

**G20 Interfaith Forum:
South Africa's 2025 Presidency**

**Religious Leaders and Actors
on Moral Imperatives to Serve
the Hungry and to End Hunger**

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WORLD FAITHS
DEVELOPMENT
DIALOGUE



BERKLEY CENTER
for Religion, Peace & World Affairs
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY



A Call to Action: Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, Cape Town, South Africa

"Give us this day our daily bread"

At our recent colloquium of church leaders at Bishops court in Cape Town on 12 June 2024, which followed in the tradition of public theology seminars over the last decade or more, in which we have examined burning national issues and challenges facing South Africa and the world, we focused on the core values of ethical leadership in all sectors with the aim of creating just, peaceful, and inclusive societies - in which no one is left behind.

Returning from a visit to Makhanda in the Eastern Cape in 2022, I concluded: "You have to learn to cry ...you can touch, you can smell, you can see the poverty." The impact of our triple burden of malnutrition, under-nutrition and obesity (eating wrong foods) is clearly visible. I have emphasized that all of us, in all sectors, are instruments in God's hands and that we must use our resources and skills to serve one another.

To take perhaps the most glaring example of suffering among God's people in Southern Africa: the levels of poverty which intensify the pangs of hunger which too many experience. In John's Gospel, Jesus says he came that God's people may have life, "and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). But what does the promise of abundant life mean to the one in every three South Africans—nearly eight-and-a-half million people—who are unemployed and the four out of every five who have given up even looking for a job? In this context we are called to restore hope that we can end the crisis of food security for the vulnerable. Hope is not a nebulous, pie-in-the-sky concept. No, hope is the driving force which motivates our determination to name our problems, to identify solutions to them and to mobilise people to overcome them. Hope must be what drives us to work to fulfill the promise of societies based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.

Small steps taken in hope can become islands of hope and as they come together we can in turn create landscapes of hope. We need to be cautious though, because working in hope is not simply about "good deeds or works", it is about those carrying out those deeds infused with love, which in the public domain means deeds infused with justice.

Faith and Hunger: Our Context

Hunger demands urgent action by any global leader today. Despite promising strides in recent decades, we are off track to achieving the goal agreed to by all member states of the United Nations: zero hunger by 2030.

One of the most ancient and compelling moral calls on human communities is to feed those who are hungry. The call echoes in every faith tradition, in stark admonitions, demanding teachings, poignant stories, and practical advice. The variety of approaches reflects both the essence of an ethical compass and different experiences, of suffering and of compassionate response.

We should never forget that ending hunger is an achievable if ambitious goal, one that requires creative collaboration and strategic partnerships among governments, international organizations, and private sector institutions. The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, launched at the 2024 G20 Summit in Brazil, is a compelling example of the ideal and means for that kind of collaboration in action.

Sustainable and meaningful action on hunger also requires the engagement and participation of individuals and communities. That includes prominently people of faith, religious institutions, and faith-inspired organizations. Faith leaders and representatives are among the most vocal advocates for ending hunger, and people inspired by religious teachings are at the front lines of fighting hunger around the world. It is therefore imperative that religious communities and faith-inspired organizations be a part of collaborative efforts to address hunger and malnutrition, especially in light of declining political will to address the issue.

Recognizing the strategic position of faith voices in speaking to the moral urgency of this moment, the G20 Interfaith Forum has invited religious leaders and scholars from across the world to share statements on the importance of ending hunger and serving the hungry. This booklet brings together statements from different individuals and organizations, illustrating both the common thread of the moral call and their rich diversity. It is both a testament to the common religious teaching to feed the hungry and a call to action to put this teaching into practice.

We hope reading and reflecting upon this diverse set of statements may inspire a fresh perspective on the challenge of addressing hunger and galvanize new partnerships to bring about a world without hunger and malnutrition.

W. Cole Durham, Katherine Marshall. G20 Interfaith Forum

Bishop Sithembele Sipuka

I challenge all of us to rethink how we can work together to restore dignity to our people. This is not just about feeding the hungry; it's about reclaiming our sense of ubuntu and transforming our communities from being mere recipients of aid to becoming active producers.

True partnerships in food security must restore dignity. Between faith and government, we need to jointly implement nutrition programs, collaborate on community development projects, share training and capacity-building efforts, and coordinate responses to food emergencies. Between communities and businesses, we need local procurement for school feeding programs, contracts for smallholder farmers with large retailers, skills development partnerships, and support for technology transfer. Between citizens and institutions, we need community ownership of development projects, participatory planning and implementation, local leadership development, and accountability mechanisms.

Our vision must be clear: every South African should have access to nutritious food, not as charity, but as a result of a functioning economy where everyone can participate productively. In the short term, we must expand social grants while building productive capacity, establish food security projects in every community, train extension officers and community facilitators, and address immediate malnutrition crises. In the medium term, we must reduce dependency on grants through increased production, develop local food systems and markets, build processing and storage capacity, and create sustainable employment in agriculture. In the long term, grants must be an exception, where the government minimally intervenes to do what people locally are unable to do, and consistently empowers them to achieve food self-sufficiency at the community level, following the principle of subsidiarity.

The path forward requires us to shift from dependency to dignity. Food security is not just about calories; it's about ubuntu, our interconnected humanity. When children die of malnutrition while food rots in warehouses, when fertile land lies barren while people queue for grants, and when communities that once fed themselves now depend on handouts, our ubuntu is broken.

But Ubuntu also offers a solution. When government, business, faith communities, and citizens work together with mutual respect and shared responsibility, when we treat people as agents rather than objects, and when we build systems that empower rather than create dependency, then we restore not just food security, but human dignity.

Bishop Ivan Abrahams, South Africa

The Lord's Prayer is prayed each day by millions of people in many different languages. I am particularly interested in the petition for DAILY BREAD which comes before the petitions for FORGIVENESS and PROTECTION FROM TEMPTATION.

BREAD has great symbolic power!

It is the marker of poverty – the bread line

It speaks of friendship, hospitality, covenants and community – breaking bread together

It is the symbol of hope and opportunity – cast your bread upon the waters

It captures security and responsibility – the breadwinner

It signifies basic needs – bread and butter issues

It is the symbol of God's gift of life – Jesus the Bread of life.

Bread also takes many forms; buns, croissants, tortillas, bagels, pot bread, dombolo, ujeqe, roosterbrood, roti, naan, chapatti, baguetteand so we can continue

With urbanization bread is becoming the staple food of many people.

A theology of Bread must question the structures that keep people hungry and poor. A few years ago the Competitions Commission fined a major company six percent (6%) of its bread business profits that came to a whopping R98.9m. We need to confess that Churches were rather silent on this issue and left it to the Commission to pronounce that, "Blatant profiteering is an insult to the nation, particularly the poor".

A theology of Bread must recognise that we face a disaster of incalculable proportion. The signs are visible everywhere in greenhouse gases, accumulation of nuclear waste, deforestation, desertification, the disappearance of species yet unknown and the reduction of biological diversity and more. Thousands of people die of hunger each day. Let me remind you as I did in my introduction that in South Africa 15 million people are consigned to the sinful humiliation of suffering from food insecurity!!!

A theology of Bread will expose the contradictions of unbalanced abundance of fast food and systemic hunger where food and land has become a commodity and the poor are assaulted by the politics of biotechnology and maximization of profits.

Cardinal Peter K. A. Turkson

Fight Hunger, Not the Hungry

Hunger is too real in this world. We either experience it or we know about it. We know that there are millions of human beings without enough nourishment for body, mind and spirit. As long as hunger is not overcome, humanity will not live in peace. We will not have peace so long as some banquet daily while others are starving at their doorstep or on the other side of the planet. For ours is one common home, and we eat at one common table. Let us work together for sustainable food, nutrition and food-security. Let us overcome food insecurity, not eliminate the hungry! Many different approaches are needed. The key is to turn global hunger into a human issue: hunger comes from a lack of solidarity, hunger comes from failing to feel, relate and behave as brothers and sisters. And like every great human issue, it is also a moral issue. It involves the exercise of human freedom. We are free to show disinterest and indifference. We are free to exercise good will. The choice is no one else's – it is our own free moral choice. Pope Francis gives this example in *Laudato si'*: "When cooperatives of small producers adopt less polluting means of production, and opt for a non-consumerist model of life, recreation and community," then "another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral" really does seem possible. "Will the promise last, in spite of everything, with all that is authentic rising up in stubborn resistance?" (§ 112). The better alternatives may appear very small compared to the magnitude of the challenges we face. But it was also a little thing, those five loaves and two fish that, one day, an anonymous boy made available to Jesus facing thousands of hungry people. Not only was there enough to feed a crowd of five thousand: the left-overs filled twelve baskets. When food becomes Eucharist, when bread, recognized as a gift of God, is blessed, broken, given and shared, paradoxes are overcome and fraternity becomes reality. Joy fills our common home.

Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah

Islam's Perspective on Hunger

Hunger signifies, from the Islamic perspective, a form of torture. For it is equivalent to fear and it is one of the greatest tests for human beings; according to the Qu'ran, where Allah (peace be upon him) is he: "Who provides them with food against hunger and with security against fear of danger (106:4)."

Feeding hungry people is one of the greatest rewards a person can receive. Feeding a hungry person, believer or non-believer, is a significant gift from Allah. Therefore, Islam commands and recommends to feed hungry people constantly, as narrated in the sayings of the Prophet: "Oh people, exchange greetings of peace, feed people, and you will enter Jannah (paradise) in peace."

His Eminence Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah
President of the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace and Co-Moderator of
Religions for Peace

Gunnar Stalsett, Bishop Emeritus of Oslo

Justice for the hungry—time to deliver.

The World Bank's alarming statistic of over seven hundred million people living in extreme poverty on less than one dollar and ninety cents a day, and the United Nations' distressing report of about six hundred and ninety million people being undernourished, underscore the urgent crises we face. The faces of horrendous hunger in places like Sudan, Gaza, and Myanmar should not be allowed to escape our attention. It's easy to turn off the TV as we enjoy our daily meals, but the hungry poor, seen or unseen, are begging for survival, while a majority may feast on fancy food.

Caring for the poor is a central theme in Jesus Christ's teachings. In Matthew 25:35-40, He instructs followers to act compassionately by feeding the hungry, offering drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the needy, caring for the sick, and visiting prisoners.

Indeed, serving the poor and hungry is a moral obligation shared by all faiths, if not all ideologies and political parties. This call to serve the needy extends beyond charity; it involves advocacy, education, and sustained financial support for those in need. Advocacy for policy changes that address systemic issues related to poverty and hunger is not just crucial, but urgent. By promoting legislation that supports social justice, fair wages, and access to healthcare, we can help create a more equitable society. Justice for people experiencing poverty is fundamental to a world order of solidarity and human dignity. This is a humanitarian imperative of prayers expressed in practice, the essence of loving your neighbours as yourself.

For the love of Christ, it is time to deliver in words and deeds.

David Beasley, former Executive Director, World Food Program (WFP), Governor of South Carolina

Across the world, hunger is the driver of conflict and instability. Where there is hunger, people are desperate; where there is desperation, peace cannot flourish. And where there is no peace, there will be hunger. As I said when the work of the World Food Programme was honored by the Nobel Peace Prize, if we do not feed people, we feed conflict, while assuring that people do not face hunger is the pathway to peace. But acting with force and energy to end hunger is not just about security: avoiding violence, saving lives, and assuring stability. It is about far more: it is the key to building hope in the future. With over \$500 trillion in worldwide wealth today, not child should go to bed hungry anywhere on the planet. If we act with courage and compassion and take the steps that we know well can work, we can break the vicious cycles of war, bitter anger, and acute poverty. We can lay the foundation for lasting peace across nations and communities.

Bahá'í International Community Statement in Support of the Zero Hunger Challenge

Statement in Support of the Zero Hunger Challenge

The Bahá'í International Community welcomes all efforts to address the age-old scourge of hunger and deprivation. That some members of the human family should live in great luxury and comfort

while others lack the most basic necessities for existence flouts all standards of fairness and justice. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identifies “eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions” as “the greatest global challenge.” Re-visioning systems for the production, transportation and distribution of food are clearly necessary. But more normative changes of heart and soul will also be required. There is an increasing awareness that a more fundamental challenge is the fact that hunger and poverty is allowed to persist when food, water, and other resources are available in sufficient quantities to sustain all on our common planet. In this light, hunger reflects not simply a scarcity of material resources, but a deficiency in the way human beings perceive, relate to, and value one another. “Hunger”, in other words, is not the problem. Human relationships and consciousness are the problem; so, we can also be the solution. And in this, those of faith have an indispensable role to play in building new patterns of interaction and relationships. Leaders of religion bear particular responsibility in such a process of transformation. Theirs is the task of calling humanity to embody the exalted standards of equity, compassion, and selflessness enjoined by the Founders of the world’s great faith traditions. Only as these teachings increasingly become reflected in daily decisions and social structures will lasting progress become possible. As the holy writings of the Bahá’í Faith state: You must consider all [God’s] servants as your own family and relations. Direct your whole effort toward the happiness of those who are despondent, bestow food upon the hungry, clothe the needy, and glorify the humble.

Submitted by Bani Dugal, Principal Representative United Nations, New York

Rabbi David Saperstein

Hunger, and other forms of poverty, as a moral challenge to be addressed by each person and every society, is recognized in the earliest of biblical times and was reaffirmed and often expended in every era of Jewish life for over 3, 000 years. Addressing poverty, particularly hunger, was a matter of tzedakah (often translated “charity” but conveying justice and righteousness – an obligation as central to Judaism as any ritual practice).

Five key points:

1. Addressing hunger and poverty is an individual mandate from God. The mandate for each individual is clear: Is not this the fast I have chosen: ... to deal your bread to the hungry. (Isaiah 58:6-8)
2. Addressing hunger and poverty is a moral requirement built into the economic structures of the Jewish people. E.g. The Bible commands that the corners of the field and the gleanings of the harvest be left for the poor (Lev. 19:9-10, 23:22)– so, later rabbinic authorities explained, the hungry would always know where to find food without begging. So too the sabbatical cancellation of debts and the Jubilee restoration of land to those who have lost it.
3. Addressing hunger and poverty is a governmental requirement. By Talmudic time (100B.C.E -500 C.E. every Jewish community had to ensure that there were (among other communal funds for the poor, a money fund (the kuppah) and a communal food kitchen (the tamchui) -- explicitly to ensure the hungry were provided for (Tosefta Peah 4:9)
4. Early on, the rabbis recognized that failure to provide for the hungry and the poor of any in their community, Jew or non-Jew, was not only unjust but leads to instability and strife. So, for “the sake of the ways of peace” (mipnai darkhei shalom), Jews and non-Jews alike were provided for. (Talmud Demai 4:1, Gittin 61a)
5. Finally, the Jewish tradition prioritizes in the giving of tzedakah, first help the poor in your own family, then your neighbor, then your community, and finally communities beyond

your own. This concept of a moral obligations to help the hungry beyond those to whom we are connected directly, speaks across the centuries to our responsibility today. In this ever-shrinking world, as the U.S. withdraws from its significant role in meeting such moral obligations, the model of the Jewish tradition envisions in our global community, ensuring that we too provide the resources, create the economic policies, and maintain the institutions that can adequately deliver the assistance to address the needs of the over 1 billion facing serious food insufficiency and insecurity -- a fulfillment of these age old ideals of the Jewish tradition and so many of our faith traditions.

Sister Ngozi Uti: Faith-Based Statement on the Theological Mandate to Fight Hunger and Poverty

As a religious actor, I affirm that the fight against hunger and poverty is not merely an act of charity but a core expression of our faith. Our sacred texts consistently emphasize that caring for the poor, feeding the hungry, and upholding the dignity of all people is central to living a life that honors God. Scripture teaches that every human being is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and thus deserves to live with dignity, free from hunger and extreme deprivation.

Throughout the Bible, God reveals a special concern for the poor and marginalized. In Isaiah 58, the Lord declares that true worship is to “share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house.” Jesus reaffirms this in Matthew 25:40 when He says, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” These are not suggestions; they are commands that reveal the heart of God.

However, our calling goes beyond temporary relief. While feeding the hungry is a vital first step, our faith challenges us to offer more empowerment, opportunity, and lasting change. As Proverbs 31 portrays, the virtuous woman not only gives but builds, teaches, and strengthens others. Empowering people through skills, education, and support enables them to rise out of poverty and fulfill their God-given potential. We see this spirit in Tobit’s wife, who diligently worked by spinning and selling cloth, and even endured insult for her efforts (Tobit 2:11–14), and in Deborah, who rose as a judge and prophetess, leading with wisdom and courage in a time of national crisis (Judges 4–5).

Our faith calls us to be stewards of compassion, justice, and sustainability. Hunger and poverty are moral and spiritual challenges that demand a response rooted in mercy and empowerment. As people of faith, we must act boldly, not only to alleviate suffering but also to equip others to thrive so they, too, may become a blessing to their communities and glorify God through transformed lives.

Sister Francisca Ngozi Uti, HHCJ.
Executive Director,
Centre for Women Studies and Intervention.

The Presiding Bishopric of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Hunger Relief

When Jesus Christ was on the earth, He imparted two great commandments: to love God and to “love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:39). As we seek to show our love for God, our hearts naturally

turn toward the well-being of others. As followers of Jesus Christ, we consider this to be both a duty and a joyful privilege.

Fasting as a religious practice exists in some form in almost all world faiths. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints practices fasting as a direct, practical way to care for others. Latter-day Saints fast one day each month and generously donate the value of the meals missed to help feed the hungry. Individual efforts combine for a large impact. Fasting is a manifestation of a heartfelt commitment, expressed through personal sacrifice, to help others.

Additionally, the Church supports humanitarian projects around the globe which address acute and severe malnutrition. One in three young children worldwide suffers from chronic malnutrition. The Church has recently undertaken a collaborative initiative to improve the well-being of children and mothers in 12 high-need countries. This initiative connects families with health and nutrition resources; strengthens agriculture, healthcare systems and supply chains; and supports national and local health officials in creating sustainable services. The ambitious goal is to reach tens of millions of mothers and children with appropriate nutrition.

We are humbled to engage in this divine work in collaboration with others who are likewise committed to caring for and lifting those in need. As so many of God's children across the globe are praying for relief, may we each seek ways in which we can help bring about the answers to those prayers.

Cardinal Charles Bo (Myanmar)

In 2025, as millions of children starve, the richest nations of the earth are gorging themselves on war. Military budgets now swell around 5% of GDP, inflating the fortunes of arms manufacturers while 45 million children suffer from wasting, the deadliest form of malnutrition. USAID's suspension of food aid to poorer regions this year has left over 20 million people without supplies. By 2030, hundreds of thousands may die, not from war, but from neglect.

The weapons industry is eating out of the bowels of poor children. Every missile launched, every tank commissioned, is bought with the hunger of the innocent, echoing the words of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies... a theft from those who hunger and are not fed."

According to the UN, just 10% of global military spending would be enough to eradicate world hunger for good. But instead of food convoys, we see convoys of tanks. Instead of bread, raining of bombs. Merchants of death boast about new nuclear warheads and ICBMs—Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles.

But what the world truly needs are ICBMs of a different kind: Intercontinental Bread-Bombing Missions—planes that drop grain, not fire; missions of mercy, not missiles of death.

This is not merely a policy failure; it is a profound historical and spiritual catastrophe. Hunger is a self-inflicted man-made disaster.

The God of the Bible abhors forced starvation. When His people were hungry in the wilderness, He rained bread from heaven (Exodus 16:4). God the Father sent bread from the skies. Bread bombing! Jesus, when faced with a starving crowd, was "moved with compassion" and broke the

loaves to feed them all (Mark 8:2). His command is clear—it resounds through the Gospel: “I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat... Depart from me, you who are cursed” (Matthew 25).

That is God’s judgment against those who make bombs instead of bread for the world’s poor.

Bhai Sahib (Dr) Mohinder Singh

In Sikh teaching, compassion and benevolent action are driven forwards by a bold and hopeful vision of shared flourishing, or ‘sarbat da bhalla’. This is affirmed in our daily prayers, not as a distant dream, but a dynamic possibility within our human reach. Sikhs believe that, as life’s infinite source of benevolence, God has provided abundantly for all of creation, gifting nature with a self-replenishing ability that sustains a breathtaking diversity of life species. It is humanity’s duty to share these blessings with loving responsibility, by harnessing the Divine virtues of daya (compassion), sat (integrity), santokh (contentment), nimrata (humility), and prem (love). These virtues form the real wealth that to be cultivated, invested and circulated for our collective well-being.

When avoidable hunger persists in the world, it indicates a spiritual poverty in our governance of the planet, when the human mind falls prey to insensitivity, greed, hypocrisy, possessiveness and exploitation. In Sikh teaching, the revered saint, Bhagat Kabir recounts a familiar scenario, where the rich man turns his back on the poor man, yet the poor man readily offers his help and respect to the rich man. And yet, Kabir concludes, both men, as fellow human beings, are brothers. Within humanity, those who are truly poor are the ones who lack awareness of Naam, the Divine energy that interconnects all life. In this way, they neglect to see that our individual and collective flourishing are intertwined, and that to serve the Creator is to serve creation.

From a Sikh perspective, to connect our awareness to Naam is to nurture a sovereign mind that is no longer enslaved by the ego. Rather, the human mind becomes spiritually empowered - to manifest Divine wisdom and virtue, self-reliance and benevolence along with compassionate, responsible leadership and governance. These values are reflected in many elements of Sikh practice e.g. the wearing of the turban, and the five centuries old tradition of langar - the serving of food to all, irrespective of background, that also promotes self-help, self-reliance and community participation, and a prayerful respect for food as a blessing, not to be careless consumed or wasted.

The langar tradition is based on Guru Nanak’s teaching that life’s true business (sacha sauda) is to serve others, to nourish minds and bodies, and uplift humanity. In Sikh history, this was extended to serving water to wounded soldiers on both sides of the battle, to never lose sight of humanity’s oneness beyond all conflict (manas ki jaat sabai ekai pehchanbo – ‘recognise the human family as one’). Observing many injustices during in their time, the Sikh Gurus warned against the slide into religious or political hypocrisy and hollowness, as one scriptural verse sternly reminds us:

*True devotion has not welled up within you, to inspire you to give to the hungry...
Breaking into the houses of others, you rob them and so sinfully fill your belly...
Cruelty has not left your mind, and you have not nurtured kindness to all beings...*
- Sri Guru Granth Sahib – ang 1253

Today, while conserving the value-rich legacy of the Sikh Gurus, Sikhs are establishing new ways to translate it into powerful local and global action. Joining many Sikh-led initiatives around the world are the organisations founded by Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewa Jatha, dedicated to nishkam sewa or

altruistic selfless service to humanity. These include Zero Hunger with Nishkam Langar and NishkamSWAT. Working to consciously align with the UN Sustainable Development Goal of Zero Hunger, they support and empower communities to combat hunger across the UK, Malawi, Kenya, Botswana, India and Argentina. These, and numerous such projects within the worldwide Sikh fraternity, demonstrate that Sikh commitment to ending hunger is both a spiritual calling and a practical mission.

Bhai Sahib (Prof) Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia OBE KSG, Spiritual Leader & Chairman, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha

Sulak Sivaraksa: Buddhism and Hunger

Hunger stemming from poverty is the result of massive inequality and the state of our economic system and institutions (both public and private). The affluent, driven by unchecked, insatiable greed, have shaped laws, governments, and other institutions for their own gain without regard for environmental concern or social justice. Increasingly, smaller and smaller numbers of people control greater portions of the world's wealth leaving the world's poor with less and less. The immense concentration of wealth at the 10 top leads to undue influence on institutions and people in power who, beholden to the wealthiest, pass laws that further increase their riches while shifting the costs of society onto the middle and lower classes. Structural violence, increasing poverty and hunger are inevitable in such a system. From a Buddhist perspective, the cause of these problems begins with individual greed, hatred and delusion that is then projected out into society and then becomes institutionalized. For Buddhists, overcoming these poisons requires internal transformation coupled with work towards outer transformation. Through the use of a variety of meditation techniques grounded in an ethic of non-harming and concern for others, greed can be transformed into generosity, hatred into compassion, and delusion into clarity and wisdom. The global elimination of poverty and hunger can be achieved but personal transformation alone is not enough to accomplish this undertaking. We must come together in solidarity and work towards reforming our institutions and toward a more just, equitable, global economic system that is free of structural violence. Through inner cultivation, education, organizing, inter-faith cooperation and the establishment of new mass democratic movements, change is possible.

Sulak Sivaraksa is a father of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists

Rev. Dr. David Beckmann

Between 1990 and 2024, the fraction of the world's people in extreme poverty dropped from one in three to one in ten. This great liberation has spiritual, ethical, and political implications. The escape of hundreds of millions of people from hunger and poverty has been an experience of God's love in our time – like the biblical exodus. It taught us that virtually ending hunger and poverty is possible, and that renewed progress depends mainly on mobilizing the necessary political will.

But progress against poverty has now stalled. In some respects, hunger and poverty are becoming more severe. Notably, the prevalence of famine and near-famine conditions has increased in the world, much of it in Africa. I deeply regret that my own country, the United States, is now leading an international reduction in international assistance and an increase in protectionism.

As a Christian, my life is grounded in the love and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. One way to share this inner joy is to work for reforms that make the world more consistent with the fact that God loves everybody. For me, that means doing my part to make U.S. politics supportive of poverty abolition in the United States and around the world.

David Beckmann, is Coordinator of the Circle of Protection, a broadly ecumenical advocacy coalition, and President Emeritus of Bread for the World

Ismail Serageldin, Library of Alexandria

The New Abolitionists

It is inconceivable that there should be some 800 million persons going hungry in a world that can provide for that most basic of all human needs. In the 19 th century, some people looked at the condition of slavery and said that it was monstrous and unconscionable. That it must be abolished. They were known as the abolitionists. They did not argue for some improvements in the conditions of slaves. They did not argue from economic self-interest, but from moral outrage. Today the condition of hunger in a world of plenty is equally monstrous and unconscionable and must be abolished. We must become the “new abolitionists”. We must, with the same zeal and moral outrage, attack the complacency that would turn a blind eye to this silent holocaust which claims some 1,000 hunger-related deaths every hour of every day, while billionaires increase their wealth by over \$200 million every hour of every day.

Hunger is associated with extreme poverty, and exacerbated by conflict and climate. Beyond outright hunger, some 17% of the world population, is food insecure: 1.3 billion people, lack regular access to “nutritious and sufficient food” resulting in malnutrition, disease and stunted growth of children.

By mobilizing science, focusing on the needs of the poor, the destitute and the vulnerable, recognizing the gender dimension, dramatically improving the food and agricultural sector, acknowledging and working on the added problems of conflicts and climate change, we can make rapid progress towards ending extreme poverty, promoting human security, and abolishing hunger.

It can be done, it must be done, and it will be done.

Dr. Vinya S. Ariyaratne, President, Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, Sri Lanka

The Power of Belief in Ending Hunger – A Buddhist Perspective

The call to end hunger is a profound moral imperative. It resonates deeply with the Buddhist values of mettā (loving-kindness) and karuṇā (compassion), reminding us that the suffering of even one sentient being is the concern of all. To allow hunger to persist is to ignore our shared humanity and interconnectedness.

In the Buddhist tradition, compassion is not passive. It is a call to action — to alleviate suffering wherever it exists, beginning with the basic right of every human being to adequate and nutritious food. As long as even one child sleeps hungry, our spiritual practice remains incomplete. The Buddha taught that true awakening involves recognizing the suffering of others as our own and acting

with wisdom and compassion to transform it.

The ideal of Sarvodaya — the Awakening of All — is rooted in this vision. It is both a spiritual and practical path. It reminds us that no individual can fully awaken until all are free from suffering. Our communities hold the potential to transform this vision into reality when their inner strengths are awakened through shared purpose and volunteerism.

Ending hunger is not just a noble aspiration; it is a realistic goal. We have witnessed what is possible when compassion is joined with commitment, and when faith inspires tangible action. From the farmer practicing mindful and sustainable agriculture, to the caregiver nurturing a child's well-being, to the leaders and citizens ensuring that no one is left behind — we all have a role. Buddhist teachings remind us that the roots of suffering lie not only in material want, but also in ignorance and indifference. When we see clearly, with eyes of compassion, the path forward becomes evident. We must respond — as individuals, communities, and nations — with loving action grounded in moral clarity.

The end of hunger is not a distant dream. It is a shared responsibility. It is a sacred duty. Let us awaken — together — to that call.

Haruhisa Handa

The pain and shame of hunger and poverty are reflected in many FOLK Shinto traditions and stories. For one such tradition, take the story of the binbōgami. They were kamis or spirits linked to poverty. When these kamis took over a human being or his house there was misery and poverty. The binbōgami, however, liked the smell and taste of baked miso. In one town, merchants used to bake miso in the shape of a plate. An official then walked around the town with this miso in his hands. The appetizing smell filled the air. The smell of miso drew the binbōgamis out of the houses and they were trapped. The miso was thrown into a river, and the smell was washed away. The Shinto faith thus guided the afflicted, helping to draw out the negative kami and realign with the kami or spirits that help them along the path of good fortune. Today, it seems that that structural and systemic injustices that afflict our world give evil kami strength and numbers too great for any single being to overcome alone. It is a blessing, therefore, that in the Asian culture in which Shinto came into being, we have a strong sense of community that imbues us with a sense of responsibility to defeat hunger and poverty collectively. This spirit is evident in the story that is told often, even today, about those in the community who have resources who can undertake great efforts to draw out binbōgami, the kami of poverty, and banish them from our homes and our lives.

Haruhisa Handa is Founder and Leader of Worldmate

Nicta Lubaale

The commitment towards zero hunger by the year 2030, under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development brought hope for a hunger free world. The participatory nature of the process that shaped the SDGs, and the bold targets that were agreed on, resulted into a shared understanding of the world the human family envisioned. The outcomes from the last 10 years of action on SDGs, however, do not reflect this ambition. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report (2024) shows that food insecurity and malnutrition continue to affect millions of people where abject

poverty persists, and especially in Africa, despite there being enough food and resources globally to end hunger.

South Africa's G20 Presidency under the theme, "Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability" is an opportunity for us as Political Leaders, Faith Leaders, Business Leaders at the local and international levels to renew our commitment, and accountability to the people and communities left behind in hunger. It is a moral imperative. In the current geopolitical context where there are competing demands for resources, we must have the courage to uphold collective action, address social and structural injustice, and ensure that hunger is addressed through sustainable agricultural practices that affirm food sovereignty, human dignity, and self-determination while protecting and preserving the environment for present and future generations.

We welcome the Global Alliance Against Poverty and Hunger launched by Brazil at the last G20 Summit and the continuing momentum during South Africa's Presidency to address the interconnectedness of hunger, malnutrition, loss of biodiversity, environmental damage, climate change, trade, and financial markets.

The challenges faced by small holder farmers in Africa, who produce 70-80% of the continent's food, must be proactively tackled through political goodwill, timely policy implementation, and availability of adequate resources.

It is time to act:

- By Making public policy at the international and local levels responsive to the realities of communities vulnerable to hunger.
- By Increasing Financing for agriculture
- Increasing Investment in the agriculture that is linked to nutritional outcomes in regions that are vulnerable to hunger.
- By committing to strengthen national social protection systems in line with the 2021 G20 Policy Principles to ensure adequate, effective, and sustainable social protection is accessible for all.
- Building peaceful communities
- Building multi-sectoral alliances for ending hunger

Rev. Nicta Lubaale, General Secretary, Organization of African Instituted Churches

Sheikh Saliou Mbacke, Senegal, Mouride tradition

La faim est pratiquement toujours présente dans la région sahélienne de l'Afrique. Quand le corps a faim, l'esprit a faim. Cheikh Amadou Bamba, fondateur de la confrérie mouride et son inspiration spirituelle, nous a laissé cette prière qui évoque l'essence des enseignements islamiques :

« Protège-nous de l'humiliation, de la carence, de l'avilissement, de la domination de nos ennemis, de la misère, de la soif et de la faim, Ô SEIGNEUR ! »

Mais il a aussi appelé à l'action pour cultiver la terre et a enseigné à ses disciples les compétences de l'agriculture. Rendre le rêve de zéro Faim (d'éradiquer la faim) une réalité dans notre vie résonne comme la passion Mouride pour la communauté, une passion qui lie la quête spirituelle à l'action quotidienne et au souci du bien-être de tous.

Hunger is a constant companion in Africa's Sahel region. Hunger of the body walks alongside hunger of the spirit. Sheikh Amadou Bamba, founder of the Mouride confrérie and its spiritual inspiration, left us with this prayer that evokes the essence of Islamic teachings:

"Preserve us from degradation, from scarcities, from defeats, from misery, from hunger, and thirst. Oh Allah!"

But he also demanded action, bringing the land under cultivation and teaching his followers the skills of farming. Making the dream of Zero Hunger a reality in our lifetime echoes the Mouride passion for community, a passion that links the spiritual quest with daily action and concern for the welfare of all.

Rev. Kosho Niwano

Ryoanji is a Zen Temple in Kyoto, Japan. In one corner of its garden is a stone handwashing basin, into which is carved "I only know satisfaction". According to Shakyamuni Buddha, "a person who knows satisfaction is calm in heart and mind, and a person who does not know satisfaction is confused in heart and mind." This phrase tells us that the source of human happiness is a mind that knows what it means to be satisfied. If our minds cannot grasp the deeper meaning of satisfaction, no amount of financial, material, or social reward can ever make us truly happy. Buddhism also teaches us that, "All things are impermanent," that is, we should realize that we are all caused to live by everything existing outside of ourselves. We are all brothers and sisters, mutually coexisting. If we continue to let our desire and greed grow larger, however, we will no longer have the choice of being either victimizers or victims. As long as we are living here on this earth, everyone is a victimizer and everyone is a victim. Therefore, it is crucial that every single person now realize that the problem of world hunger is her or his own problem. Over fifty years ago, Rissho Kosei-kai started the Donate-A-Meal Movement. We did so because we wish for the whole world to be happy. In order to ourselves feel and share the painful suffering of hunger experienced by people facing poverty and warfare, we go without one meal and put the money we would have spent on that meal into the donation box.

Christine MacMillan

The World Evangelical Alliance recognizes that addressing 'zero hunger' is not merely achieved through visualizing the abundance of food. Values of co-operation and opportunity highlight food systems of inclusive, safe, sustainable and resilient societies. Compassion is the motivation which acts on our God given responses to hunger with a commitment which looks beyond line ups of food handouts. Our WEA constituency of 600 million plants its resources and mandate in addressing the challenge of 'zero hunger' when hungry people are the central participants of agricultural and distribution development. In collaboration with our global partners, United Nations Teams, faith communities and our grassroots National Alliances with local churches, we progress together in dialogue for long term solutions. In the midst of progression we continue to address daily hunger needs in the short term. We acknowledge the potential of local economies to build infrastructure of access to food, employment and reduction of import costs. Dignity and respect for food choices, food tables of socialization and sacred celebration builds societies in the hope of achieving health, peace and well being.

Commissioner Christine MacMillan, Senior Advisor - United Nations Mission,
World Evangelical Alliance.

His Holiness Swami Chidanand Saraswati

A fundamental tenet of traditional Indian spiritual culture is, “Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam.” It means “The World is a Family.” Regardless of country, culture, color or creed, all of creation is one global family. It is, therefore, our sacred responsibility to ensure that all of our brothers and sisters across the world have food in their bellies and that no one sleeps hungry. Just as we care for the members of our immediate family, tending their needs and ensuring their health and safety, so we must tend to the needs of the Earth family, 12 particularly our sisters and brothers who sleep hungry each night, and our children who perish of starvation and malnutrition. There is so much talk about a global food shortage but actually what we have is a global consciousness shortage! The Earth is abundant, and if those who have the luxury to choose make choices for a fair distribution of resources, of grain, of water, of land, there is plenty to go around. As Mahatma Gandhi said so beautifully, “There is more than enough for everyone’s need, but never enough for even one man’s greed.” Now is the time to shift from a greed-based culture to one based on sharing and giving so that everyone’s needs may be met. This is the power that our faith leaders have – to catalyze a paradigm shift in priorities and values from “me” to “we.” I have full confidence that the Zero Hunger Project of the World Food Program will truly be able to unearth the root causes of hunger and bring about implementable solutions to them. I am honored and excited to be part of such an initiative and give my deepest blessings for its success.

His Holiness Swami Chidanand Saraswati is President of Parmarth Niketan Ashram, Rishikesh, India, and Co-Founder/Co-Chair of the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance

Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati

I am deeply grateful to the G20 Interfaith Forum for bringing together faith inspired voices of conscience and compassion to focus on one of the most urgent moral crises of our time: hunger. Ending hunger is not merely a policy goal; it is a spiritual imperative. When we are rooted in faith, our choices are no longer driven by habit or convenience but by expanded consciousness and compassion. Our religious traditions do not only tell us what to say yes to -- yes to love, yes to service, yes to divine connection -- but they also empower us to say no. No to systems and patterns that perpetuate suffering. No to excess while others endure emptiness. When the choices of the privileged lead to the starvation of the vulnerable, that is violence. When we consume in ways that deprive others of access to life-sustaining resources, that is theft. “Thou shalt not kill” and “thou shalt not steal” must apply to what we do with our forks, our wallets, and our silence. Hunger does not persist because we lack food—it persists because we lack the will to live in alignment with the sacred truth of our oneness. It persists because we lack the conscious vision to see all of Creation as an embodiment of the Divine Creator. Let us live consciously, choose compassionately and act courageously. With deep gratitude again to the G20 Interfaith Forum for calling upon the world’s religious leaders to lead us from prayers to prayerful action — for being a confluence where faith meets justice, and spirituality becomes sustenance for all.

With love and peace from the holy banks of Mother Ganga, in Sacred Service

