

THE ISSUE

You know it when you feel it. It's that grumbling in your stomach that makes you weak, jittery and unable to concentrate. While many of us can easily access nutritious food to calm those hunger pangs, there are more than 925 million people around the world who can't.

JUMP TO A QUESTION:

WHAT IS HUNGER? >>>

WHERE IS HUNGER? >>>

HOW CAN WE SOLVE HUNGER? >>>

WHAT ARE SOME CAUSES OF HUNGER? >>>

So, what is hunger?

[BACK TO TOP](#) ▲

Imagine how uncomfortable you are if you go hungry for an hour or two. Now think about what it must feel like for a day, two days or more. Those who live with constant hunger are in a continuous state of weakness and desperation with little knowledge or hope of where their next meal will come from. And likely for individuals in a situation like this, the next meal will not be fully nutritious.

On average, a person needs to consume sufficient protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals and water each day to lead a healthy life. When the body consistently does not get the required energy and nutrients it needs each day, it breaks down. This means a decrease in mental and physical activities and ability to fight off illness. It means a lower ability to work, to play and TO LIVE.

Today, almost one person of every seven does not get enough nutritious food to be healthy and lead an active life. This makes hunger and malnutrition **the number one** risk to health in the world.



1 IN 7 PEOPLE
IN THE WORLD ARE UNDERNOURISHED

SOURCE: The World Food Programme

Where is hunger?

[BACK TO TOP](#) ▲

Hunger exists in rich, wealthy countries and poor countries alike. It affects people in big cities, small towns and rural villages. It affects children and adults. Hunger and malnutrition are all around us, but can often be out of sight.

Not surprisingly, hunger and malnutrition are most present in poor communities around the world because being poor prevents people from buying or producing healthy food. For this reason, we must stop hunger, be the voice for the poor and hungry and think of smart ways to solve the problem of world hunger so people don’t die simply because they don’t have food.

PERCENTAGE OF UNDERNOURISHED POPULATIONS WORLDWIDE



How can we solve hunger? [BACK TO TOP ▲](#)

The only way to stop world hunger is to work together.

One person can’t solve the hunger problem alone. It will take many. Each of us has to use our strongest personality traits, skills and talents. Solving world hunger requires people coming together from all career fields including agriculturists, nutritionists, economists, community builders, journalists and more. Fighting hunger and malnutrition requires improving, roads, setting up clean water systems, getting politicians to make smart and informed policies and laws, producing healthy food and making sure people have sustainable access to that food. It requires us to view the problem with fresh eyes, a new perspective and a 360-degree view of all the ways we can fight. The more ideas and expertise we direct toward this cause, the more we can ensure that no one goes to bed hungry.



What are some causes of hunger? [BACK TO TOP ▲](#)

There are many key causes of hunger. Learn about them here. If you want to quiz yourself on the causes, log in and check out the activities to test your knowledge.



NATURE AND NATURAL DISASTERS

Have you ever had to deal with a tornado, flood or earthquake warning? Under normal circumstances, families usually run to the grocery store and stock up on food and emergency supplies when these situations hit. Now, imagine being hit by a natural disaster, like a tsunami or drought, BUT you had no warning. You and your family had no way to prepare and gather food. **Scary stuff.**



AFTER THE 2010 HAITI EARTHQUAKE, 3 MILLION PEOPLE WERE IN NEED OF HUMANITARIAN RELIEF, INCLUDING FOOD ASSISTANCE.

EFFECTS OF NATURAL DISASTERS ON HUNGER

Natural disasters, big or small, can cause enormous damage and can suddenly prevent people from having access to food, shelter, electricity and water. When people are affected by natural disasters, they cannot grow food, lack access to clean water, and may even have trouble finding work. Even worse, it can become incredibly difficult to purchase food. The inability to buy or grow food is one of the first causes of hunger for people in communities impacted by natural disasters. Most recently, we have heard about [Haiti](#) and [Japan](#), but there are many communities that are affected by floods, droughts, tornados and other natural disasters throughout the year, every year.

SOURCE: World Food Programme

OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPACT

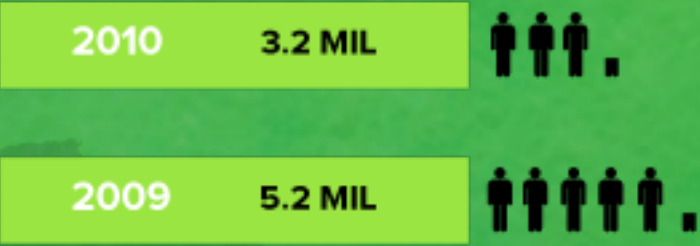
While we can't prevent Mother Nature from going about her activities, we can proactively help countries vulnerable to these incidents strengthen their economies and communities so that they will be better prepared when tragedy strikes.

Take Ethiopia (where?!) . The country is very dependent on external forces like rain and climate changes. The southern and eastern areas of Ethiopia are experiencing major drought, which in turn affects farming, crop yields and the well-being of the people who live there.

Despite this, Ethiopia has been able to decrease the number of food insecure from 5.2 to 3.2 million in 2010. How'd they do it? Through rural road investments, health extension systems, increases in primary school enrollment and food security programs through the [World Food Programme](#).

So while we can't go fighting Mother Nature directly, we can think about other places where we can help countries stride forward. Remember, it's that 360-degree perspective on providing world hunger relief that will allow us all to move forward to a better and stronger future that is without hunger.

FOOD INSECURE POPULATION



38% DECREASE
IN ONE YEAR WITH HELP OF WFP



GOVERNMENT AND POLICIES

Government policies are rules or principles created by governments that ideally help achieve certain results to help strengthen and protect their citizens. If you think this sounds important, you're right. It is.

When it comes to hunger-related issues, policies and laws can impact when crops are planted and harvested. Policies influence the prices of crops and even jobs. Politicians and policies can really impact people for the better or worse!

EFFECTS OF GOVERNMENT ON HUNGER

If policies or rules are miscalculated, we can end up with less food to choose from and high food prices. Yikes! This is a downward cycle for people who can't afford food because it increases hunger and illness.

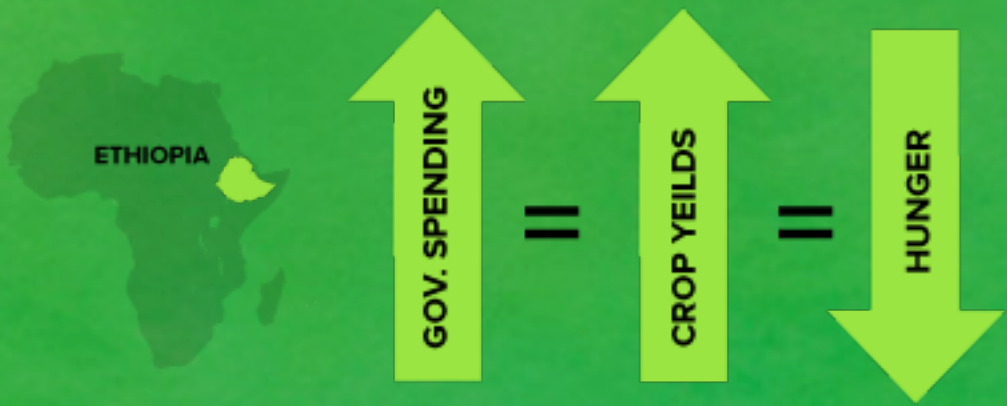
Think that's bad? It gets worse. Government policies that do not invest in education, nutritional education and health programs, better infrastructure (i.e. electricity, clean water and road systems) deprive people of a healthy, nourished future.

Data shows that in 2010, the global price of wheat increased by 60%. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations shows that rising prices in the past (2008 and even in the 1848 revolutions) were linked to riots in dozens of countries. More recently, the rising price of wheat in Egypt, the largest importer of wheat in the world, sparked protestors voicing concerns over the dramatic price spikes.

HIGH BREAD PRICES = POLITICAL UNREST?



SOURCE: Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPACT

Changing government policies may seem like a daunting task but there are methods in place to make it happen. Take Ethiopia as an example again. By raising government spending on agriculture to 15% of its budget, crop yields are up 25%. Hunger: DOWN, DOWN, DOWN 35%.

SOURCE: World Food Programme & Good

AGRICULTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Agriculture is very complex. Farmers need training, equipment and tools—plows, tractors, fertilizer, seeds and water systems—to increase the amount and quality of food and maintain a lower cost. All of these things make up agricultural infrastructure. The scary thing is that many communities don't have some or any of these items, leading to widespread hunger issues.

Communities struggling to fight hunger also require clean and dry storage areas for storing their harvests of corn, beans and rice. These crops can be used in times of crisis, when food is not available. If farmers don't have access to smart farming and agriculture practices and can't produce enough food to store food for times of crisis, how will there ever be enough food to sustain them, their families and communities?



SMALL FARMERS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD LACK QUALITY SEEDS, FERTILIZER, IRRIGATION, AND OTHER FARMING SUPPLIES.

SOURCE: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

EFFECTS OF AGRICULTURE ON HUNGER

Agriculture infrastructure can be overlooked. This, along with rising food prices, can drive millions more into poverty, hunger and malnutrition. MILLIONS.

The hunger problem is exacerbated by food's spiking prices, aided by factors like erratic weather in key grain exporting countries, increasing crop use for bio-fuel production, export restrictions and low global stocks.

SOURCE: The World Bank

OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPACT

Investments in agriculture will be critical to stop world hunger. It can help poor people move their way out of poverty and hunger because up to 70% of people living in extreme poverty are small-holder farmers. Most of them are women.

The fight is about targeted short and long term efforts that include educating populations on agriculture practices that will sustain their communities in the long term.

For example, teach a woman to farm and it can have an extraordinary multiplier effect. What effect? It will allow families to put food on the table and improve their nutrition, create smarter and healthier kids, who can stay in school and go on to grow businesses, create jobs and thrive. Pretty awesome cycle, huh?

In Ghana, farmers have improved the quality of their crops and increased how much and the variety of what they grow. What does that do? It leads to more food that is better for the population. And, added BONUS. Having a diversity of crops has led to a country that has had self-sufficiency in staple foods since 1980. That means that Ghana can produce enough staple foods they need for their country's population and, therefore reduce the amount they need to buy from other countries. (What are staple foods?!)

Between 1990 and 2004, Ghana cut hunger levels by 75 percent. Ghana's agricultural sector is one of the world's top performers in agricultural growth, according to the Overseas Development Institute.

SOURCE: Partnership to Cut Hunger & Poverty in Africa

GHANA'S PROGRESS IN ENDING HUNGER

YEAR	POVERTY RATE	UNDERNOURISHED POPULATION
1990	52%	25.3%
1991-2003	IMPROVED AGRICULTRAL TECHNIQUES & CROP VARATIES	
2004	28.5%	8%

SOURCE: The World Food Programme





POVERTY

Can \$1.25 a day pay for three meals for one person? In poor countries around the world, more than 1.4 billion people earn less than \$1.25 per day. Poor people in developing countries spend between 50% and 80% of their incomes on food. Comparatively, the average American and European spends around 10% of their income on food. Pretty ridiculous difference, eh?

EFFECTS OF POVERTY ON HUNGER

Poverty prevents people from accessing food, health and other basic needs for survival. Many people living in poverty are hungry and malnourished, and they do not have money or the ability to grow or obtain food. Hunger and malnutrition are desperate situations, and they negatively impact the body physically and mentally.

 = 307 MILLION = US POPULATION

 **1.4 BILLION**
(4.5 X MORE THEN US POP)
PEOPLE IN THE WORLD ARE LIVING UNDER \$1.24 A DAY

SOURCE: Global Issues

IN BURKINA FASO RICE PRODUCTION IS UP 50%. FARMER'S INCOME HAS DOULBED AS A RESULT.



SOURCE: The World Food Programme

OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPACT

In the past two decades, the number of people living below \$2.00 a day has fallen, but remember that cost of food, shelter and basic goods and services continues to rise.

There are boat loads (and we mean a whole LOT) of places that need help. And places that are already on the right track. For example, in Burkina Faso (where?!), rice production is up 53% due to farmers learning and implementing better rice farming practices. Farmers have been able to claim unused land to increase rice production in rural communities. As a result, income for the farmers is up 100%. The community is benefitting from improved water and irrigation practices.

SOURCE: The World Bank



WAR AND CONFLICT

You may have read or watched news stories about war and conflict. War and conflict cause injury, cost money and also cause people and communities to flee. It gets worse. Systems that deliver food often break down or are purposely disabled in the process of the conflict. Livestock and crops are often destroyed during war and in dangerous environments.

Communities in war-torn areas are unstable. Farming and food production become unstable as well. This leads to hunger and malnutrition amongst the people. War and conflicts are scary and can cause a lot of food-related problems during and potentially for generations following.



SOURCE: 2011 World Hunger and Poverty Facts and Statistics

EFFECTS OF WAR ON HUNGER

War and conflicts can cause many threats to food security for a country. What kind of threats?

Political instability, irregular crop yields, decrease in livestock, high food prices, worsened transportation pathways, low agriculture technologies, disease. We could go on. All these threats lead to a decrease in food production which negatively and drastically impacts communities.

In Guatemala, there have been years of conflicts related to land rights and distribution. Guatemala's skewed land has led to violent conflicts between the poor peasant farmers and the wealthy plantation owners. These conflicts are key causes of hunger and poverty. Today, Guatemala has the 4th highest rate of chronic malnutrition in the world. It has the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean. Poverty and hunger in Guatemala primarily affect young, indigenous and rural populations.

OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPACT

What can be done to alleviate hunger in situations of war and conflict? Often times, this is where emergency operation and aid are most necessary. While peacemaking work and negotiations among leaders are important, countries undergoing war and conflict need immediate assistance to help their populations.

For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo there have been brutal armed conflicts for the last 12 years. Approximately 21% of the population is undernourished. To assist the country, the World Food Program is implementing relief and recovery operations in the Republic to help people affected by hunger and poverty caused by the conflict. While this assistance can't fix everything, it's a start.

Learn more about other World Food Programmes

WFP PROVIDES
MONTHLY FOOD TO
115,000 PEOPLE
WHO HAVE FLED
FIGHTING IN THE
DEM. REP. OF
CONGO.



SOURCE: The World Food Programme



POOR HEALTH

When an individual's health is at risk, hunger and malnutrition can make conditions even worse. Malnourished women are more likely to be sick and have children who have health issues or are malnourished. Malnourished children who lack food often lack the strength to grow, survive and stay healthy. And the ones that do survive have no positive generational skill or knowledge to help their own children have a better chance at accessing food security.

EFFECTS OF POOR HEALTH

Countries with the highest hunger rates also have high rates of disease such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhea, respiratory infections, etc. For medicines to work and to prevent illness, our bodies need to be well nourished. Additionally, some effects of malnutrition cannot be reversed. For example, young children who fail to receive adequate levels of iodine suffer permanent losses in their cognitive ability and are therefore less productive for their entire lives.

The proportion the world's undernourished and malnourished population declined from 20% in 1990–92 to 16% in 2010. However, the world's expanding population has meant that the number of hungry people has increased from 827 million to 906 million at the same time.

SOURCE: The Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

AFRICA IS HOME TO



100 GRAMS OF
ORANGE-FLESHED
SWEET POTATO
A DAY CAN
PREVENT VITAMIN
A DEFICIENCIES.



OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPACT

There are ways to help communities reach toward better health and nutrition. They don't just include access to medical care and more food (although those things aren't bad!), but also include long-term, well-studied solutions. What the heck are we talking about?

Take Tanzania for example: Nutrition is UP UP UP? Why? There is a new type of vitamin-rich sweet potato bred for the region that has helped to also increase farmer incomes up to 400%!

Who knew a sweet potato could improve nutrition and income all at the same time?

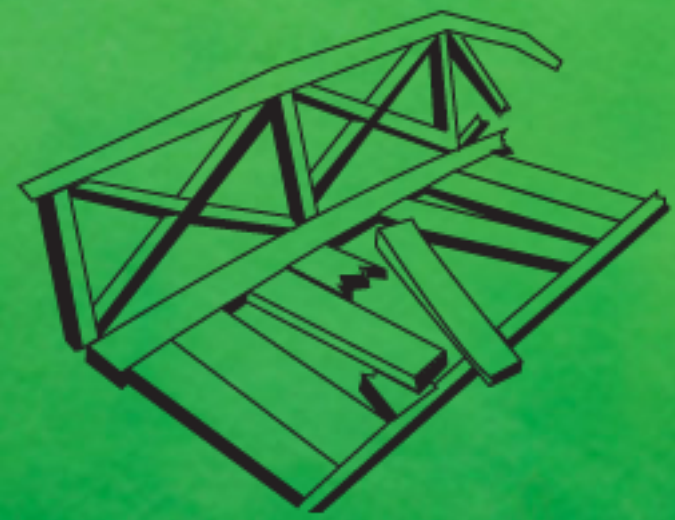
You want in on that? Read more about initiatives in the biofortification field to create rockin' vitamin-rich foods for communities in need.

ROADS AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

We know that roads and physical infrastructure help people and things get from point A to point B. Physical infrastructure refers to the basic and bigger things that keep cities and town running like roads, bridges warehouses, sewer systems, electric systems and cable systems.

When roads, bridges and other physical infrastructure are non-existent, food, water and supplies cannot get where they are needed.

This impacts trade and can even stop it all together, leading to hunger issues among the population.



AFRICA NEEDS TO SPEND \$93 BILLION A YEAR TO BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE IT NEEDS TO SUPPORT GROWTH

SOURCE: The Africa Infrastructure Country Diagnostic

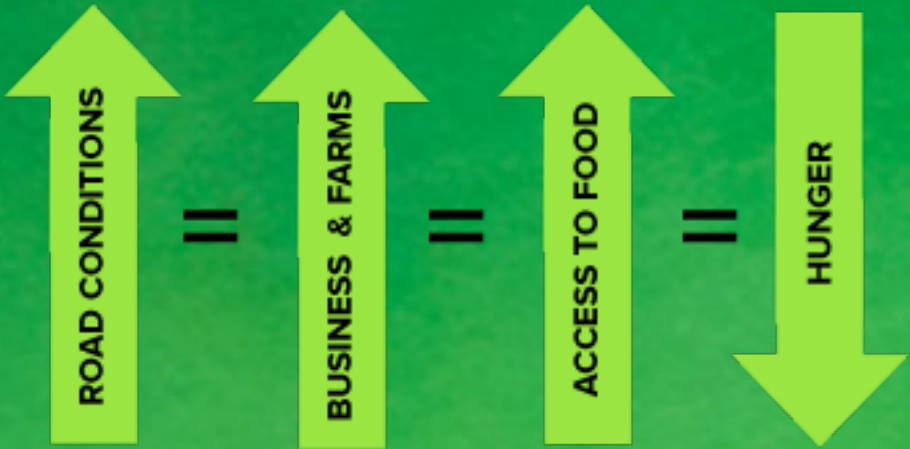
HOW INFRASTRUCTURE AFFECTS HUNGER

For example, if a farmer cannot bring her crop to a selling location, due to damaged roads, then people can't buy food. How much food can a farmer lose to spoilage by the time they get it to a market – after traveling on a muddy, unpaved and damaged road or not even being able to make it to market? 20%? 50%? 70%? TOO MUCH.

All of a sudden, the food in markets becomes more valuable and the price usually increases because there is low supply. It's a vicious cycle!

OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPACT

Investments in infrastructure prove to be smart investments. For example, in many African countries many people will travel with food by truck. This is expensive. Places with warehouses are at an advantage because they can store food before sending it to a store.



DISCRIMINATION

You may have talked about discrimination with your friends or in school. Individuals can be discriminated against for a bunch of reasons—age, disability, gender, race, ethnicity, religion and more. If you are discriminated against, you may not be able to get a job, medical treatment, education or even a safe and clean place to live.

EFFECTS OF DISCRIMINATION ON HUNGER




























Discrimination contributes to poverty. The poor are at the greatest risk for being sick, hungry and illiterate—all things that get in the way of someone's chance to succeed and thrive.

Who is discriminated against? Take just one example – and, unfortunately, there are many. Some 60% of the world's chronically hungry people are women or girls. This is because women and girls have unequal access to resources, education and income.

And guess what? When women are affected by hunger, so are their children. That begins our vicious cycle... again. Children inherit hunger and then continue to pass it generation to generation. This needs to STOP.

WORLDWIDE, FOR EVERY 100 BOYS OUT OF SCHOOL THERE ARE 122 GIRLS.

The chart below shows some countries where the gender gap is much wider.

COUNTRY	BOYS OUT OF SCHOOL	GRILS OUT OF SCHOOL
WORLDWIDE	100 	122   
BENIN	100 	257     
YEMEN	100 	270    
IRAQ	100 	316     
INDIA	100 	426     

SOURCE: The World Food Programme

AN EXTRA YEAR OF
PRIMARY SCHOOL
BOOSTS GIRLS’
FUTURE WAGES
BY 10% - 20%.
AN EXTRA YEAR
OF SECONDARY
SCHOOL: 15% - 25%

SOURCE: The World Food Programme

OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPACT

There are many possible solutions to help alleviate discrimination. If we stay on the example of women –one solution is developing programs that empower these women around the world with the resources to build better and stronger communities.

You might be asking, why women? In many countries, women are the backbone of families and communities. They work on farms, and they play a key role in households. So what?

If we provide women with education, resources and systems to help them improve their situations, it will have an amazing trickle effect that will help their children, their children's children and so on. Pretty cool, huh?

Are you diggin' this? For some summer reading, dive into Nicholas Kristof's book *Half the Sky*. We can't promise you that you won't want to stop everything you're doing and go help women around the world.

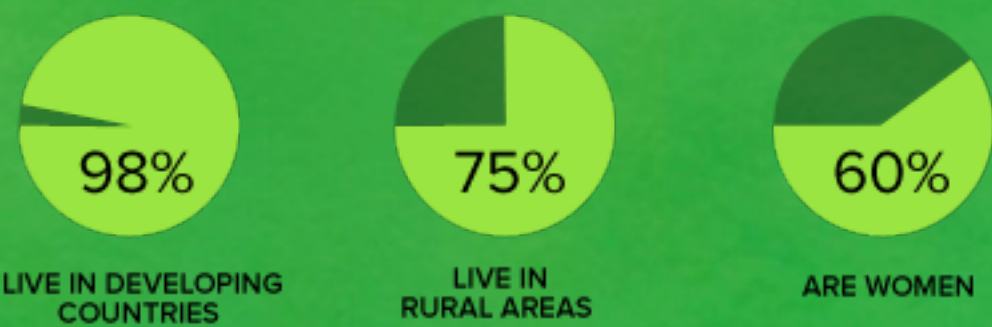
For more information on programs that focus on supporting women, visit <http://www.wfp.org/focus-on-women>.

POWERLESSNESS

Having strength – both physical and mental strength- is important to health and a healthy lifestyle. When individuals are poor, live in a war-torn environment or cannot protect themselves and their interests, they often feel powerless.



OF THE WORLD'S HUNGRY



EFFECTS OF POWERLESSNESS ON HUNGER

Those who are powerless are often poor. They lack life's basic necessities such as food, shelter, health and education. Those living in a powerless situation spend a lot of time and energy on basic survival: finding food, shelter, water and safety. Children, women and elderly people are the groups most affected by this burden.

SOURCE: The World Food Programme

OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPACT

We must think creatively and in new ways to fight the causes of world hunger. Powerlessness seems pretty insurmountable, huh?

Well, let's step back and take a 360-degree view on this.

Consider microfinance or microlending. In the most basic terms, microfinance involves institutions and organizations—like the [One Acre Fund](#), that provides small loans and expertise to farmers in Rwanda and Kenya to improve farming practices, crops and farmers' ability to sell their goods in markets. Who are One Acre's borrowers? They are the poorest farmers with one acre of land or less and the One Acre helps these farmers make the most out of their small plots to provide for their families and communities. What's even more impressive is that 97% of the loans made to the poor are repaid!

There are other microlending organizations such as [FINCA International](#) and [Kiva](#) that support other fields as well. Microfinance aims to empower the poor, and direct their creativity and entrepreneurial ideas to build a pathway out of poverty and toward a healthy, prosperous life.

For more information on how this all works, check out this [cool infographic](#).

Want to see an example of entrepreneurship at work? [View this video story](#).

THE BANGLADESH BANK,
GRAMEEN, LENT MONEY
TO MORE THAN
2 MILLION VILLAGERS.
THE AVERAGE LOAN WAS
LESS THAN \$100.
OF THE PEOPLE THAT
RECEIVED LOANS,
50% ESCAPED POVERTY



SOURCE: The Grameen Bank



THE ISSUE	GET INVOLVED	STORIES	ABOUT US	RESOURCES	USEFUL LINKS
MYTHS & FACTS	HUNGER FIGHTER TYPES	HUNGER FIGHTERS	MISSION	DOWNLOADS	TERMS OF USE
	FACE IT		FAQS	GLOSSARY	SITE MAP
	FIGHT IT		CONTACT US	EDUCATORS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS	PRIVACY POLICY
	LIVE IT			GROUP PROJECTS	LOGIN
	ACTIVITIES			TUMBLR BLOG	REGISTER

SUBSCRIBE: [facebook.](#) [YouTube](#) [tumblr.](#)

Like 1,427 people like this.