

Why growing more food won't solve **global** hunger:



Hunger is just the tip of the iceberg.

There is more than enough food produced today to feed everyone in the world, yet close to 800 million people are chronically hungry. Locally, there may be food, but it may not be affordable, easily accessible, or culturally appropriate. Globally, climate change, declining food varieties, and unfair global trade rules benefit large companies at the expense of small farmers and traditional growers. These are all reasons why far too many people still don't get enough nutritious food to eat.

Addressing the root causes of hunger, including unequal access to resources, climate change, and human rights issues is a more sustainable way to eradicate hunger both locally and globally. Here's how:

Equality and Power

Small farmers produce roughly 70% of the world's food, but globally, trade rules supported by governments favour large companies. This often results in small farmers being pushed off of their land to grow fewer crops for export instead of diverse crops to feed local communities. In developing countries, the majority of small farmers are women, yet women often have even less access to land rights, financial services, and decision-making power.

In order to eradicate hunger at home and around the world, governments need to make sure all people, especially women, have equal access to basic services, the right to own land and property, and have equal decision-making power.

Healthy Ecosystems

Farming communities, especially in countries that already face many other barriers to accessing local, healthy food, are also the most affected by climate change. Severe droughts, floods, and shifting growing seasons can wipe out entire crops for several years. Diversity, including plants and animals as well as people, is the key to a strong and resilient environment. Small-scale farmers are the gate-keepers of diversity, planting many different kinds of crops.

By taking care of our planet, fixing our climate, and supporting small farmers we are creating more healthy, resilient food systems that are better able to feed families, communities, and the world.

Hunger: LookDeeper.ca

Partnerships and Solidarity

When we support food producers who grow food for their local communities, we help create space for those who face hunger to address the problems that affect them the most. By sharing ideas and solutions in a respectful and equal way, we can create even better systems that reflect the diversity of our world.

Supporting more people-centred and planet-friendly options like fair trade and cooperatives are ways to support people who grow the world's food to receive fair wages and healthy working environments, and to build sustainable local economies.

Dignity and Human Rights

Because food is a fundamental human right, if we want everyone to have access to healthy, affordable food, it means we need to fight for human rights.

By working for human rights and supporting governments and community projects that put power in the hands of people, we are helping people to determine their own food needs, rather than making decisions for others. This leads to more sustainable solutions to local and global hunger problems.

Related Stories...

The Power of Collective Action in Bangladesh

SCIC Member: [Inter Pares](#)

The Meghna River in Bangladesh is a big, fast-moving river in the south of the country. Along its banks, in the communities of Charbata, thousands of poor families make their living from farming the rich alluvial soil and from fishing. Many are members of landless groups organized by Inter Pares' counterpart Nijera Kori.

Wealthy local businessmen have been trying to take control of this area, and last year they claimed they had leased a large area of the river. They planned to build embankments enclosing the area for intensive agricultural production and fishing, depriving people of the riverside land and access to the river. The businessmen signed a secret agreement with labourers from another village to begin the work.

When Nijera Kori landless groups found out, they quickly began to strategize how to resist. By organizing a series of public meetings, and using street theatre and songs, members brought the situation to their neighbours' attention. They collected signatures, made banners, staged marches, and demanded a meeting with the local government and water development board. The government engineer investigated and pronounced, "As per the law, the river belongs to the people and this river has not been leased by the government. To occupy the river or construct embankments in the river is a punishable offence."

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It was a victory for the poor over the powerful, of collective action over greed and violence.

Despite this pronouncement, a few days later, the hired labourers, protected by an armed gang, began construction. Shortly after, more than 2,000 landless group members surrounded the armed gang and workers. After a three-hour standoff, the gang and the labourers gave in saying, "We are just doing this job to try to earn our living. We give you our word that in the future, we will not come to occupy the river. We are also poor people, and we support your movement."

It was a victory for the poor over the powerful, of collective action over greed and violence. More than 2,000 people defended hundreds of families' food security that day, by protecting the land to farm and the river to fish.

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To globalize equality, [Inter Pares](#) collaborates with people and organizations who are dedicated to building more just societies and creating positive change. Inter Pares puts solidarity into action by:



- raising funds to support counterparts in Canada and abroad;
- advocating for improved and fairer policies;
- carrying out public campaigns and share stories to engage and inspire Canadians;
- supporting women's leadership through a feminist approach;
- facilitating learning exchanges by bringing together activists who are struggling with the same issues;

At the heart of the collaboration with Inter Pares' counterparts lies the profound belief in the equality of all people.

Inter Pares does not have overseas offices in the countries where they work. Instead they choose to support organizations and activists working in their own countries to confront injustice, helping them strengthen their work and increase their impact as Inter Pares also learns from them. These collaborations are not one-way "helping" relationships, but a two-way collaborative relationship.

Re(storeing) Hope in Honduras

SCIC Member: [USC Canada](#)

When Rubi Mancía made the move from her remote mountain community in Honduras to La Esperanza, a city three hours away, she thought she was boosting her chances of finding a job. But, as it is for so many people her age, employment was nowhere to be found.

Hunger: [LookDeeper.ca](#)

Two thirds of the Honduran population is less than 30 years-old and the Honduran job market has not been able to keep up. Many youth from poor rural areas leave for cities or nearby countries in search of paid work. There, it's all too easy to become targets of violence or get swept up into the pervasive gang activities that make the Northern Triangle region of Central America one of the most violent places in the world.

The effects of this massive youth out-migration are deeply felt in the communities they leave behind. Without younger family members taking part in farming and related work, the food security of entire communities is at risk.

In Rubi's case, she went to the big city to look for employment. The solution, it turns out, was at home.

[USC Canada](#) has been working in collaboration with our Honduran partner, the Foundation for Participatory Research with Honduran Farmers (FIPAH) for 14 years in three regions. Early on it became clear that for any of the work the partnership does with farmers around seed diversity and ecological farming to have any lasting impact, young people must have a chance to play meaningful and productive roles in their communities.

With support through USC Canada's Seeds of Survival program, FIPAH has helped establish 130 farmer research teams - 37 of which are teams of dynamic young farmers. They have been learning ecological farming and agroecology techniques and developing ways of bringing their crops to market. Last year, 179 young people in Yorito and Otoro took part in hands-on workshops to learn how to produce organic fertilizers and pesticides. They also had training in starting businesses, organizing coops, bookkeeping and administrative management.

And it's paying off.

When Rubi found no work in La Esperanza, she returned to her hometown and joined her local FIPAH farmer research team. With the support of the group she obtained credit to start a grocery store. Rubi's store now sells products from her own community, like grains and seasonal vegetables.

Youth groups like the one Rubi is a part of have established alternative credit and financing systems for a coffee nursery and a maize and bean storage facility. The facility allows local people the chance to purchase community grain supplies at fair prices.

Meaningful and productive work is still far too hard to come by for too many young people in Honduras. But for young people like Rubi Mancía, opportunity and hope are growing.

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The goal of USC Canada's Seeds of Survival Program is to ensure a secure source of food and livelihood for small-scale farmers and to promote crop diversity.



Seeds of Survival stresses the importance of building upon [small-scale farmers'](#) time-tested local knowledge and techniques, limiting the need for outside farming methods that often don't work with local growing conditions. A key component of the program is building collaborative relationships between farmers, scientists, governments and local NGO workers.

USC Canada's Ottawa-based program managers travel overseas as needed, but the organization does not send Canadians to work or volunteer in program countries. Instead, USC Canada works through local independent partner organizations, or when that is not possible, through employees hired locally.

This unique and award-winning program is guided by the values of [rights, resilience and respect](#). It is based on a "systems" approach that recognizes the connections between five key areas and the need to act on each of them to attain [food sovereignty](#). These include:

- 1. Farmers are knowledgeable producers who, for a host of reasons including [climate change](#), are finding it hard to maintain the diversity and innovation at the heart of their food security.*
- 2. Traditional local crop varieties are affordable, often more nutritious, and better adapted to challenging growing conditions than varieties that are not native to a region.*
- 3. Farmers are local experts and play as important a role in improving productivity as agricultural scientists.*
- 4. Conservation through use and plant selection is vital to protecting [seed security and diversity](#) and the survival of our planet's biodiversity.*
- 5. [Women](#) and [young people](#) play a critical role in farming, and their contribution, both as farmers and leaders, must be valued if we are to achieve sustainable and vibrant [rural economies](#).*

Seeds of Survival is a global program with projects in 11 Global South countries. In 2013, USC Canada partnered with [Seeds of Diversity Canada](#) to bring the Seeds of Survival approach home to Canada.