NOTES TO TEACHERS

*Please have students check [www.kidscanmakeadifference.org](http://www.kidscanmakeadifference.org) for the most up-to-date statistics.

(1) FOCUS ON ROOT CAUSES OF HUNGER

The activities in this program were collected from various sources: teachers, students, activists, hunger organizations and curricula, etc. They have all been designed to guide you and your students toward a clear understanding of the root causes of hunger. Many lessons also offer examples of the creative and effective actions people around the world are taking to end hunger in their communities.

Projects and discussions emphasize --- not charity --- but a thorough investigation into why people are hungry in the first place, what they need to begin feeding themselves, and what we can do to remove the obstacles that prevent people from taking control of their own lives. A few lessons offer students ideas on how to organize fund-raisers or earn money for hunger relief services. These are essential lessons; however, before planning a fund-raiser, hold a crucial discussion with your students on both the importance and the limitations of charitable giving. We don’t want to send the message to young people that money or charity will solve the hunger problem. Even if all the world’s wealth were somehow magically re-distributed tomorrow, powerful social and political forces would just as quickly and dramatically upset the balance again. We cannot buy social justice which is what hungry people need to become self-reliant; however, food, medicine and shelter cost money. Emergency services save lives, they are the first step in helping people begin to help themselves. Be sure students understand that in addition to raising money, we must continue to work together to understand and eliminate the forces that undermine self-reliance.

Uncovering root causes is an empowering and hopeful experience. Once young people understand that ending hunger is possible, that it is not caused by a shortage of food, but by a shortage of democracy, feelings of guilt, passivity and cynicism are replaced by an exuberant, confident and clear-sighted desire to provoke change.

(2) CREATE A POSITIVE TONE

The most common reaction expressed by students when they become aware of the effects and extent of chronic hunger is guilt. Teachers involved in the hunger program have found effective ways to help students understand their feelings and move beyond them in ways that are constructive and empowering. They suggest setting aside plenty of time after your first hunger lesson to allow students to share their feelings freely. Let them know that most people react in a similar way and that it is natural to feel guilty; however, feeling guilty doesn’t change anything. It is also appropriate to feel anger toward a system that is so unjust. Tell students that during the course of their study they will begin to understand the forces at work causing and perpetuating hunger. They will also begin to see clearly what they can do individually and collectively to help eliminate chronic hunger around them. The
idea of "changing the world" is overwhelming, but working to change yourself, then your family, friends and community is doable. Remind students often that **ending hunger is possible.** It has already been proven! Around the world everyday people are working together to change their communities. This is something to celebrate!

Contrary to the way hungry people are portrayed by the media, they are not helpless and dependent. Everyday poor people overcome tremendous odds in their struggle to obtain life's essentials: food, clean water, a safe home, health care, education, a job, fair wages. They courageously resist and endure oppression in the form of greed, racism, class and gender discrimination, industrial exploitation and environmental degradation. During your study of hunger it is important to balance an honest portrayal of the destructive nature of hunger with a positive portrayal of people working together to change their own lives as well as the lives of others.

### (3) CONNECT YOUR STUDY OF HUNGER TO STUDENTS' LIVES

This program opens with a nutrition workshop - **FOOD KEEPS US ALIVE!** in which students examine how fundamental food is to their own survival. Once they realize our shared dependence on the life-giving power of food, they can better understand the seriousness of hunger and the significance of later lessons which focus on how hunger destroys bodies, minds, spirits, families and communities. **EATING THE WAY THE WORLD EATS** is a powerful, personal experience of the injustice of the world's food system. Some teachers have used this provocative activity to kickoff their hunger-study, others have helped students stage the banquet at the end of their study of hunger and invited parents, local government officials and the media to participate. Students read from their journals and presented research on hunger in their communities.

Most of what students know about hunger comes from images of famine projected by the media. In **TWO KINDS OF HUNGER** students explore the political reasons behind famine. They also learn that 90% of hunger deaths are the result of another kind of hunger --- one which is more widespread, less talked about and closer to home --- chronic hunger. Students need to be aware that hunger is not always visible. Most of us probably encounter hungry people everyday without realizing it. As teachers we must be aware of and sensitive to hungry children in our schools. Children suffering from chronic hunger are often embarrassed by their situations. In many communities hard-working parents refuse to take advantage of available relief services because they don't want anyone to know that they can't feed their families. We need to remind **all our students** that every one of us will need help from others many times during our lives. When we do, we need to know there are places to go where we can get that help. It is okay to seek and accept help. At the same time, we must remind students that no one should be in need of food, a home, or a job, and that there are urgent and practical things communities can do to make sure everyone has what she needs to become and remain healthy.

The first thing we can do is to alert others to what we are learning about the causes of hunger. Whenever possible, encourage students to engage their
families and friends in discussions and projects about hunger. **THE POWER OF ONE** contains inspiring real-life stories of how one person’s efforts provoked positive change. Activities in **UNIT HI: WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP END HUNGER?** emphasize the power of the group in launching an effective hunger awareness campaign, connecting with local hunger activists, writing attention-getting letters, and testifying before legislative committees. It is not necessary to complete activities from Units I and II before planning and performing these activities. Integrate them into your study from the start.

(4) **EXTEND SIGNIFICANT LESSONS**

This guide presents a broad overview of hunger and poverty. Many sections contain valuable teacher background reading; however, poverty is a complex subject. The topics addressed in some lessons have long and deeply rooted histories and deserve a more in-depth study. For example, **THE LEGACY OF COLONIALISM** is essential to understanding how the world's resources and power became so unequal. A case study reveals how Brazil’s land, resources, and indigenous people, as well as African slaves, were exploited for the purpose of enriching and empowering Portugal. Students see that the consequences of colonialism continue today. They connect the severe poverty and hunger in Brazil and other developing countries to the power imbalances and widespread environmental destruction set in motion by colonialism. They also explore evidence of the reverberations of colonialism in their own communities, and connect the present day struggles of workers, Native Americans and African Americans to colonialism and slavery. This key lesson could be expanded to include more comprehensive units on colonialism around the world, Native American cultures, slavery, resistance, racism, the civil rights movement, and the labor movement. To assist in designing these expanded units additional curricula, books for young people, and videos are listed in the Resource Guide. Some examples of other topics to extend are: nutrition, ecology, women, the media and homelessness.

**If You Only Have Two Weeks To Spend On A Hunger Program ...**

Follow the lessons outlined below and, whenever you can, work other activities and literature related to hunger into your regular classroom subjects. Integrate a group project from **UNIT III: WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP END HUNGER?** into your two-week study.

**Lesson 3: How Big Is The Hunger Problem?**

**Lesson 5: Two Kinds of Hunger: Famine & Chronic Hunger**

**Lesson 7: If There Is Enough Food, Why Are People Hungry?**

**Lesson 9: One Planet, Two Worlds**

**Lesson 10: The Legacy of Colonialism**

**Lesson 14: Hunger, USA**
**IDEAS FOR TEACHING A HUNGER PROGRAM**

1. Have students keep personal journals in which they record their feelings about what they are discovering, draft letters and plans for class projects, compose stories and poems, and collect ideas for community action. Their journals should also contain a list of local organizations with addresses and contacts for student volunteers. Encourage students to title and decorate these journals and use them as a permanent resource guide for continued community service.

2. Invite speakers from your area to address issues related to poverty and hunger.

3. Plan a special class hunger project with your students. If possible, involve the entire school. Some students have founded a *Make A Difference* club, organized annual hunger assemblies in other schools, hunger marches and food drives, and forged permanent relationships with local soup kitchens, food pantries, and shelters.

4. Involve students in planning and teaching hunger workshops to students in other classes, schools, the public library or town hall.

5. Ask students to collect current news items related to hunger and poverty. Prepare a special bulletin board where, after discussing these, students can post them for the rest of the school to see. Add poems, essays, drawings and notices for volunteers to the display.

6. Engage other teachers in your school in integrating hunger-related issues into their classes. For example, the biology teacher might teach a full nutrition course, the science teacher an ecology course, the history teacher a course on colonialism, the Industrial Revolution or labor movement, etc.

7. Join an organization working to end hunger in your community and share your experiences and knowledge with your students.