

Ramadan Action Guide:

Advocacy Resource
on Hunger and Poverty

*Those that give their wealth for the cause
of God can be compared to a grain of corn which
brings forth seven ears, each bearing a hundred grains.*

– The Qur'an, 2:261

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Think

Awareness: The Scope of Hunger

Global

- During this month of Ramadan—usually the peak of harvest season in the horn of Africa—9 million people in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia will need humanitarian assistance due to catastrophic drought and high global food prices.
- An estimated 950 million people in the world suffer from hunger.
- In 2008, nearly 3 million children died before they reached their fifth birthday due to hunger and malnutrition.
- Malnutrition kills more people than HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined.

Domestic

- In the U.S., 1 in 4 children, more than 17 million, live in households that have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet.
- Only 4% of food assistance in the U.S. comes from charitable sources. Federal programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps), School Lunch and WIC comprise 96% of all nutrition assistance.
- From 2009-2011 the number of SNAP recipients increased by 10 million. 1 in 8 Americans and nearly 1 in 4 children receive SNAP benefits.
- Unemployment and poverty have risen during the recession, but hunger has not—largely because of SNAP. As an entitlement program, SNAP can respond in times of rising need.

Care

Compassion

Ramadan is the time to serve those who are less fortunate and an opportunity to reinforce the spiritual reasons for fighting hunger and poverty. It is also an ideal time to educate the diverse Muslim-American community. The hungry and poor should be, and always are, emphasized in supplication during Ramadan taraweeh prayers. As we experience hunger, the best way to follow that spiritual experience is through action on behalf of poor and hungry people. The following ideas can be intensified during Ramadan in the spirit of Zakat.

Your mosque or organization can hold an event highlighting issues related to hunger and poverty. These gatherings may include leaders of other faiths and members of their respective congregations which would allow non-Muslims an opportunity to visit your establishment during Ramadan. With minimal effort, your mosque and others in your area can team up for fundraisers, food drives, advocacy efforts or direct feeding programs, which will make a considerable difference in the lives of poor and hungry people.

“They will ask you about almsgiving. Say, ‘Whatever you bestow in charity must go to parents and to kinsfolk, to the orphans and to the destitute and to the traveler in need. God is aware of whatever good you do.’”

– The Qur’an, 2:215

Act

Advocate

Write or call your members of Congress

Communication with your Members of Congress is most effective if it is personalized and makes a specific request. Letters from constituents have an impact, especially when they are received in numbers.

For resources on letter writing and visiting your members of Congress, visit www.results.org/skills_center. RESULTS trains and supports grass roots citizen activists committed to ending poverty and hunger through advocacy.

ADVOCACY RESOURCES

ONE offers education resources on global hunger; materials to help you call, write, and meet with elected officials; and ideas for mobilizing your community.
Website: www.one.org/us/actnow

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation’s decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. They offer resources for faith-based advocacy on U.S. and global hunger and materials to help individuals call and write elected officials.
Website: www.bread.org

Act (cont.)

Meet with your elected officials

During the month of August, members of Congress are back home catching up on local news and visiting constituents. This is a great time to request a meeting with them to discuss the issues you care about.

Your greatest opportunity for success comes when you work in coalitions. Including representatives from a variety of faith communities demonstrates broad interest in the needs of hungry and poor people. Another way to make such efforts fruitful is by organizing a hunger awareness event and inviting an elected official to speak.

Educate

Public Awareness

Organize an event or community action to raise awareness about hunger and poverty during the month of Ramadan or the months immediately after. Fighting Poverty with Faith (FPWF) is a national, interfaith movement working to overcome poverty in the United States. The 2011 theme is “**Working Together to End Hunger.**” If an event during the month of Ramadan isn’t possible, consider organizing an event as part of the 2011 Fighting Poverty with Faith mobilization from **Thursday, October 27 to Sunday November 6, 2011.**

FPWF provides an “Action Toolbox” with helpful resources, including program templates for a Food Stamp Challenge and a Hunger Banquet, advocacy information, media and outreach materials, and links to organizations working on domestic hunger.

Hunger Banquet: Guests at the banquet draw a ticket at random that assigns them to a high-, middle-, or low income group. Each income level receives a corresponding meal: The 20 percent in the high-income group receive an elaborate meal; the 40 percent in the middle eat a simple meal; and the 40 percent in the low-income group have small portions of white bread and water. All the guests are invited to share their thoughts after the meal and to take action, volunteer and advocate.

Food Stamp Challenge: Live for one week on the average food stamp allotment. Leaders and community members take the Food Stamp Challenge to better understand how the program works and to highlight the prevalence of hunger in the U.S. From Thursday, October 27 through Thursday, November 3, participants across the country will live on the nationwide average food stamp benefit, approximately \$3.25 a day or \$1.08 a meal. Learn more and at: www.FightingPovertyWithFaith.com.

Serve

Coordinate Food Pantry/Shelter Efforts

Partnering with local anti-hunger organizations can help guide your Mosque’s efforts to serve hungry and poor people. By partnering, you can learn a great deal about your surrounding community and find that you can have a significant and lasting impact.

The **Hunger Free Communities Network** is web-based clearinghouse for local anti-hunger activists to connect, learn from each other, and access resources from hunger groups around the country. The website includes a blog, lively discussion forums, a directory of Hunger Free coalitions and an expansive resource library. To learn more about what you can do in your community to combat hunger, visit www.HungerFreeCommunities.org.

What can I call, write, and ask about?

Tell Congress that deficit reduction proposals should not include cuts to programs for poor and hungry people, and tell them what you think about the compromise that was passed.

Before heading home for August recess, members of Congress debated and voted on a budget bill and deficit reduction proposal that will have major consequences for hungry and poor people for years to come. The cuts proposed, and some of those included in the final compromise, will have disastrous consequences if fully implemented. As people of faith and conscience, we have a moral obligation to hold our leaders accountable and encourage them to defend these programs.

Learn more about the compromise Congress just enacted at www.bread.org/hunger/budget/ or www.cbpp.org, and find out how your Representative and Senators voted at Thomas.loc.gov.

Key Messages:

- **Tell your member of Congress that the budget should not be balanced on the backs of poor people, and share what you think about the deficit and budget compromise they passed before coming home.**
- **Ask them to join you and thousands of other people of faith and conscience around the country in forming a circle of protection around programs for poor and vulnerable people.**

Background: This spring, during the early days of the Federal budget and deficit debate, a group of humanitarian, Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders joined together in a campaign of fasting, prayer and action to form a circle of protection around programs for poor and vulnerable people. Nearly 40,000 people joined in the campaign, including 28 members of Congress. Learn more at www.HungerFast.org and <http://bit.ly/CoPletter> for more information.

Act (cont.)

Volunteer at Islamic Relief's Day of Dignity • October 1, 2011

In the spirit of Ramadan, Islamic Relief hosts "Day of Dignity," where communities around the country come together to provide services to homeless individuals and families in need to promote their well-being. "Day of Dignity" is a grassroots effort coordinated by thousands of volunteers who distribute clothing, hygiene items, toys and food, and provide free health screenings. Every year, the "Day of Dignity" provides services to over 25,000 individuals in need throughout the U.S.

Visit www.islamicreliefusa.org. Contact: Kyle J. Ismail—703.370.7202 or kismail@irusa.org

Atlanta, GA

Baltimore, MD

Chicago, IL

Dallas, TX

Detroit, MI

Flint, MI

Minneapolis, MN

Las Vegas, NV

Bronx, NY

Brooklyn, NY

Philadelphia, PA

Phoenix, AZ

Portland, OR

Seattle, WA

Washington, DC

About the contributors:



Islamic Relief USA is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) humanitarian organization, incorporated in the state of California in 1993. As an international relief and development organization, Islamic Relief strives to alleviate the poverty and suffering of the world's poorest people. Since its establishment, Islamic Relief has expanded greatly, with permanent locations in more than 35 countries worldwide. Islamic Relief operates a wide variety of projects, including education and training, water and sanitation, income generation, orphan support, health and nutrition, and emergency relief.

www.Islamicreliefusa.org



ONE is a grassroots campaign and advocacy organization backed by more than 2 million people from around the world and every walk of life who are committed to the fight against extreme poverty and preventable disease, particularly in Africa.

At **ONE**, we achieve change through advocacy. We hold world leaders accountable for the promises made to the poorest people, and we press these leaders to support better policies and more effective aid and trade reform. We also support greater democracy, accountability and transparency in developing countries so these resources can be effectively deployed.

ONE Sadaqa is a part of **ONE Sabbath**, which rallies individuals and organizations of all faiths to address the challenges of extreme poverty and global diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Together as **ONE**, we can save lives and build hope in Africa and the world's poorest countries, making a better world for us all.

www.one.org



The Alliance to End Hunger engages diverse institutions in building the political and public will to end hunger, both at home and abroad. The Alliance develops innovative partnerships among our members; political commitment among our leaders; and global connections among groups working to end hunger worldwide. The Alliance brings together more than 85 member—corporations, non-profit groups, universities, individuals, and Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious entities.

www.alliancetoendhunger.org



The Alliance to End Hunger supports the **Hunger Free Communities Network**. The **HFC Network** is a national platform for local anti-hunger coalitions, campaigns and collaborations to learn from each other and share their knowledge and experience with other hunger free organizers.

www.HungerFreeCommunities.org



Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) is an association of Muslim organizations and individuals that provides a common platform for presenting Islam, supporting Muslim communities, developing educational, social and outreach programs, and fostering good relations with other religious communities, and civic and service organizations.

www.isna.net