

# Better Nutrition, Better Tomorrow

**All children deserve the opportunity to live a healthy life and reach their full potential. Join us in making this opportunity a reality!**

Over the past several decades, the world—with a strong commitment from the United States—has made great progress toward ending hunger by promoting global nutrition programs. Hunger and poverty rates have been cut nearly in half during the past 30 years. In countries such as Ghana and Honduras, stunting—when a child does not grow and develop properly because of chronic malnutrition—has been reduced by nearly one-third in approximately 10 years.

We have the tools to move toward our goal of ending hunger. Good nutrition during the 1,000-day period from the beginning of a woman's pregnancy to her child's second birthday is critical to a child's health and future well-being.

As people of faith, we are called to care for one another and speak out for those in need. Bread for the World's 2019 Offering of Letters: Better Nutrition, Better Tomorrow urges our government to accelerate progress toward ending hunger by increasing funding for global child nutrition programs.

Today, nearly 821 million people in the world—11 percent of the world's population—remain hungry. One in 4 of the world's children are affected by stunting, resulting in irreversible life consequences. Countries in Central America, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa are disproportionately affected. Almost half of all child deaths worldwide are linked to malnutrition.

## The Way Forward

**To accelerate progress on nutrition, we must scale up what we know works:** improved access to nutritious foods, vitamins and minerals, clean water and sanitation, promotion of breastfeeding, and treatment for severe malnutrition.

**Current funding is not enough to reach our global nutrition goals,** and powerful political forces are pushing to curtail poverty-focused assistance.

Every child deserves a chance to survive and thrive. And when children thrive, so do economies—leading to greater global economic and political stability. Let's join together to urge our government to expand support for global nutrition



Joseph Molteni for Bread for the World

**A U.S. government nutrition program in Guatemala is helping children grow and learn.**

programs that will improve the lives of millions of children and mothers worldwide.

### 1. Urge Congress to support a global initiative to accelerate progress on nutrition

Congress should pass legislation to establish a new, scaled-up approach to global nutrition. Passage of a bill or resolution will strengthen U.S. commitment to global child nutrition and will lead other countries to join us in the global effort to end hunger.

### 2. Urge Congress to protect and increase funding for global nutrition

Congress should increase funding for global nutrition programs. At the same time, our government—through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in particular—should strengthen its capacity to address malnutrition.

Nutrition for children experiencing hunger is a bipartisan issue that will draw support from people in churches across the country, people of goodwill, and leaders from both political parties in Washington, D.C.

At a time of sharp political division in our country, participating in the Offering of Letters can unite Americans around a common cause for which millions stand to gain.

# A BRIGHTER TOMORROW FOR OUR CHILDREN

Esther Okwir was nearly five months pregnant with her first child when she walked a mile to her local clinic for a nutrition lesson. After a morning's work in her family's fields, Esther joined three dozen other moms-to-be and new mothers gathered around midwife Susan Ejang, who made a most astonishing proclamation:

**"Your child can achieve great things."**

Greatness? An excited murmur raced through the assembly. It was an audacious notion in northern Uganda, where a child's mere survival was an achievement in a harsh climate for both agriculture and peace.

A half century of conflict and poverty had left a legacy of malnutrition and a woeful healthcare system. Who could dare dream of greatness for their child?

To Esther and the other moms, the midwife in her white lab coat seemed like a modern-day incarnation of the angel Gabriel, who two millennia earlier had appeared to one young woman with the message that she would give birth to the Son of God. Susan's message wasn't quite that momentous, but it was certainly a bolt from the blue. And it required a leap of faith.

In northern Uganda, the death rate of children under age

5 is among the worst in the world: 90 per 1,000 live births. Of the children who survive, 40 percent are stunted physically and cognitively with irreversible life consequences due to malnutrition. Esther and her husband Tonny had grown up during the madness of warlord Joseph Kony. During years of terror, families abandoned their farms and scrambled to find safety.

With peace recently restored, Susan told the moms they could make a difference in the healthy development of their children. Good nutrition was the key, particularly in their first 1,000 days — the time from the beginning of a mom's pregnancy to the second birthday of her child. Those first 1,000 days, she explained, are the most important time for the healthy physical and mental development of the child—and the development of our communities, nations, and world.

"You take good care in these days and your child won't be malnourished," Susan told the moms. "The next president of the country may come from this group!"

Esther believed she was fortunate to give birth at a time when her country made improving child nutrition and reducing stunting a priority. **The importance of the first 1,000 days is enshrined in Uganda's long-range nutrition plan; if Uganda is to achieve its ambition of becoming a middle-income country, all its children need to reach their full potential.**

Doing her part, Esther eagerly embraced a new initiative known as Harvest Plus, a U.S. government-funded program integrating agriculture and nutrition. Harvest Plus raises the nutrient levels already in staple crops, ensuring that more vitamins and minerals enter the diets of poor farmers.

Esther and her husband, both smallholder farmers, planted the new Harvest Plus crops: orange-fleshed sweet potatoes rich in Vitamin A and beans with more iron. Come harvest time, Esther included the two vegetables in nearly every meal. She had a healthy pregnancy and delivered a robust baby boy named Rodgers.

Once he began eating solid foods, the sweet potatoes and beans became Rodgers's favorites. As he grew, Rodgers was clearly beating the odds of a child in Uganda: his development was outpacing the growth charts, and he was neither malnourished nor stunted. After turning three, Rodgers joined the nearby nursery school. He loves singing songs and chanting the alphabet; his teachers say he is an eager learner.

Esther dreams of great things, recalling the midwife's words. Her son, the president? "That," she said, "would really be something."

*This story was written by Roger Thurow, an author and a senior fellow for the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, who adapted it from his book, "The First 1,000 Days: A Crucial Time for Mothers and Children—And the World."*

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Anne Thurow

**In Uganda, Esther Okwir's son Rodgers is growing up healthy due, in part, to a U.S. government-funded program that links agriculture and nutrition.**

# WRITE TO CONGRESS:

## Urge Congress to Advance Global Nutrition

Join our collective voice in urging Congress to **pass legislation that will accelerate progress on global nutrition**. This sample letter will help you, your church, or community group send handwritten letters or personalized emails to your representatives and senators in Congress.

### Follow these easy, quick steps for an effective letter:

1. Ask for a specific action, using your own words or this sentence:  
*I urge you to increase funding to reduce global malnutrition.*
2. Give reasons for your request and make it personal.
  - Share a personal reason or story that motivated you to write.
  - Show your own organization's commitment: "My church is helping by [example], but I also urge you to enact legislation that increases our nation's commitment to global nutrition."
3. Write your name and address at the end of your letter and on the envelope, so your members of Congress know you are one of their constituents.
4. Send your letters to Congress, and **please don't mail them to Bread for the World**. If you're mailing your letter, put each letter in a separate envelope and address it. To send a personalized email, go to **bread.org/ol**.
5. **Report back and let us know if you or your church have written letters or sent emails at bread.org/evaluation.**

Send your handwritten letters to:

Sen. \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Rep. \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

### Sample Letter

[Date]

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_, or Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_,

I ask you to support legislation and increased funding to accelerate progress on global malnutrition.

Almost half of all child deaths worldwide are linked to malnutrition. The children who survive remain at high risk of irreversible stunting, which affects their physical and cognitive development. For 151 million children under the age of 5, the majority in Central America, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, stunting is a life sentence.

We are making progress, but it is far too slow. Increased access to nutritious food and vitamins, supporting breastfeeding, and ensuring safe drinking water and sanitation will enable more children to grow and reach their full potential.

My faith calls me to have compassion and stand alongside women and children around the world. I urge you to increase our nation's commitment and investment in efforts to advance global nutrition.

Sincerely,

[your name]

[your address]

[city, state, ZIP]

*For the most current version of this sample letter, updated as legislation moves in Congress, visit [bread.org/ol](http://bread.org/ol).*



Bread for the World photo

## HUNGER AND POVERTY FACTS\*

In 2017, the number of people experiencing hunger around the world increased for the third year in a row. Much of the increase in hunger is due to climate change, conflict, and economic downturns.

- **Forty-five percent** of all preventable child deaths are linked to malnutrition.
- Nutrition programs for pregnant women and young children are highly cost effective. **Every dollar** spent on them produces on average a **\$16 return** from reduced health care costs and people's improved ability to participate in the labor market.
- **One in 4 of the world's children** (151 million children) suffers from physical and cognitive stunting.
- In 2017, more than **7 million** U.S. women and children living in low-income households received nutritious food and nutrition education through the Women, Infants & Children (WIC) nutrition program.

\* Go to [bread.org/ol](http://bread.org/ol) to read about additional domestic and international hunger and poverty facts.

# A PRAYER FOR YOUR OFFERING OF LETTERS

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*—Matthew 22:37-39

Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Michael Curry, proclaimed, “when love is the way, no child will go to bed hungry in this world...when love is the way, we will let justice roll down like a mighty stream,” referring to the kind of love spoken by the prophets, which Jesus calls us to live out in Matthew 22. Jesus compels us to love God and neighbor, and in so doing, to seek justice and show compassion for all people.

Out of love for our neighbors, we write letters to Congress. Our letters are an offering of our time and our voice. We offer this prayer and provide additional worship resources to support your Offering of Letters at [bread.org/ol](https://bread.org/ol).

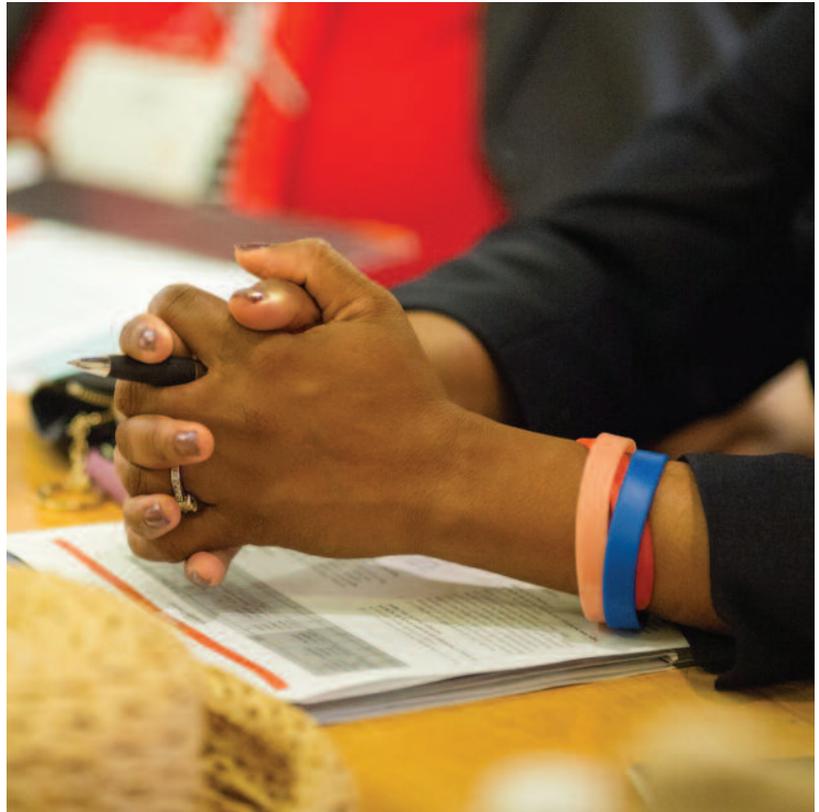
## Prayer Over Letters

Gracious God, you have called us, through your prophets and your Son, Jesus Christ, to live out your vision of a world without hunger. Trusting in your love and mercy, we lift our voices and pray alongside all those who suffer from malnutrition and its devastating impacts.

We share your deep love and concern for all who experience hunger and poverty, and we desire that all may prosper and be in good health.

Bless these letters that our words may touch the hearts and minds of members of Congress and embolden our elected officials to increase our nation’s commitment and investment in global nutrition programs.

With gratitude for our nation’s leadership and the world’s progress in ending hunger, we present these letters in the name of Jesus Christ, the source of all our hope. Amen.



Joseph Moller for Bread for the World

Additional resources for the 2019 Offering of Letters are available at

[bread.org/ol](https://bread.org/ol)

how-to guide • Q&A • hunger fact sheets • Pan-African devotionals • prayers, litanies, and worship bulletins (English/Spanish) • feedback form

**Bread for the World** is a collective Christian voice urging our nation’s decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. Moved by God’s grace in Jesus Christ, we reach out to our neighbors—whether they are next door, in the next state, or on the next continent. Each year, thousands of churches from many faith traditions take part in Bread for the World’s Offering of Letters.



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