

The New Dialogue About Hunger in America

by Hannah Laufer-Rottman (*)

Hunger in America is everywhere. In 2008, it affected 49 million people - of which 17 million were children. A new dialogue about hunger in America requires that two basic conditions are met: we need to acknowledge food security as a basic human right; and as a corollary, we need to frame the response to hunger - or the access to food for all - well beyond charity. The right to food cannot be guaranteed on a voluntary or charitable basis. This is an important shift in the way we approach hunger (this approach is not limited to the US alone; it can be applied everywhere in the world).

We need to resist the creation of parallel structures that are far from being cost efficient and perpetuate or replicate the very condition of inequality that is one of the root causes of hunger in America . We believe that poor and hungry people should be able to access the food they need in a dignified way, from the local supermarkets or other food stores and markets (or from growing their own food). All children in school should receive good quality and nutritious food, every day. Food stamps for the unemployed, the underpaid, the homeless and anyone who cannot access food, should become the rule until many other changes take place that will ultimately align the cost of living with the minimum salary for the employed and create more jobs.

It's becoming clear that the impact of these two ideas will have to accelerate as 49 million hungry people require an immediate and radical change in the way our country deals with the hunger problem and its underlying causes.

(*)After 30 years of service with the United Nations World Food Programme, [Hannah Laufer-Rottman](#) founded Palms for Life Fund to continue raising awareness about the root causes of hunger and poverty and promoting access to food and education for all those living in impoverished conditions around the globe.