RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The major focus of 2020 was responding to the heart-wrenching challenges presented by the global COVID-19 pandemic, from skyrocketing unemployment to widespread hunger. The WhyHunger Find Food database of more than 34,000 food access organizations is the most comprehensive in the U.S. In 2020, through our WhyHunger Hotline (1-800-5HUNGRY), texting service and online tools, we assisted 1,036,065 individuals in accessing healthy food and essential services in their communities.

Through partnerships with Google and Waze, we also improved our infrastructure and service by adding new food providers and updating existing ones with COVID-19 changes in hours or food distribution. WhyHunger also developed an automated answering service to minimize wait times and upgraded our texting service.

Working with our partners, WhyHunger made critical investments in transformative solutions to hunger led by Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and other deeply impacted communities. Through our Rapid Response campaign and International Solidarity Fund, we mobilized $845,223 in emergency funding to 42 partner organizations and social movements in 8 countries for rapid response activities.

The Rapid Response activities included:

- Distributing nutritious food, medication, masks and hygiene supplies to vulnerable and impacted communities.
- Developing the capacity of urban and rural small-scale farmers to grow sustainable food and build local distribution infrastructure.
- Supporting food banks and pantries struggling to meet rising demand in the United States.
- Creating education and communication campaigns about the prevention of COVID-19.
- Global campaign to “Stay Home but Not Silent” to counter human rights violations amidst lockdowns.
- Recovery efforts post-Hurricanes Eta and Iota in Central America.
BUILDING GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS

It is critical that communities are able to move beyond food access to build food sovereignty, which is defined as the right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound methods, and to determine their own food and agriculture systems. The COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying hunger crisis have exposed our unjust food system and the need for communities to have greater control over their own food. In 2020, WhyHunger’s *Summer’s Heating Up!* campaign energized our board and donors to raise an additional $72,000 to train small-scale farmers in sustainable food production to feed people and cool the planet.

Around the globe, WhyHunger supports communities to organize, grow food and regain control of their local food systems through our International Solidarity Fund. In 2020, we invested **$689,808** in strengthening social movements through **50 community-based projects in 25 countries** led by rural peasant, fishing, youth and Indigenous communities to build food sovereignty, engage more people through political education and organizing, and meet the challenges presented by COVID-19 and climate change.

Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo (ATC)/Rural Workers’ Association, Nicaragua

The Campaign Against Hunger (TCAH), New York, USA

South Bronx Food Hub Collective (SBFHC), New York, USA
Supporting Black Food Sovereignty is a critical strategy in WhyHunger’s work to address systemic hunger and poverty in the United States and around the world. Systemic and institutional racism, disenfranchisement and state-sanctioned violence against Black communities have resulted in gross economic, political and social injustices. Research indicates that Black communities suffer disproportionately from food insecurity; struggle hardest to access and afford fresh food, adequate health care and housing; and face the deepest inequities in health, income and employment. These cruel realities have also led to devastatingly disproportionate rates of COVID-19 illness and death in Black communities.

2020 Food Sovereignty Highlights:

- Women in El Salvador leading a pilot project to raise pigs sustainably to supplement and enrich local families’ diets and build their income.
- Farmers in Puerto Rico hosting online growing information sessions with farmers across the island and providing the required masks, gloves and other personal protection equipment needed for small-scale farmers to sell their produce at local markets.
- Women in India providing basic nutrition education to children in 10+ rural communities and teaching them to grow food sustainably.
- A BIPOC community in the southeastern United States developing a farm and mutual aid network model that provides weekly produce shares and medicinal herbs to its members.
- LGBTQ+ and BIPOC leaders in the United States Mid-Atlantic region providing inclusive educational opportunities in natural building, carpentry, timber framing, low-impact forestry and basic land stewardship skills focused on ecological restoration and sustainable food production.
WhyHunger’s partners in the movement for Black Food Sovereignty are working locally, regionally, nationally and internationally to reimagine and build a food system that prioritizes the health and well-being of all people and the planet and is rooted in the belief that food sovereignty is a human right.

From organizing digital workshops, webinars and gatherings for sharing collective knowledge and skills to building cooperative food and farm businesses, purchasing land collectively and re-establishing agriculture extension services, our partners are creating a new food system that restores the earth, preserves human dignity and fosters self-determining food economies.

**In 2020, WhyHunger supported partners in the Black Food Sovereignty movement by leveraging critical funding to:**

- Train and equip Black farmers to grow food sustainably and resource land acquisition and infrastructure projects that allow them to scale production and boost their income.
- Resource collaborative efforts led by Black urban and rural farmers and community gardeners to provide regular deliveries of healthy food to homebound and vulnerable Black seniors.
- Build an educational training center focused on creating local food distribution infrastructure, food production, ecological restoration and land stewardship.
- Create an online directory of Black food producers to increase access and opportunity for both producers and consumers to connect to one another.
- Support parts of a Black-led food supply chain, including farmers’ markets, food hubs, grocery cooperatives, food distributors and food makers throughout North America.
- Support the development and replication of a food chain model that provides Black churches in Maryland, D.C. and Virginia an opportunity to buy in bulk from Black farmers in the Mid-Atlantic region.
Agroecology produces nutritious food in harmony with the earth, helps mitigate climate change and strengthens communities. The most effective way to accelerate and scale the use of agroecology is through farmer-to-farmer training and organizing.

WhyHunger supports agroecology trainings around the globe and provides technical support to the People’s Agroecology Process, a grassroots-led process in the U.S., Puerto Rico and Canada that has brought together hundreds of organizers and farmers from Black and Indigenous, farmer and farmworker communities through agroecology encounters and trainings over the last six years. WhyHunger offers logistical, technical and financial resources to the People’s Agroecology Process, including support for their first publication in 2020 and a virtual launch party that brought together farmers and organizers to discuss their visions and struggles for justice through agroecology.

WhyHunger continued to deepen relationships with and provide support for four global social movements: La Via Campesina International, the World March of Women, the World Forum of Fisher Peoples, and the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous People. These movements represent over 200 million farmers, Indigenous people, peasants, and fisherfolk working to build food sovereignty and social justice for all.

WhyHunger mobilizes funds and provides logistical and technical support and international solidarity to these movements. In 2020, we helped to ensure small-scale farmers, women, youth and Indigenous communities across the globe can produce nutritious food, maintain their land rights and strengthen their ability to organize.

... It is extremely important that we dedicate ourselves to rescuing and strengthening our cultural practices and traditional knowledge, as well as ensuring our food sovereignty and restoring our relationship with Mother Earth.

- Movimiento por la Defensa de los Territorios y Ecosistemas de Bocas del Toro (Movement in Defense of Territory of Bocas del Toro Archipelago) - Panama
The U.S. is one of only a few countries that has never ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which includes the right to food and adequate nutrition. In 2020, WhyHunger and the Human Rights Clinic of the University of Miami School of Law stewarded the first-ever submission to the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review concerning the state of the right to food in the United States. This landmark report reframes hunger in the U.S. as a human rights issue and will be an important tool for organizers across the country working to establish nutritious food as a human right.

In 2020, WhyHunger also partnered with 30+ international NGOs, grassroots activists and scholars from across the U.S., Canada and the United Kingdom to launch the Global Solidarity Alliance for Food, Health and Social Justice. This alliance understands that food banking cannot end hunger and is building collective strategies and alternative models to promote more effective solutions that ensure the right to nutritious food around the world.
WhyHunger provided over $608,653 in direct funding to help 14 organizations and community leaders across the U.S. bolster initiatives around childhood nutrition, community organizing, narrative change strategies and Black food sovereignty.

By deepening local impact and building stronger connections regionally and nationally, WhyHunger is helping communities address their own immediate needs and create long-term change.

WhyHunger stewards the Closing the Hunger Gap (CTHG) Network, the national alliance of emergency food providers working to shift from charity to justice. Together, we’ve identified an 8-Point Checklist for Organizational Transformation to help food providers take practical steps to address the root causes of hunger.

### In 2020, WhyHunger supported Closing the Hunger Gap to:

- Organize a Racial Equity webinar jointly sponsored by Bread for the World, attended by 985 people and organizations.
- Participate in a Right to Food and Just Transition Panel coordinated by Action Aid and including panelists from the National Family Farm Coalition and Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).
- Focus on racial injustice as a root cause of hunger.
- Support racial justice as a critical part of the solution, including the creation of a statement in support of protests against police brutality and in defense of Black and Brown lives.
- Collaborate with the Poor People’s Campaign on production of a webinar connecting immigration rights and housing.
- Establish a partnership with the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC) as a strategic ally in helping CTHG member organizations explore economic justice and cooperative models as part of their work to end hunger.
Hunger is indeed a solvable problem. We need a new narrative – a shift in our mindset from thinking of hunger as the problem to looking at hunger as a symptom of greater forces at work in people’s lives creating poverty.

- Noreen Springstead, Executive Director, WhyHunger

WhyHunger continued our work to transform the dominant narrative about hunger in the U.S. The global impact of COVID-19 and the call for racial justice in 2020 have increased the visibility of hunger and food insecurity as key issues to overcome. WhyHunger organized food access organizations across the U.S. to lead a national narrative change process, creating a strategy centered around hunger, economic justice, and the rights and dignity of essential workers in preparation for 2021 campaigning. We expanded these efforts through WhyHunger’s storytelling and Food Justice Voices series, which released *Food Access Problems need Food Justice Solutions* to highlight FoodShare Toronto’s justice-based approach to ending hunger in Canada.

Shared weekly with thousands of subscribers, our *Root Report* email series continues to provide uplifting stories of innovative community-based projects around the globe that address hunger’s root causes. WhyHunger also released a new organizational video highlighting our unique strategies that ensure access to nutritious food now while also investing in long-term solutions and building power to end hunger for good.

**ARTISTS IN ACTION**

WhyHunger believes music has a unique power to heal, inspire, unite and drive change. From the start with our founding by the artist Harry Chapin, we’ve been mobilizing artists and their fans to raise awareness and funds to support our work. Artists Against Hunger & Poverty (AAH&P) is stewarded by 50 participating artist ambassadors, including founding member Bruce Springsteen, Tom Morello, Carlos Santana, Cindy Blackman Santana and Yoko Ono Lennon. Throughout the pandemic and despite the crushing blow of COVID-19 to the music industry, AAH&P artists like Phish, Dead & Co and Jesse Colin Young championed WhyHunger’s efforts from their living rooms, studios and homes, engaging their fans and raising over $118,000 to support our work through virtual concerts and online activations.
WhyHunger and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) were the co-beneficiaries of PLAY ON, a primetime TV music special which aired on CBS and streamed globally on YouTube and nationally via SiriusXM. This virtual concert, created by SixDegrees.org, united stars like Kevin Bacon, Bruce Springsteen, John Legend, Bon Jovi, Eve, Jon Batiste, LL Cool J, Maren Morris, Machine Gun Kelly, Sara Bareilles, Ziggy Marley, Andra Day and more at iconic venues around the country, celebrating the power of music to impact lives and drive change.

PLAY ON raised over $7.3 million, with key support from Bloomberg Philanthropies, Hard Rock International, Ford Foundation, JP Morgan, Southern New Hampshire University, Mary Kay Inc. and many others to support WhyHunger and LDF.

Hungerthon 2020 raised over $1 million for the fifth consecutive year, fueling programmatic work and educating listeners through 30+ radio interviews with our partners at SiriusXM, Entercom New York and iHeart Radio New York. Artist ambassadors and celebrities, including Yoko Ono Lennon, Bruce Springsteen, FRZY, Billy Joel, Taylor Swift, Marshmello, Kenny Chesney and more, elevated the campaign through merchandise, auction donations and promotional support.

Hungerthon 2020 RAISED OVER $1 MILLION

Ending hunger has been an issue close to my heart for decades. I believe nutritious food is our most basic human right ... My friends at WhyHunger are tackling the systemic issues at the heart of hunger and poverty so that we can all live in a just and hunger-free world.

- Bruce Springsteen in PLAY ON, aired on CBS

**CHARITABLE PARTNERSHIPS**

WhyHunger was humbled by the response of our donors and friends to the crises of 2020. We significantly increased our network of supporters, growing individual giving by 218% over the previous year and expanding our monthly supporters by 74%. Our foundation partners also stepped up in critical ways, investing over $2.36 million in our work.

We launched new charitable partnerships, bringing in over $632,000 from corporate partners like Hard Rock International, The Institute for Integrative Nutrition, vitafusion™ Gummy Vitamins and more. During our 2020 Hungerthon campaign, vitafusion Gummy Vitamins helped WhyHunger fund critical solutions to hunger in 10 communities across the country and helped amplify WhyHunger’s work with vitafusion Ambassador Tiffany Haddish.

In partnership with the Albertsons Companies Foundation Hunger Is initiative and Sony Music Entertainment, WhyHunger also made significant investments in grassroots solutions to hunger across America to support healthy food access, childhood nutrition, sustainable food production and more. Through our longtime partnership with USA for Africa, the grantmaking organization that distributes the proceeds of the song “We Are The World,” WhyHunger secured over $40,000 in funding to support our partners in Africa and a number of Black-led organizations in the U.S.