



In Leogane, Haiti, children scrape their bowls clean during a meal at a destroyed orphanage after a massive 2010 earthquake. Even today, food supplies are running short. Photo: St. Louis Post Dispatch

## Solution exists for child hunger and malnourishment

### Ready-to-eat therapeutic food needs a wider production and distribution network.

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According to the latest estimates, as many as 9 million children in the United States live in “food insecure” homes. That phrase may sound mild, but it means that those households don’t have enough food for every member to lead a healthy life. That’s one in 8 children, or 12.5%. Feeding America 2021 data reports that 42,260 people are food insecure in St. Louis city and county.

In Haiti, it’s about 50%, or 2.5 million children, who have been pushed into crisis-levels of hunger this year, with almost half the country’s population not knowing where their next meal will come from, according to Save the Children.

Around the world starvation is stealing the next generation with 60 million acutely malnourished children at imminent risk of death, illness and longterm developmental impairments. We know how to stop the scourge of hunger – if we have the will.

The miracle answer for starving children

is ready-to-use therapeutic food. It can be used anywhere and is highly effective with simple daily dosing that can be administered at home by any caretaker. It’s portable, has a long shelf life even in the tropics and doesn’t require refrigeration or clean water.

For more than 20 years, the St. Louis based Meds & Food for Kids has produced ready-to-use therapeutic food that can cure 92% of malnourished children in a matter of weeks. Using this miracle treatment, Meds & Food for Kids already has saved more than 700,000 children in Haiti and 17 other countries in partnership with Unicef.

These results prove that there are simple solutions that work to end hunger. But decision-makers must have the will to prioritize, mobilize and invest on the same scale as the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

For the first time, there are more severely malnourished children in need of therapeutic food than can be produced with

current infrastructure. We have the knowledge and ability to produce this life-saving treatment. Hunger is inter-generational. Unless we break this deadly cycle, the world will face lost opportunities and lost capabilities of malnourished children for decades to come. We can and must break this cycle.

What we need is investment to scale-up production through the worldwide network of producers. An international network of producers and researchers are deeply engaged in solutions that work. Along with advocates from a wide range of practices – medicine, agriculture, education and research – these voices represent more than three decades of experience reporting on the politics and impacts of hunger, and options to help save generations of children from starvation, one child at a time.

As we learned from the pandemic, what happens in one part of our world impacts all of us. “A malnourished, stunted child anywhere is a stunted, malnourished child that we should collectively care about. A lost chance of greatness for any one child becomes a lost chance of greatness for all,” stated journalist Roger Thurow, who reported on the global causes of famine, hunger and starvation for more than 30 years for The Wall Street Journal.

David Miliband, president and chief executive of the International Rescue Committee, has called for an international response for curing the global hunger crisis. He said: “An act of U.S. leadership, similar to the 2003 HIV/AIDS emergency response, is needed to tackle the humanitarian crisis already causing millions of preventable deaths in severely malnourished children.”

The difference between that emergency and malnutrition is that we already have a solution that saves starving children.

Once you hold a starving baby in your arms, your life is changed forever. We know how to save this generation of starving children. They deserve to be saved and have a chance for a life.

There’s no time to waste. Join the voices calling for a presidential emergency nutrition plan that would scale-up practical, proven solutions. Americans should lead the global effort to end hunger by doing what works now.