Many individuals, organizations such as IRUSA, and coalitions like the Alliance to End Hunger are working together to build the public and political will to end hunger by supporting programs that encourage and assist with food and nutrition.

During Ramadan, fasting from dawn to dusk is an obligation for Muslims, but it’s also a way to learn what so many people around the world feel when they don’t have enough food to eat. That tired feeling, those sharp pains of hunger and thirst, that time of the day when all you can think about is food—so many people around the world feel this way all the time.

Understanding the impact of resolving hunger issues lies in understanding the difference between food security and food insecurity and closing the gap between the two. Food security is not simply a matter of having food to eat. It means having reliable access to safe and nutritious food that meets dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

We are working together to build the public and political will to end hunger by supporting programs that assist with food and nutrition. There are many ways you can do your own part to help with food security, as you will notice throughout this guide.

Join IRUSA in working to end hunger—become an advocate!

Brought to you by Islamic Relief USA and the Alliance to End Hunger

**WHY HUNGER?**

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**Focus: Hunger in the United States**

Men, women, and especially children face a continuing struggle in every community across the country. About 41.2 million Americans (including 28.3 million adults and 12.9 million children) live in food-insecure households.

The current administration has proposed to radically change the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that would have people on program receiving a portion of their benefits in the form of a food package of predetermined items. Other important social insurance programs face major changes and budget cuts.

**Hunger can kill.**

Lack of nutrition goes beyond the sharp pains of hunger. It can weaken the body and leave people vulnerable to outbreaks of illness. More people die from hunger-related causes every year than from AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined.

**1 in 3 people suffers from malnutrition.**

Malnutrition takes different forms, including obesity. In the United States, people who are living in poverty often can’t afford healthy, nutritious foods. Lower-quality processed foods that contain more sugar and fillers often are cheaper and may be the only option when they can’t afford anything else.

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**Hunger and poverty are linked.**

Consider the following statistics:

- Some 40.6 million people, or 12.7 percent of the population, live in poverty.
- 13.3 million children under age 18, or 18 percent, live in poverty.
- Not all people living in poverty are necessarily food insecure, but there often is overlap. 15.6 million households, or 12.3 percent, are food insecure. That percent rises to one in six households with children, or 16.5 percent.

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**FIGHTING HUNGER IN 2018**

### FOOD DESERTS

Islamic Relief USA has worked for many years to provide high-quality and nutritious foods, particularly in food deserts. Food deserts are areas, mostly impoverished cities or municipalities, where residents have little to no access to markets with fresh, healthy foods.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that 37 million people live in food deserts. The agency considers an area to be a food desert if a supermarket is more than one mile away for 33 percent of the region’s population. In addition, the area must have a 20 percent poverty rate.

Because food deserts don’t have full-scale grocery stores that sell a wide variety of nutritious food, including fruits and vegetables, residents in these communities often have to rely on small convenience stores. The type of food sold there often tends to be processed, packaged, and filled with sugar, trans fat, and other unhealthy ingredients. Frequent consumption of such foods could lead to health-related problems, like diabetes and obesity.

One of the ways IRUSA tries to mitigate the problem posed by food deserts is by supporting food pantries and food banks. In local communities, food pantries often operate out of a church or community center.

Another way IRUSA has helped provide food to municipalities is by having food distributors provide surplus items that would be discarded if they weren’t claimed. This process is known as gleaning. Gleaners distribute high-quality surplus food to pantries and food banks that are supported by IRUSA.

While these resources and procedures can help, they are temporary fixes. Food deserts need a permanent resource where residents can regularly visit to collect or purchase the food. IRUSA continually tries to find ways to increase access to healthy foods in communities where it’s severely lacking.

### HELP END HUNGER:

**SENDING EMERGENCY FOOD AND SUPPLIES:**

In dire circumstances, families need food and supplies right away so that they can make it through another day.

**EMPOWERING WOMEN:**

By empowering women with tools, support and education, you ensure mothers can provide for their children and themselves because they’ll be able to earn a reliable and livable income.

**SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE:**

By helping farmers and improving local agricultural practices with training, supplies, infrastructure and more, you help farming families earn a living, and grow food to eat, in addition to developing the local economy.

**IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS:**

Similarly, education, financial support and tools can help families start small businesses, improve existing ones and train individuals in employable skills so they can get better job opportunities.

**MAKING EDUCATION POSSIBLE:**

Children need an education—it’s a way out of poverty for many and it’s vital for their development. With a proper education, children have a chance at a better life, and they might not have to worry about not being able to afford food.

### WHY DO FOOD DESERTS EXIST?

1) **Lack of investment in the community.**

Often, food deserts don’t only lack access to stores that would sell healthy food. They also tend to lack other services so common in many towns, such as banks, restaurants, and medical care. Studies have shown that restrictive zoning policies in particular sections of a town or city are contributing factors.

2) **Lack of sufficient education/understanding about nutrition.**

People living in food deserts tend to have less information, particularly about the benefits of eating fresh or nutritious food. Thus, they are more likely to eat processed or fast foods which tend to be more common in impoverished communities.

3) **Fresh food is costly, especially if you’re living paycheck to paycheck,** which many people living in food deserts do.

IF you’re a shopper who lives in a food desert, you’re often looking more for value and convenience, rather than foods or ingredients that would require a lot of time to prepare a meal.

### LEGISLATION

Two legislative bills were introduced to address the subject of food deserts.

H.R. 2014, known as the Food Deserts Act, was introduced in 2017 by Rep. Andre Carson (D-Indiana, 17th Congressional District), who is Muslim. The legislation would create a program in the Department of Agriculture that would provide grants to underserved communities to help them establish grocery stores.

The funds could be used to help open or support the store. Much of the food in the stores would come from urban farms or local community gardens.

Another bill, S1724, known as the Healthy Food Access for All Americans Act (HF AAA), was introduced by Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) in August 2017. A companion bill was introduced in the House of Representatives last November by a bipartisan group of Congress members. The sponsors of the House bill include Rep. Tim Ryan (D-Ohio), Rep. Don McEachin (D-VA.), Rep. Ryan Costello (R-PA), and Rep. Dwight Evans (D-PA).

Visit Congress.gov to learn more about this legislation.
1. Visit Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap website, map.feedingamerica.org, to find out the rates of food insecurity in your community.

2. Collect funds for children in need and donate them at irusa.org.

3. Volunteer at a local soup kitchen.

4. Call your U.S. Senators and ask them to make ending childhood hunger a priority. Call 202-224-3121.

5. Share a fact about hunger on your social media page and a link to where people can help.

6. Collect canned soups, vegetables, fruit, peanut butter, cereal, etc. Find your local food pantry and donate your items.

7. Cook and share a meal with your neighbor or a senior citizen to bring awareness that hunger affects all people regardless of age and religion.

8. Call President Trump and tell him to make ending childhood hunger a priority. Call the White House at 202-456-1111.

9. View & share our video at irusa.org/ramadan on sharing food worldwide, and send food to a country of your choice at irusa.org/donate.

10. Plant vegetables, herbs or both in a garden or box and grow healthy food.

11. Through AmpleHarvest.org, deliver excess home-grown food to a pantry. Take ownership of hunger in your community. (See last page for more.)

12. Prepare iftar together with children and family, and teach young relatives to help others.

13. Visit a sick friend or a relative in a hospital or at home and bring a homemade meal. Make dua and remember the less fortunate.

14. Send an email to someone you had a disagreement with, wish them a happy and blessed Ramadan, and invite them to break bread with you.
**SHARE THE HARVEST**

Keep up the efforts after Ramadan is over. On Sept. 21-23, clergy of all faith are invited to deliver sermons on ending food waste, as part of AmpleHarvest.org’s Food Waste Weekend initiative.

**YOUR ACTION:**
Congregants are encouraged to identify people and influential organizations in their faith communities. It is especially recommended that people identify individuals who can provide information on the campaign to fellow religious representatives to spread the message.

Download a faith-specific (Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, etc.) letter from the foodwasteweekend.org website and send it to the people you find. If the organization has a blog, it is strongly encouraged that you mention the Food Waste Weekend campaign.

Tweet **#FoodWasteWeekend** on Twitter about your experience.

**AMPLEHARVEST.ORG:**
AmpleHarvest.org is an organization that eliminates the waste to locally grown fresh food by donating it to local food pantries. Through utilizing the Internet, Ample Harvest enables millions of Americans who grow food in home/community gardens to donate their excess to thousands of registered local food pantries. This practice helps eliminate waste, hunger, and malnutrition all in one!

**ISLAMIC RELIEF USA FOOD BOX DISTRIBUTION SITES:**

- Baltimore, MD
- Bronx, NY
- Brooklyn, NY
- Charlotte, NC
- Chicago, IL
- Coney Island, Brooklyn, NY
- Dallas, TX
- Detroit, MI
- Fairfax County, VA
- Falls Church, VA
- Flint, MI
- Fountain Valley, CA
- Garden Grove, CA
- Jersey City, NJ
- Kansas City, MO
- Las Vegas, NV
- Los Angeles, CA
- Minneapolis, MI
- New Haven, CT
- Oklahoma City, OK
- Orlando, FL
- Passaic, NJ
- Philadelphia, PA
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Portland, OR
- Providence, RI
- Raleigh, NC
- San Diego, CA
- Staten Island, NY
- Tampa, FL
- Tulsa, OK
- Washington, DC