Hunger is back on the world’s agenda. The rising cost of nearly every staple food, from wheat and maize to soy and rice, has caused food riots to break out in countries such as Haiti, Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, the Philippines and Indonesia. The high cost of food is badly affecting the poorest of the poor, and the implications, including increased malnutrition rates, are likely to be felt for a long time to come.

There is widespread agreement that, while this crisis requires an emergency response, the factors behind it are largely the results of inappropriate policies, neglect, and the ineffectiveness of development approaches that have failed to address the root causes of chronic hunger and poverty.

Experts are not only calling for short-term emergency aid. They are also demanding that the world take this opportunity to invest in, and scale up, sustainable solutions based on building self-reliance at the grassroots level, so that there is greater resilience to withstand the next crisis.

The Hunger Project’s approach is just such a sustainable solution.
Hunger Project programs address the root causes of hunger and poverty based on a methodology that is affordable, replicable and sustainable. This methodology enables women and men in the developing world to better cope with any food security challenges that they may face in the future.

If ever there has been a time for The Hunger Project’s approach to demonstrate to the international community that our partners in the developing world can indeed end their own hunger, that time is now.

EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO BE AUTHORS OF THEIR OWN DEVELOPMENT

The Hunger Project’s first step in each country in which we work is to mobilize women and men in rural communities to take self-reliant actions through a series of workshops and trainings. Some of these actions include:

• Income-generating activities: Trained Hunger Project partners implement income-generating activities, often joining together in self-help groups — from sewing projects in Mexico to cow-fattening projects in Bangladesh. This enables the women and men of these communities to increase their incomes, so that they can purchase the food they need to survive during periods of food shortage or escalating prices.

• Food banks are an essential element of our Epicenter Strategy in Africa. Each epicenter has a food bank to which villagers contribute staple crops, both those grown on the communal land at the epicenter as well as a percentage from their own household plots. Empowering the people to create, stock and manage their own food banks at the community level helps stabilize day-to-day food prices in local markets during times of crisis.

One of the most critical support mechanisms of The Hunger Project is to give farmers appropriate farming technology and farm inputs, such as improved high-yield variety seeds and fertilizer to be used for microdose technology (a precise application of small amounts of fertilizer). This enables small-scale farmers not only to increase crop yield, but also to diversify crops, which is critical to ensuring food security in their communities. Members of the community give back a certain percentage of their crop to the food bank as repayment for their agricultural inputs. We have recently received confirmation that all our epicenters have at least three to four months of food
reserves in their food banks. The success of the food banks ensures that members of the epicenter community have access to staple foods year-round, and particularly during the dry season, as well as during emergencies such as the current food crisis, floods or droughts.

• Agricultural trainings: In each region in which we work, The Hunger Project provides tools and training to increase farming production at the local level. For example, in Peru, our partner, Fundación Acción Cultural Loyola (ACLO), works with indigenous organizations to train people to grow an increased variety of organic crops. The Hunger Project helped farmers in Senegal adopt a new system of irrigation called drip irrigation, to improve crop production in their dry Sahelian climate.

• Access to credit: The Hunger Project’s African Woman Food Farmer Initiative (AWFFI) is a program of training, credit and savings to empower women food farmers, who grow 80 percent of the household food in sub-Saharan Africa, yet receive very few farm extension services and little access to credit. AWFFI enables women to have easy access to credit, increase their food production, engage in income-generating activities, and increase savings. As participants in AWFFI, women are required to deposit a certain percentage of their loan principal into a savings account, thereby creating a strong culture of savings within communities. Women use their new wealth to improve the health, education and nutrition of their families.

In addition, Hunger Project trainings and workshops also contribute to building confidence and shifting people’s mind-set from one of dependency on outside help to one of self-reliance. Trained Hunger Project partners often remark that they feel more empowered to solve their own problems and make a difference in their villages. This change in mind-set manifests itself in an increased capacity to deal effectively with crises when they occur.

ACCESSING SERVICES: REMOVING OBSTACLES AND PROTECTING RIGHTS

While our grassroots approach has proven successful, we cannot, by ourselves, apply it on a scale large enough to address the many millions of hungry people. We need to have our voice heard that it is time to change the policies that may either obstruct or limit successful and sustainable grassroots development. The Hunger Project engages in advocacy campaigns to reform policies to better support the needs of small farmers, particularly women, throughout the developing world.
In our Epicenter Strategy in Africa, local government is an integral element and is key to long-term sustainability. At every step, we empower rural communities to negotiate with district government bodies to obtain human and financial resources, such as agricultural extension and health workers, and improved roads. Extension workers provide training on improved farming techniques and new seeds, and better roads allow farmers to get their crops to markets more cheaply. People in our epicenter communities are therefore better equipped to produce more food and increase their incomes, which helps to mitigate the effects of crises.

In Bangladesh, India and Mexico, The Hunger Project strengthens the ability of union parishads, panchayats and municipios (local government bodies in each respective country) to ensure that the most impoverished members of the community gain access to resources that are rightfully theirs. Using right-to-information laws, villagers are achieving some success in having government-run employment programs reach the right people. The resulting improvement in the livelihoods of the poorest people enables them to better deal with rising food prices. Corrupt officials in grain programs have been removed, ensuring that the benefits of such safety-net programs actually reach the village level.

Local farmers have been mobilized to supplement school feeding programs with nutritious local foods. Moreover, the strengthened capacity of local governments, as a result of these activities, enables them to more effectively respond for the benefit of communities in times of crisis.

The current food crisis gives us an urgent mandate to focus our attention on our sisters and brothers in the developing world. We must seek to scale up efforts that promote self-reliance in the long term to create lasting progress in nutrition, family income, health, education and gender equality, and also to ensure that our message is heard and acted upon more widely than at present. We will be seeking to gain greater recognition that The Hunger Project’s approach is indeed the sustainable solution.

Invest now at www.thp.org to support The Hunger Project’s work to empower women and men to sustainably end their own hunger!
The Hunger Project has received, for the second year in a row, Charity Navigator's highest rating: four stars!

This is important news. Charity Navigator, which evaluates more than 5,000 of America’s best-known charities, is dubbed the “largest and most-utilized evaluator of charities” in the US. In 2007 alone, more than four million philanthropists of all levels visited CharityNavigator.org to learn about different charities and perform due diligence before making their philanthropic contributions.

We achieved the coveted four-star rating after Charity Navigator's thorough evaluation of our organization’s fiscal management. Specifically, the rating is based on our efficiency and capacity: how responsibly we function on a daily basis and how well poised we are to sustain and grow our programs in the future.

Only 16 percent of charities that Charity Navigator has rated have received at least two consecutive four-star evaluations. Charity Navigator writes: “The Hunger Project outperforms most charities in America in its efforts to operate in the most fiscally responsible way possible. This ‘exceptional’ designation from Charity Navigator differentiates The Hunger Project from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust.”

Share this recognition of us by Charity Navigator with your family, friends and colleagues to encourage them to invest in The Hunger Project, so that our programs can gain increased recognition and influence other development models to help create a world free from hunger and poverty.
The Hunger Project Partners with United Nations Development Programme Regional Center in Colombo

The Hunger Project has established a new partnership with the UNDP Regional Center in Colombo (UNDP-RCC) to raise awareness on the issue of hunger in Asia and the Pacific. Most importantly, The Hunger Project will highlight the gender dimension of hunger and its effect of exacerbating inequality, discrimination and poverty in developing countries.

As the cochairs of the United Nations Thematic Working Group on Poverty and Hunger, the UNDP-RCC and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP) are launching a yearlong campaign to build a constituency for much needed policy reform.

An electronic bulletin, available at http://hunger.undprcc.lk/insideap, is the focal point of the extensive Hunger Campaign, which is based on a Seven Point Agenda to combat hunger. The bulletin features a series of articles and facts about hunger in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Hunger Project will be providing articles and information on our country programs, and we will be hosting the launch of The Hunger Campaign in New York City in late July with a special focus on the world food crisis — details to come on our website!