

An Invitation

Use Your Influence on Congress

Dear Friends,

Political stalemates in Congress have grown severe and frequent in recent years to the point that brinkmanship is almost normal. Congress has shown that it prefers to operate in crisis mode. It puts in place short-term fixes and does not care about the long-term consequences. This is not good for our country, especially our children.

For 2015, Bread for the World's Offering of Letters focuses on a domestic hunger issue—our government's feeding and nutrition programs for children in the United States. These time-tested programs reflect our country's long history of providing protection and collective support to children. For example, our communities provide a free, full-time education to children for more than a dozen years, and labor laws keep children out of the workforce.

Our federal government, through the actions of Congress, also has in place a variety of programs that operate as safety nets for the food and nutrition needs of our nation's children. Just as our government and people view primary and secondary education as a long-term investment in children, these federal child feeding and nutrition programs have long-term benefits as well.

In the last several years, research by Bread for the World Institute has shown that giving children solid nutrition early in life—starting even in the womb—benefits them in a multitude of ways throughout their lives and well into adulthood. The Institute has been a leader in the 1,000 Days initiative, which advocates for maternal and child nutrition in the critical period from a woman's pregnancy to her child's second birthday. Studies have shown that, in developing countries, malnutrition during this period can cause stunting and other development problems in the bodies and brains of children. The risks are the same for our own children in this country.

In other words, giving children a healthy start in life—solid nutrition—pays off for years, and not just for individual children, but for whole communities and countries. Healthy children who have received adequate food and nutrition grow strong physically and intellectually. They perform better in school and get sick less often. Their chances at better jobs are higher, and thus their earning potential and



productivity are higher. They are more likely stay out of trouble with the law. They are more able to provide for their families, and they contribute to their communities and our nation's economy in stronger ways.

In many ways, it all comes down to food, which touches so many parts of our lives. Nutrition investments in children pay dividends over the long-term—for years and generations. This, unfortunately, is counter to the way Congress operates. While federal nutrition safety nets are already in place for children and families who fall on hard times, you and other Christians can help ensure these programs stay in place and are strengthened through the 2015 Offering of Letters so that all children are fed. And so I invite you to write to your members of Congress and urge them to continue to fund critical programs that feed and help our children grow. Let's do this together for the sake of our children—and for the benefit of all of us.

In Christ,

Rev. David Beckmann
President

A Biblical Reflection on Feeding Our Children

Giving Good and Nutritional Gifts



Living into the fullness that God intends for each of us includes taking care of our bodies. We do this by eating well and ensuring that our children eat well too.

Consider the following reality we face today concerning our children being fed and properly nourished: In this wealthy nation, nearly 16 million—one in five—children live in households that struggle to put food on the table. Children are especially vulnerable to the effects of hunger and malnutrition. Children who experience hunger have overall poorer health and find it harder to learn in school. Even short-term episodes of hunger can cause lasting damage to a child’s cognitive and social development. Not investing in our children with substantial “bread” today can mean a variety of social and economic issues for them and all of us years down the road.

So where can we begin to address this problem? We, like the mother Rachel of the Old Testament, are summoned to lament and weep over this tragic reality. In our sorrow and repentance, we can find a holy and bold courage to be a stronger voice for change in our communities, states, country, and world today.

“A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more.” — Jeremiah 31:15

Today, Ramah is our own, beloved United States. We, like Jeremiah who invoked Rachel’s memory, must refuse to be comforted for our children until each child is fed and properly nourished. Other prophets lamented the ways of God’s people when they failed to do what God required of them.

In our lamenting and weeping, we give witness to God’s love and compassion for people and to the abundant life God offers to all of us. In the story of Nehemiah, grief and prayers for a city in ruin leads Nehemiah to answer God’s call to rebuild a broken place of despair (Nehemiah 2:5). So for us today, our prayers can deepen our resolve to partner in God’s work to end hunger and lift the barriers to God’s intention for us and our children.

We can be a voice with Bread for the World that urges Congress to adopt policies and programs that feed and nourish all of our children. When we do this, we are giving good gifts, so that we and our children will be blessed. Scriptures like Matthew 18:5 affirm this by stating, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

We, who have been welcomed in our baptism as brothers and sisters of the Risen Christ, can be bold and persistent in challenging our nation’s leaders to offer bread, not stones, to our nation’s children.

“Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”

— Matthew 7:9-11

This passage from Matthew’s Gospel presumes a certainty: We will feed our children without hesitation. At first glance, Jesus’ questions invite an emphatic answer of “no.” It would be unthinkable to withhold from our kin. After all, who would want to give a child a stone instead of bread or a snake instead of fish to eat?

Yet the image of a stone is a sad reminder that we have not done enough to feed and nourish all of our children. We have not modeled the kind of generosity Matthew attributes to God in this passage. Instead, we have fed children in our midst with the stones of hunger, poverty, and malnourishment. Our children are prevented from receiving their just portion of *daily bread* (Matthew 6:11), as Jesus described earlier in this Gospel.

Federal Feeding and Nutrition Programs for Children

An Overview

Food affects many parts of our lives, both individually and collectively. Your own, personal weight and health is directly connected to the food you eat. And the desire of many consumers to buy organically grown food is an example of how food use affects many of us.

We have learned in recent years that giving toddlers an early start in their education can give them advantages as they enter kindergarten—better-developed speaking skills, for example. These advantages can produce other advantages and build upon each other. Children will learn more quickly, which often translates into a better education, which, in turn, can mean a better job and higher productivity and pay. In important ways, we all benefit from a more educated and highly productive workforce.

The same is true of food, given how integral it is to our lives from the day we are born. Ensuring children eat consistently and receive the nutrition they need has advantages that can grow and multiply as children grow. Well-fed children are healthier, have fewer behavioral problems, and learn more easily. This often means that, over the years, they become responsible and productive as they progress through school and enter the workforce and family life as adults. This means fewer widespread problems, such as lack of skilled workers or public-health issues like diabetes and obesity.



Joseph Moller/Bread for the World

Like adults, children need a lunch break in their days, and they perform better when they have eaten well.

Our Collective Concern for Children's Nutrition

Nearly 16 million children in the United States—one in five—live in households that struggle to put food on the table. Many of these children have parents who have job and work hard, but their wages aren't high enough to cover the high costs of rent, transportation, and utilities—and daily meals. So our federal government's feeding programs serve as a lifeline for vulnerable children and families. Because children are hit especially hard by the effects of hunger and malnutrition, nutrition programs aimed at children are particularly important. A healthy start in life—even before a child is born—pays off for years, not only for individual children and families, but for communities and our nation as a whole.

What the Federal Government Does

Only one out of every 20 grocery bags that feed people who are hungry come from church food pantries and other private charities. Federal nutrition programs, from school meals to SNAP (formerly known as food stamps), provide the rest. Our government's child nutrition programs serve millions of children each year. Here are the major programs and their functions for low-income children:

	National School Lunch Program	School Breakfast Program	Summer Food Service Program	Child and Adult Care Food Program	WIC Program
What does it provide?	Free or reduced-price lunches	Free or reduced-price breakfasts	Meals during the summer months	Healthy meals and snacks	Nutritious food, nutrition education, and healthcare referrals
For whom?	21.5 million low-income children	11.2 million low-income children	2.4 million children in 2013	Approximately 3.4 million children	8.3 million low-income pregnant women, infants, and children up to age 5
Where?	In more than 100,000 schools	In more than 89,000 schools	Over 47,000 community-based sites	In child care or qualified after-school programs	Food is bought by recipients with WIC checks or a debit card

Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Service

As the table above shows, most of these programs provide ready-to-eat food in places where children can be reached directly. Food provided through these programs meets science-based nutrition guidelines.

To receive free or reduced-price meals or WIC benefits, children must live in households that are “low-income” as defined by the federal government. The illustration below shows the programs that a typical family of four is eligible for at various income levels.

The Current State of These Programs

Congress must review and renew child nutrition programs every five years, and they are up for “reauthorization” in 2015. Currently, these programs are governed by the Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act of 2010. When Congress reauthorized child nutrition programs in 2010, it made some of the biggest investments in their histories. Nutrition standards were set for all food served in schools, and more children were given access to the meals they needed.

Despite these gains, however, gaps in participation remain, and far too many children continue to live at risk of hunger. Of the 21.5 million low-income children who receive a school lunch, only a little over half also receive breakfast. And only about one in seven receive meals during the summer months. Children are most at risk of hunger during the summer and school breaks.

What Do We Want Congress to Do?

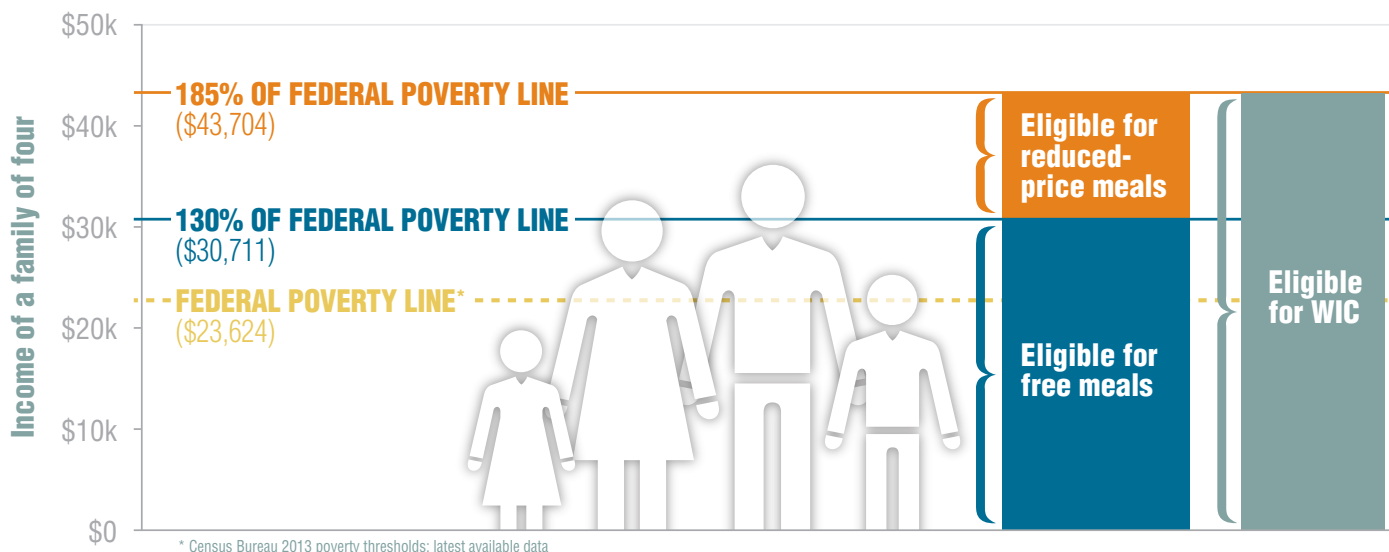
The new Congress has an opportunity to give more children at risk of hunger access to the healthy food they need. But there are challenges in doing so. With the start of the 114th Congress in 2015, there are new members and new leaders with little to no experience with child hunger or child nutrition programs. These members of Congress must be educated on the importance of feeding children. Additionally, the tight national budget and political climate make it harder to talk about programs that require more funding.

Still, Congress must act by September 30, 2015, when authority for many of these child nutrition programs end.

Bread for the World is urging Congress to pass a child nutrition bill that protects nutrition programs and gives more hungry children access to the meals they need to thrive. Specifically, we are asking Congress to:

1. **Continue strong investments in child nutrition programs.** These programs keep hunger at bay for millions of children, allowing them to learn and grow. Without these programs, child hunger and food insecurity would be much worse, and many more children would suffer from inadequate nutrition. Congress should maintain the gains made in the 2010 child nutrition bill, preserving both the funding and the nutrition standards that have proven effective.
2. **Improve children’s access to feeding programs.** Despite gains made in 2010, too many children are unable to get the meals they need to stay healthy and hunger-free, especially during non-school hours. Since 2010, a number of pilot projects have explored how to reach more children through the Summer Food Service Program the school lunch and breakfast programs. Congress should use this research to improve access and ensure children are receiving much-needed meals.
3. **Ensure improvements to child nutrition programs are not paid for by cuts to other vital safety-net programs** like SNAP (formerly known as food stamps). For the past several years, Congress has cut SNAP funding to pay for other programs. SNAP was also cut in the 2014 farm bill. Nearly half of all SNAP recipients are children, and so Congress must no longer look to SNAP or any other safety-net programs to pay for investments in our children.

Congress and our country should view child nutrition programs as investments in our children. Such investments will not only produce a healthier and stronger generation of adults in the coming decades, but they can be a big step on the road to ending hunger by 2030. But that means we need to plant—invest—today in order to have something to reap later.



Federal Feeding and Nutrition Programs for Children

Questions and Answers

1. How long have federal child nutrition programs been around?

Our country has recognized the value of child nutrition for well over a century. Congress made the school lunch program permanent by passing the National School Lunch Act in 1946. At the time, it was seen as “a measure of national security, to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation’s children.” Recruits needed for World War II were unable to pass the physical examination due to malnutrition. Between 1965 and 1975, Congress responded to increased poverty and hunger among children with the War on Poverty. School breakfast, summer meal, and childcare feeding program pilots quickly proved successful in reducing child poverty. These expansions created a more complete approach to child nutrition by providing food and nutrition assistance to children beyond lunchtime. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) began in 1974 to fill the gap before children start attending school. WIC provides food and nutrition support to expectant and new mothers and young children.

2. Why do we need child nutrition programs? Isn’t it a parent’s responsibility to feed their children?

Parents do have the primary responsibility for feeding their children. But many children live in working-poor families in which the parents don’t earn enough to pay for everything their family needs, such as rent, transportation, utilities, and even food. Some parents cannot work for a variety of reasons, such as a disability, or because they cannot find a job.

National nutrition programs allow many parents to work full days without having to worry if their children will get nutritious meals. These programs provide food while children are away from home. Free and reduced-price meals are offered to qualifying, low-income children to ensure they receive at least one



We care for our bodies by eating well. We care for our children. We should also care that our children eat well.

full, nutritious meal a day.

As Christians, it is our mandate from the Bible to care for our neighbors, whether they are next door, in the next state, or on the next continent. This care includes providing food for people when they are hungry. The Bible shows over and over that God has a special concern for people who are poor or hungry. As people of faith in a wealthy country, we have a responsibility to ensure that children, who deserve protection and care from adults, have all of their needs met.

3. With so many different child nutrition programs, is there a lot of overlap and duplication?

Child nutrition programs are a vital piece of a national safety net and help meet the nutritional needs of millions of children, including millions of children at risk of hunger. Programs operate in every state and provide nutritious meals to help children learn and grow. They reach children at different ages, and each is designed to give children access to food in a different location or period. The School Lunch and Breakfast Programs serve meals at schools. The Summer Food Service Program helps children access meals

and snacks during the summer months. The Child and Adult Care Food Program serves children in day care or in after-school programs. Finally, WIC assists low-income women, infants, and children up to age five. It provides foods that supply nutrients lacking in their diets, education on healthy eating, and even health care referrals.

4. What is Congress doing with the programs this year?

Reauthorization is the process by which Congress reviews and renews laws, which include the designation of funding for programs. Child nutrition programs are reauthorized every five years. The last reauthorization happened in 2010 and authorized child nutrition programs through September 2015. On September 30, 2015, the authority for some of these programs will expire. Congress must reauthorize them so that children and families at risk of hunger will continue to receive needed nutrition assistance.

5. What changes were made in the last reauthorization in 2010?

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 made some of the biggest invest-



Joseph Molieri/Bread for the World

Nutritionists say that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Students have active minds, and ensuring they eat breakfast gives their brains the fuel they need.

ments in child nutrition programs in more than 30 years, thanks in part to Bread for the World's advocacy efforts. With a focus on improving nutrition, the act provided additional funding for school lunch programs that met new nutrition standards. The act also included some provisions to improve children's access to the programs. It made the after-school meal program nationwide and allowed schools in high-poverty areas to determine school-wide eligibility based on census data. It also provided funding for improving "direct certification," which allows children participating in one program, like SNAP (formerly known as food stamps), to more easily receive free meals at school. As a result, participation of eligible children increased. But gaps remain, and more can be done to connect children at risk of hunger with child nutrition programs.

6. Why aren't more children being reached by these programs?

The school lunch program serves more than 30 million children, including 21.5 million low-income children. While states have made progress in ensuring children are accessing the school breakfast program, access to summer programs in particular continues to be a challenge. According to a survey by Share Our Strength, 80 percent of children are home during the summer and have difficulty getting to summer sites. In some areas, there aren't even summer sites available because of geographical limitations, for example.

7. What are some specific improvements we want to see in this reauthorization?

Congress must pass a bill that gives children who are at risk of hunger easier access to meals when and where they need them, particularly after school and during the summer months. Many states have piloted innovative projects to reach more children during summer breaks. These include mobile summer meal sites, backpack programs, and additional money for families to buy groceries. In areas where children are unable to easily get to summer food sites, states should have the option to implement alternative solutions based on the successful pilot projects.

8. Is there strong support for these programs in Congress?

Child nutrition programs have traditionally had strong bipartisan support in Congress. Operational in every state, the lunch programs alone benefit more than 30 million children, contributing to a healthier labor force and strong economy in the future. Still, given the federal budget climate and divided government, this reauthorization could be impacted by partisan gridlock. It's up to you to make your voice heard and ensure every member of Congress makes passing a child nutrition bill that closes the hunger gap a top priority.

9. Where do the states fit in with these programs? Why does the federal government need to be involved in them?

Child nutrition program rules are set and funded by the federal government but facilitated by the states. Ending child hunger requires a strong partnership between the federal government, state and local governments, and local communities. Churches, local food pantries, and other private charities are doing a lot to alleviate hunger directly. But they can't end hunger alone. For every one bag of groceries provided by charities, the federal government provides 20 times more bags of food assistance.

Oversight and funding of child nutrition programs at the federal level ensures that all children—regardless of the state they live in or what the budget situation in that state may be—have access to the food they need learn and grow.

10. Wasn't there a goal to end child hunger by 2015? How is it possible that almost 16 million children are still at risk of hunger?

In 2008, President Obama and some members of Congress set a goal to end child hunger by 2015. National anti-hunger groups, including Bread for the World, embraced this goal and have advocated for a variety of policies toward reaching it, including protecting SNAP (formerly food stamps), strengthening the earned income tax credit and child tax credit, and increasing the minimum wage. Due to the recession followed by gridlock in Congress, we refocused our advocacy efforts on protecting critical safety-net programs. Still, the number of children living in families at risk of hunger peaked in 2009 and has been slowly declining since then.

11. How does advocacy on child nutrition programs in 2015 fit into Bread's goal to end hunger by 2030?

If we want to have adults in 2030 be hunger-free, the children those adults are now need to be hunger-free today. The fastest, most direct way to reduce child hunger is through existing child nutrition programs. However, ending hunger for good requires a sustainable solution to poverty. Children are hungry because their families are struggling economically. As stated in Bread for the World Institute's 2014 *Hunger Report: Ending Hunger in America*, a long-term solution to hunger requires good jobs, investments in people, a strong safety net, and strong public-private partnerships. Child nutrition programs are a critical component of our country's federal safety-net programs. Strengthening them is critical to meeting the goal of ending hunger by 2030.

Federal Feeding and Nutrition Programs for Children by the Numbers

More than
1 in 5 children
in the United States live
at risk of hunger.



Closing the Child Hunger Gap

Receives summer meals	MISSING MEALS					
Receives breakfast	Receives breakfast	Receives breakfast	Receives breakfast			
Receives lunch	Receives lunch	Receives lunch	Receives lunch	Receives lunch	Receives lunch	Receives lunch

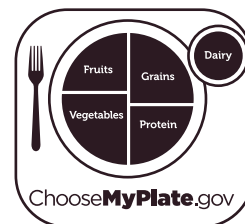
If **7** low-income children get a lunch at school every day...

- only **4** of those also receive breakfast
- only **1** also receives meals during the summer

Children, like everybody else, need a balanced diet. Good nutrition helps kids be healthy and to grow and learn. Meals provided under national child nutrition programs comply with Dietary Guidelines for Americans, published by the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture. When children



learn to eat well at a young age, they develop healthy eating habits that last a lifetime.



Write your members of Congress. Urge them to close the hunger gap by passing a child nutrition bill that gives children who are hungry access to the meals they need to learn and grow.



Real-Life Stories About Nutrition Programs for Children

Lunch 'n' Learn

Watch the video version of this story on the DVD included in this Offering of Letters kit or on the Bread website at www.bread.org/OL.

At precisely 11:20 a.m. on a cold, late-fall morning, the bell rings at Anne Frank Elementary School in Philadelphia, Pa. A minute later, the morning stillness in the cafeteria is disrupted by the conversations and shouts of more than 200 second graders. They file into the room by classroom and go through the line to pick up their lunches. For the next couple of hours, the large room is filled with noise and energy.

Among the first group of students eating a school-provided lunch daily is Aidan, the 7-year-old son of Barbie Izquierdo. His sister, Leylanie, age 9, will eat lunch during her grade's appointed time 40 minutes later.

This lunchtime routine plays out every weekday at the school and in schools across the United States. Whether it's breakfast in the morning before classes or lunch at midday, the food provided to school children under national nutrition programs gives them the energy they need for the next few hours of learning. Meals provided after school or at day-care centers are also important parts of the national nutrition program.

While these children don't think about it, the food that is subsidized by the federal government is quietly nourishing their bodies and brains so they can learn and grow. As Mickey Komins, the principal at Anne Frank Elementary—and probably any educator—will tell you, “We're teaching for a lifetime—not just for that day.”

Teaching today and laying the foundation for students' futures entail not just classroom instruction but making sure students have full stomachs so their minds can be fed. Feeding students involves staff at all levels in every school that carries out any of the government's child nutrition programs, from administrators down through teachers and cafeteria workers.

One cafeteria worker who sits at a cash register at the end of the food line at the Philadelphia school tells a student, “Go back and get a fruit cup.” Workers know the students they see every day and make sure they are following the government's nutrition guidelines by eating something from each of the major food groups—protein, grains, and fruits and vegetables. Cafeteria managers sometimes use students to test new menu items or encourage students to try a new vegetable. In these ways, students are also being educated on eating well and developing healthy habits for a lifetime.

All Philadelphia public schools provide every student with a free lunch regardless of their family income, a practice at many schools across the country where a high percentage of students would qualify for free meals. At many other schools, family income determines whether a student pays the full price, reduced price, or gets a meal completely free.

At the end of the school day, Barbie comes to the school to pick up Aidan and Leylanie. Leylanie does her assigned chore of washing the dishes while Barbie sits with Aidan and helps him with his homework. Barbie asks her children every day what they had for lunch. She is reassured that they receive a solid, nutritious meal during their school day. One day a week, Aidan and Leylanie eat a free breakfast at school with their classmates, but they choose to eat breakfast at home on the other days.

Barbie Izquierdo helps Aidan, age 7, with his homework after school. Barbie knows that the food he eats throughout the day helps to keep him focused on his school work.



Joseph Molieri/Bread for the World

“If school couldn’t provide lunch for children, there would be a lot of children going home with probably nothing to eat at all,” says Barbie. This isn’t the case for her children now, but it used to be. “There were times when I had to send my kids to bed because I didn’t have enough food for them to eat. So had they not received any type of food in school, then they would have had nothing.” The single mother was on SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) just a couple of years ago after losing her job.

Barbie moves to the kitchen to begin preparing dinner, a dish of noodles with broccoli. When dinner is ready, the family eats together at the dining room table.

“People always think that we’re asking for a handout because we’re on welfare or public assistance,” explains Barbie. “And what we’re really asking for is the opportunity to show them that we’re just like you. We’re smart, we have wants, we have needs, we have dreams. We want the best for our kids just as they want the best for their kids. We just grew up in different circumstances.”

Barbie is currently taking classes toward her associate degree. She is interested in working in the field of criminal justice. “If I can build my life to a place where they don’t have to worry about their home being taken from them and they don’t have to worry about opening the fridge and nothing being in there, then I’ve accomplished everything.”



Joseph Moller/Bread for the World

Leylanie, age 9, Barbie Izquierdo's daughter, does her homework after school. The school lunch she ate fuels her brain until dinnertime.

Barbie Izquierdo in 2013's *A Place at the Table* documentary

Past participants in Bread for the World's Offerings of Letters first met Barbie Izquierdo in 2013. That year, she appeared in *A Place at the Table*, a documentary about the hunger, stress, and complications in the lives of Americans for whom putting food on the table is a daily struggle.

The 2013 Offering of Letters carried the same name as the film, which was a component of Bread's campaign that year. The film makes the connection between eliminating hunger and advocating for public policies and programs that ensure a place at the table for all people.

The film is still available on DVD, Blu-Ray, iTunes, and on demand for churches and other groups that would like to use it as the basis of a discussion on hunger and advocacy in the United States. For more information, visit www.takepart.com/table.

Here is how Bread's 2013 Offering of Letters introduced Izquierdo as a subject in *A Place at the Table*:

Barbie Izquierdo is a young mother who has found the task of feeding her children challenging. Having lost her job during the recession, she was often unable to buy enough food for her daughter, son, and herself. Looking back on the hardest days, Barbie recalls thinking, *I literally have nothing left. What do I give them?* Some days, Barbie

skipped meals to make sure that her children ate.

“I feel like America has this huge stigma of how families are supposed to eat together at a table,” Barbie said, “but they don’t talk about what it takes to get you there or what’s there when you’re actually at the table.”

In fact, the tables of young families are most often the ones standing bare. Households with children are twice as likely to experience food insecurity, meaning that the family does not know how to find its next meal.

Having gone hungry many days as a child, Barbie was determined that her children would not be caught in the hunger and poverty cycle.

As the valedictorian of her high school, Barbie dreamed of going to college and earning a degree in criminal justice so that she could earn a decent salary. But first she had to figure out how to keep her children fed. The seemingly simple act of providing food was a stressful struggle—jobs are hard to find in her North Philadelphia neighborhood.

Eventually, Barbie qualified for benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps), which provided some relief. But finding healthy and affordable food on a slim budget is its own challenge for those who live in poor neighborhoods. Barbie had to take two buses and travel an hour to reach a decent grocery store. The food she was able to buy with her SNAP benefits usually lasted only three weeks.

“It gets tiring,” said Barbie.

Write to Congress

Ask Congress to protect and improve access to child nutrition programs

Offering of Letters campaigns encourage individuals to write personalized letters to Congress about anti-hunger legislation and policies. Bread for the World provides a sample letter and information about the issues so you can encourage people to prepare letters to their representative and senators in Congress. Our letters will urge Congress to protect and improve access to child nutrition programs. (See pages 3 through 7 for more information about the issues in this year's campaign.)

In this digital age, it may seem old-fashioned to write personal letters to members of Congress when it's so easy to click on and send a form email message. But because form emails are

so easy, Congress is flooded with electronic messages. Research indicates that the volume of form emails has decreased their effectiveness. But writing a personal letter or sending personal email message tells your member of Congress that you are so concerned about the issue that you've taken time to write him or her about it. Congressional staffers log each letter; the number of letters indicates how serious the issue is to constituents.

At certain times throughout this campaign, we will also be calling on you to augment your personal letters and emails with a phone call or a visit to the offices of your members of Congress.

Writing a letter is simple and should take only a few minutes. Follow these steps for an effective letter:

1. Write your name and address at the end of your letter and on the envelope so your members of Congress know you are one of the people they represent.

2. Ask for specific action, using this sentence or your own words:

I urge you to protect child nutrition programs from cuts and harmful policy changes and improve children's access to these programs while not cutting other safety-net programs.

3. Give reasons for your request. Some examples:

- Share your personal story about what motivated you to write. Letters with personal stories are the most compelling and effective.
- My church is already helping by [example], but I also expect the government to do its part to address hunger in this country.

4. Send your letter to Congress. Put each letter in a separate envelope and address it.

Send your letters to:

Sen. _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Rep. _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

SAMPLE LETTER

[Date]

Dear Senator _____, or Dear Rep. _____,

As you consider renewing child nutrition programs this year, I urge you make sure children at risk of hunger can get the healthy meals they need to learn and grow.

Specifically, I urge you to protect child nutrition programs from cuts and harmful policy changes and improve children's access to these programs while not cutting other safety-net programs.

Child nutrition programs serve as a lifeline for America's vulnerable children and their families. As your constituent, I urge to protect and improve child nutrition programs.

Sincerely,

[your name]
[your address]
[city, state, ZIP]

For the most current version of this sample letter, visit www.bread.org/ol.

A Prayer and Litany for an Offering of Letters

Commit Your Efforts to God

Prayer

O God, our creator, we give thanks that you preserve and sustain all life through good government and other public and private institutions. We ask you to bless our letters to Congress. May this expression of our democratic rights be part of your work of ending hunger. We pray also for our nation's decision makers. Grant them compassion and wisdom so that all children in this nation receive the nutrition their young bodies and minds need to learn and grow. We ask these things in the name of the Risen Christ, who teaches us to pray that your will be done on earth and that all may have the daily bread you provide. Amen.

Litany

In our baptism with Christ, you welcome your sons and daughters, assuring us that your loving kindness is without end,

God of welcome, we give you thanks.

For children in this wealthy nation, who are too often welcomed with stones rather than with daily bread,

God of mercy, we repent and ask your forgiveness.

From selfishness and greed that keep your abundance from being shared with all people in need,

God of grace, free us from anxiety and fear.

For the bounty of farms and orchards throughout our land,

God of abundance, we give you thanks.

For good government and civil society, for wise and just leaders,

God of all power, may your will be done on earth.

For parents who struggle to make a living and provide for their children,

God of strength, grant them courage and patience.

For teachers and administrators who help children learn in the face of so many challenges,

God of wisdom, we give thanks for their dedication and service.

That we may challenge our nation's leaders to see that all children receive the food they need to grow and learn,

God of courage, give us bold and persistent voices.

That, freed by Christ, we may spend our days freeing others from want and need,

God of love, grant us joy and hope in serving our neighbors.

We offer these petitions, trusting that Jesus, the Bread of Life, is among us as we boldly pray.

Amen.



Bread for the World photo

Personal letters are crucial and effective. But they are only the first step. Consider following up with a phone call, a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, and a visit to the local offices of your members of Congress. Meet your senators or representative in Washington, D.C., during Bread for the World's Lobby Day in June 2015.



bread**rising**

WORKING TOGETHER TO END HUNGER BY 2030

A CAMPAIGN TO END HUNGER

www.bread.org/breadrising

We are at a turning point in history when we can end hunger. Many elements are already in place: poverty has been cut in half around the world; chronic hunger has been significantly reduced; and governments of nations around the world are coming together on the goal of ending extreme hunger and poverty by 2030—15 years from now.

In order to have a world without hunger by 2030, God calls us to make sure that all children are fed. Currently, one in five children in the United States suffers from hunger. This is why the 2015 Offering of Letters: Feed our Children is a critical part of Bread for the World's long-term goal to end hunger by 2030.

We can end hunger only if we have strong leadership from the U.S. government. Our next national elections are in 2016, and we need to vote for leaders who are committed to ending hunger. Having a Congress and a president and administration committed to making hunger a national priority and in place by 2017 will enable us to enact policies and laws so that we can end hunger by 2030.

To achieve our vision of a world without hunger, each of us is called to step up our roles—to increase our commitments to pray, act, and give. Reaching our vision requires Bread to build a collective voice against hunger in every congressional district. Bread needs to become a stronger voice in national life. We need to ground our work in God's love in Jesus Christ. And Bread needs to win a series of advocacy victories.

The 2015 Offering of Letters is one of the advocacy victories we must win in order to end hunger 15 years from now.

Join us in this year's Offering of Letters campaign and in the larger campaign of Bread Rising.



Rebecca Vander Meulen