in times of food emergencies. We also encourage Canadians to consider their own participation in the global economy, and our use of resources in a world still marked by inequality.

At the Foodgrains Bank, we focus our attention on strategic areas related to hunger where we think we can make a difference. We encourage public support at key moments when we believe we can influence decisions related to global hunger.

>> Canadian Foodgrains Bank supports small-scale farmers to learn skills such as conservation agriculture in response to soil degradation and increased droughts.



Photo: CIMMYT

How can we start advocating?

Where two or three are gathered in my name.... A single voice in support of food justice is good, but the effect becomes more powerful with a collective voice. A simple place to start is to gather a Harvest of Letters. Personal letters or other handmade forms of communication are more effective than using online or electronic methods. Here are 10 simple steps for churches or small groups to put on a Harvest of Letters event:

1. Gather together prayerfully

Bring a spiritual and prayerful focus to your action. Ask friends or others in your faith community to join you. It's okay to start small—speaking out is about faithfully using the voice God has given us.

2. Learn about the issue

Go to “Get Involved” at foodgrainsbank.ca for the current Harvest of Letters campaign. Visit our website for other resources and to learn more about the root causes of hunger in developing countries.



3. Get support

In addition to friends and colleagues, Canadian Foodgrains Bank staff can provide additional information, helpful details, advice or strategies to help you advocate on issues related to global hunger. Contact us!

4. Make a plan of action

A bit of planning can expand your success in holding a Harvest of Letters. Review your resources, decide on good timing and space for a letter-writing event, and seek the appropriate approval from personnel if doing this at your church or school.

5. Invite your community to participate

People take action when it is communicated clearly and openly as to how and why the issue is important to them. Biblical examples of advocacy like those mentioned in this booklet help explain the purpose of this kind of action.



Photos: Pierre Marceel, flickr.com/teggart



6. Gather to write personal letters

Have pens, paper, and envelopes ready to go. Identify all Members of Parliament being addressed. This information is available by postal code at www.parl.gc.ca. Have copies of the Harvest of Letters sample letter available for

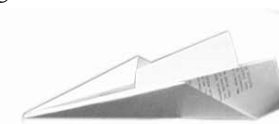
people and remind them to engage the issue in a positive, constructive way. Postage to the House of Commons is free.

7. Pray over the letters

Prayer is the most basic form of advocacy. Have someone publicly bless and thank God for the letters. If your church or small group isn't already praying regularly for the impoverished people in the world, suggest a way to introduce this as a regular part of worship.

8. Send the letters and the Harvest of Letters Report

Mail the letters and the completed reporting form, or access the online report on the Harvest of Letters webpage. By sharing this information with Canadian Foodgrains Bank, you will be kept informed about what is being done collectively across the country.

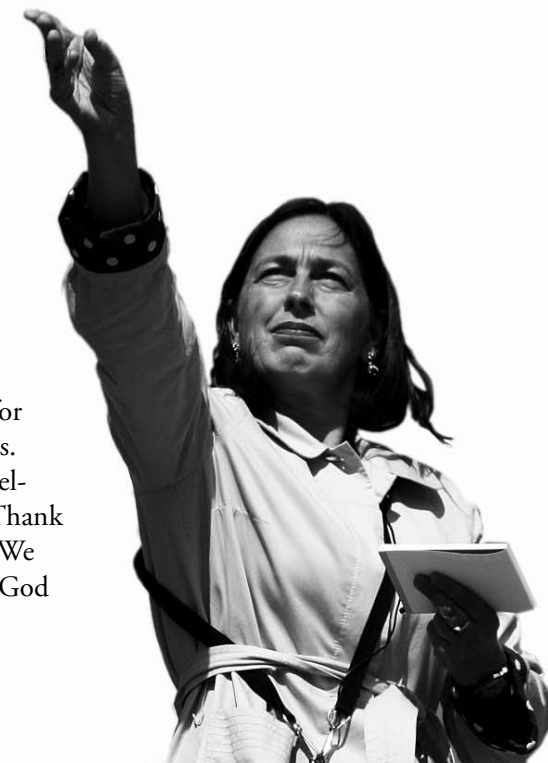


9. Keep in touch

Staying informed with the process of change at the policy level will keep up your energy for advocacy. You can do this by joining the Food Justice Network at foodgrainsbank.ca under “Get Involved”. Advocacy takes practice, so plan to learn for the next time around!

10. Give thanks and give feedback

After getting people to take action, it's important for them to know about the importance of their efforts. Consider how you will share updates or policy developments—email, church bulletin, Facebook, etc. Thank people for their action, regardless of the outcome. We celebrate our faithfulness to the call and trust that God will continue to work with us for change.



Are there other ways to be advocates?



Visit your Member of Parliament

It's simpler than you think! This type of action is effective, provided there is an issue currently up for decision that can be influenced by meeting with an MP in a timely way. It's important to have spent some time studying the issue or seeking guidance from Canadian Foodgrains Bank in preparation for your meeting. Citizens can schedule a visit with their MP to inform them of an issue and urge them to take action.

Officials are more likely to be receptive to their constituents' concerns if they feel appreciated for their attention to a matter and if they are gaining greater awareness on an issue.

Written or visual communication

Articles for local newspapers, letters to the editor, and blogs are other ways we can speak out about hunger. Flash mobs, videos, banners, or creative visuals can also be used within a strategy to get a message across to decision makers. Again, it helps to be well-informed, so spend time learning about the issue.

Education

People will often gladly do a small action to support an initiative—if they just feel they know about the issue and how to communicate it.

With a bit of background reading you can gather people to learn more, preferably through mutual learning and dialogue. Think beyond formal terms—people learn well in living rooms or coffee shops. Consider inviting a local Regional Coordinator to explain the work of the Foodgrains Bank.

Ways we haven't thought of yet

All kinds of creative methods have been used to get a message across collectively. Efforts like these often extend their reach to more people through radio, TV, print or social media. The goal is to condense the information and issue to make it simple to understand and move people to action. Be imaginative... and be positive!



Photo: flickr.com/people/disaster_area

Advocating puts you in good company!

When speaking out on the issue of hunger, you become part of a network of people for whom hunger in a world of abundance is unacceptable. Here are some other ways to participate:

Pray: support people who experience hunger through prayer—a vital form of advocacy. Fast for Change was initiated to encourage churches to reflect, pray and act. Fasting also leads to changes in how we consume in a world of finite resources. Sign on at fastforchange.ca and get resources for your home, church, or campus;

Give: donate money or grain to Canadian Foodgrains Bank; every year tens of thousands of people across Canada express their concern for people who don't have enough to eat by making a donation directly or through one of over 200 growing projects, where groups or individuals host an event or grow and sell crops to raise funds for the Foodgrains Bank;

Learn: attend an event on food and hunger issues or participate in an international food study tour to learn more about the root causes of hunger.

To learn about growing projects, events, study tours, or to become part of the Food Justice Network, look under Get Involved at foodgrainsbank.ca.

>> Each year, the Foodgrains Bank commits around \$35 million worth of food aid, food security, and nutrition programs to 2 million people in over 30 countries, thanks to the generosity of Canadians and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).



Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a partnership of 15 churches and church-based agencies working together to end global hunger. We do this by working with local partners in food aid, food security, and nutrition projects, by influencing public policies related to hunger, and by getting Canadians more involved in these efforts.

foodgrainsbank.ca • 1.800.665.0377

Member agencies:

ADRA Canada • Canadian Baptist Ministries • Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace • Canadian Lutheran World Relief • Christian and Missionary Alliance Canada • Christian Reformed World Relief Committee Canada • Emergency Relief & Development Overseas (Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada) • Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada • Mennonite Central Committee Canada • Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Canada • Presbyterian World Service & Development • Primate's World Relief & Development Fund (Anglican Church of Canada) • The Salvation Army • The United Church of Canada • World Relief Canada

