



Hunger Banquet

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the global disparity in food security
- Learn basic facts about world hunger
- Recognize the components of long-term food security

MATERIALS

- Hunger Banquet Tickets
- Fabric
- Notebook Paper
- Food for participants (three levels)
- Food Insecurity Contributors Posters

SCHEDULE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Hunger banquet and discussion (45 minutes)▪ Serving of breakfast (25 minutes) |
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PROCEDURE

1. Set up the room for the hunger banquet and prepare the necessary food.
2. Have enough “tickets” for the participants to accurately depict the distribution of food resources.
3. Place the “food insecurity contributor” posters on the wall in the front of the room.
4. As participants enter the room, have them select their breakfast seating ticket from a bag.
5. Once all participants are seated, use the hunger banquet script to run the banquet.
6. Once the script is completed, allow them to ‘eat’ according to their hunger banquet status for approximately 5-10 minutes.
7. Once they are eating, begin with the discussion session using the questions following the script. It may be helpful to refer to the Hunger Fact Sheet (attached). Have participants reflect on the causes of food insecurity.
8. Once the discussion is complete, invite them all to eat breakfast.

Hunger Banquet Script

Setup for Ticket Distribution

- 15%: High income, large meal
- 25%: Middle income, rice, beans, water
- 60%: Low income, rice and water

Script:

Welcome to the _____ hunger banquet.

We are here today because 1.3 billion people live in poverty.

[PAUSE]

850 million of these people suffer from chronic hunger.

[PAUSE]

Every 2.9 seconds, a child dies from hunger and other preventable diseases.

[PAUSE]

That's 30,000 children a day. *[PAUSE]*

You may think hunger is about too many people and too little food. Not true. Our rich and bountiful planet produces enough to feed every woman, man, and child on earth.

It's about power. The roots of hunger lie in inequalities in access to education and resources. The results are illiteracy, poverty, war, and the inability of families to grow or buy food.

Today, we will join the fight against hunger. Oxfam, an international organization that designed this banquet, maintains that human rights do not hinge on the country, gender, race or identity we inhabit, or the money we have. Rather they are fundamental and non-negotiable.

Mercy Corps activities have made great strides over the past several years in breaking the cycle of poverty. Even so, while the proportion of the world's population living in hunger has decreased, hunger endures for millions of people. The fact that you are here today shows that you are concerned, that you want to learn more about our world of inequality and that you want to make a difference.

This Hunger Banquet is a metaphor for how food and other resources are inequitably distributed in the world. As such, this Hunger Banquet – can only touch upon the issues. We cannot recreate the many, complex ways poverty manifests itself. We will not have time to go into all the problems associated with lack of access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, and the realities of the day-to-day struggle for survival.

The one thing I would like you to remember is this: everyone on earth has the same basic needs; it is only our circumstances—where we live and the culture we are born into—that differ. Some are born into relative prosperity and security, while millions—by no choice of their own—are born into poverty. As each of us walked in the door here today, we chose our lot, at random. Look around,

and you can see that equality and balance do not exist here. Please note: no one section of this room represents a single country. While the US is one of the wealthiest countries on earth, almost 35 million Americans live in poverty. Stark inequalities prevail everywhere. Now I would like to introduce you to the three segments of this world. But do remember—it's too easy to measure this world purely in economic terms. It is really about each person's ability to achieve a sense of security and have access to resources.

[MOVE NEAR HIGH-INCOME GROUP]

If you are sitting over here, you represent the 15 percent of the world's population with a per capita income of \$9,076 or more. You are fortunate enough to be able to afford a nutritious daily diet. As a group, you consume 70 percent of all the grain grown in the world, most of it in the form of grain-fed meat. Since most of you exceed your daily requirement of calories, you face health problems such as heart disease and diabetes.

But most of you don't worry about getting healthcare. You have access to the best medical care in the world. It's a given that your children will attend school; the only uncertainty is how many years they will study after high school. Access to credit? You turn down more offers than you can count. You and your family live in a comfortable and secure home. You own at least one car and probably two televisions.

When you take your annual two-week vacation, you don't worry about your job disappearing. You have access to everything you need and the security to enjoy it.

[MOVE NEAR MIDDLE-INCOME GROUP]

If you are sitting here, you represent roughly 25 percent of the world's population. You earn between \$912 and \$9,075 a year. The levels of access and security you enjoy vary greatly. You are the folks who live on the edge. For many, it would take losing only one harvest to drought or a serious illness to throw you into poverty.

You probably own no land and may work as a day laborer, which pays a minimal amount—but it's better than nothing. Your small income allows for some use of electricity and a few years of schooling for your children—especially if they are boys. Alternatively, you may have left your family to go work in the city. You hope that the money you earn from your less-than-minimum-wage job as domestic help or sweatshop worker will eventually allow you to move back home and make a better life for your family.

Let me put a real name to a person in this middle-income group: Romeo Ramirez. In an effort to support his struggling family, Romeo left his home in Guatemala when he was 13 to find farm work in Mexico. Two years later, he made the difficult journey to the US to chase the American dream. But the promises of this dream were unattainable. Instead, Romeo toiled in the fields of Florida where he needed to pick nearly two tons of tomatoes to make just \$50 a day.

[MOVE NEAR LOW-INCOME GROUP]

If you are sitting on the floor, you represent the majority of the world's population—roughly 60 percent. Your average income is less than \$911 a year—about \$2.50 a day—although many of you earn much less. Every day is a struggle to meet your family's basic needs. Finding food, water, and shelter can consume your entire day. For many of you women, it would not be uncommon to have to walk 5 to 10 miles every day to get water, spend several more hours working in the fields, and of course take care of the children.

Many of you are frequently hungry. It is quite likely that you don't get the minimum number of calories your hardworking life requires. Many of you are homeless or living in structures so flimsy that a hard rain or strong wind can cause a major catastrophe.

Even though education is the single most powerful weapon against poverty, school is a luxury few of your children will ever experience. Most girls don't even bother to dream about school. Adequate healthcare is out of the question for many of you in this group. For most of you, early death is all too familiar, with many mothers expecting to lose one or two children before they turn five.

If you are lucky enough to work, you are probably a tenant farmer who must give your landowner 75 percent of your harvest. Or, you may get occasional work as a day laborer at a large plantation growing bananas, sugar, or coffee for export. You reap few benefits from these crops; you'd prefer to grow food your children could eat. Meet Adis Gemada. Adis lives in the Rift Valley of Ethiopia which has been plagued with chronic droughts. Her husband died and left her with seven children. In good times, they eat one meal a day. As a result, her children have had malaria and other illnesses related to the shortage of food. Adis had three goats but was forced to sell them in an attempt to feed her children and overcome these problems. "I have nothing left to sell," she says.

[MOVE UP/DOWN SCENARIOS]

Now, I have some news that will affect several of you:

Like we've said, no one can choose the circumstances into which they are born. Some people have the good fortune to change their lives for the better, but for most the circumstances of life are determined by factors outside their control.

[ASK ANY SIX PEOPLE FROM LOW-INCOME GROUP TO STAND]

These six people live in the border region of Mexico. Another *maquiladora*—an industrial plant owned by an American firm which finds it cheaper to produce goods in Mexico and then ship the product back to the US—has just opened its doors in your town and needs few thousand workers for the factory floor. Once hired, you will be paid a few dollars a day and you anticipate your life becoming much more secure. You will be able to feed your family on a regular basis and perhaps build yourself a small house out of scrap materials on the edge of a shantytown. I invite you to make a place for yourself in the middle-income group. But before you go...

[ASK ANY SIX PEOPLE FROM MIDDLE-INCOME GROUP STAND]

These six people already work in a *maquiladora* in the next town over. You have been working there for many years and have finally gotten angry about the dangerous working conditions, mistreatment by the managers, and low wages. Now, you refuse to work until changes are made. There are unions for the *maquiladora* workers—union leaders were given stakes in many of the companies early on in order to keep the unions out of the plants—and so you have been fired. You are now forced to look for another equally low-paying job with poor working conditions. You have been living week to week and have no savings and nothing to live on until you, hopefully, manage to find another job. I invite you to take the seats of those six from the low income group who managed to find jobs in the next town over.

[PEOPLE EXCHANGE PLACES AND SIT. NOW, TURN TO HIGH- INCOME GROUP AND ASK SOMEONE TO STAND]

You are a middle manager at a large US-based coffee company. The world market price of coffee has reached record lows. Even though your company is paying less for the coffee, it is not going to lower the prices it charges US consumers. Your company's profit margins are about to escalate, and you will receive a hefty bonus at the end of the year. Congratulations! Maybe you'll take a

Caribbean vacation. While you're deciding how to spend your bonus, please remain standing while I introduce two people you wouldn't ordinarily get to meet.

[ASK ANY MAN IN MIDDLE-INCOME GROUP TO STAND]

You are Joseph Mkombozi. You have just been laid off from your job picking coffee beans, which allowed you to provide the basics for your family in Kenya. After the price of coffee dropped, your employer was forced to scale back its workforce because it could no longer afford to pay everyone. Please move to the low-income group.

[ASK ANY WOMAN IN LOW-INCOME GROUP TO STAND]

Please meet Lillian Kenyatta. You live in the same village as Joseph, and you make a living by selling maize and other vegetables from your garden in the local market. Because Joseph and many of your other customers have been laid off from the nearby coffee plantation, they are buying less from you, and you can't afford enough corn for your family. You will receive only a half-portion of rice today.

[TURN BACK TO ADDRESS ENTIRE ROOM]

This is just a small slice of life as it plays out each day around the globe. Now, we invite you to eat.

Those of you in the high-income group will be served a nutritious meal
[MAY MENTION MEAL].

Those in the middle income group may will have a buffet of
[RICE AND BEANS, IF THIS IS THE CASE] to share.

People in the low-income group seated on the floor will find rice and water.

Enjoy the meal – Bon appetit!

MEAL

Have the students eat the meal; do not mention there is dinner for everyone.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is everyone enjoying their meal?
2. How does everyone feel?
3. Is it fair how this was decided? Do people choose to live in poverty? Why?
4. How did the price of coffee affect people in the different groups?
5. Who else moved from one group to the other? Was it connected to anything else? Did you have much control over the move?
6. Allow participants to express any other feelings that they have.
7. Using the "food insecurity contributor" posters, ask participants how they think each contributor impacts food insecurity and hunger.

FACT SHEET: HUNGER AND FOOD SECURITY

GLOBAL CHALLENGE

- Approximately 854 million people worldwide go hungry; this constitutes 14 percent of the world's population.
- Every day almost 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes—one child every five seconds.
- Over 95 percent of the people who are undernourished live in the developing world.
- Hunger is the result of many factors contributing to **food insecurity**. Some of these factors include: disease, access to water and sanitation, health care, distribution of food, politics, local agricultural production, the market price for agricultural goods, and access to resources and the quantity and quality of available food.
- Most people who battle hunger suffer from chronic undernourishment and vitamin or mineral deficiencies, resulting in stunted growth, weakness and heightened vulnerability to illness. This affects their long term physical health and mental capacity.
- One billion people lack a clean water supply and over two billion people lack adequate sanitation. These two factors are major causes of disease, a leading cause of hunger.

GLOBAL PROGRESS

- There is enough food in the world today for every man, woman and child to lead a healthy and productive life.
- Over 30 developing countries have managed to reduce hunger by 25 percent since the early 1990s.
- Simple hygiene measures resulting from access to water and sanitation can significantly reduce the number of hungry and undernourished people as their bodies are better able to process food.

TAKE ACTION!

- Join the youth movement at www.globalcitizencorps.org
- Host a fundraising event
- Poster your school
- Donate to a [Mercy Corps Kit](#) for hunger



Definitions

Hunger is the sensation felt when one needs to eat; hunger is measured on an individual scale.

Food Security is when all people, all of the time, have access economically, socially and physically to sufficient, safe and nutritional food that satisfies their nutritional needs to lead active and healthy lives.

Learn More

To learn more about hunger and how you can get involved, visit:

- Global Citizen Corps
www.globalcitizencorps.org
- Mercy Corps
www.mercycorps.org
- Action Against Hunger
www.actionagainsthunger.org
- The World Food Programme
www.wfp.org
- United Nations Water for Life Decade
www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/