

What have you heard lately about the problem of hunger? Most news stories about hunger are in the context of natural disaster, famine or war. But there is a quieter, more deadly form of hunger that you might not have heard of: chronic hunger.

Chronic hunger exists in the most extreme levels of poverty and results from a vicious cycle: limited resources lead to a lack of education; illiteracy prevents an individual from securing a well-paying job; the lack of sufficient income leads to malnourishment and susceptibility to disease; poor health prevents an individual from going to work; the loss of work leads to greater poverty and poorer health, and the downward spiral continues. Often all it takes to push a family over the edge is a common illness.

Each day, 24,000 people, 16,000 of whom are children under age five, die due to hunger-related illness. Because of the cyclical nature of chronic hunger, it plagues not just individuals and families, but entire communities.

Such a threat demands intervention, for both practical and moral reasons. Chronic hunger is closely tied to the spread of disease, such as AIDS, which does not respect national borders. It also creates a huge economic burden for both national and foreign governments as they face rising epidemics, emergency aid expenses, and a weakened work force. But when it comes down to it: a hungry person is a hungry person, no matter where they live.

You may not think you have the power to end hunger today, or even know where to start. Take the first steps today. Educate yourself, your friends and your communities about hunger and how it *can* be prevented.

There are success stories. Freedom from Hunger is an organization I recently discovered that is working effectively in many countries to empower families to help themselves out of poverty and to end their own hunger. In recognition of Freedom from Hunger Day, September 28th, I ask that each of us take a moment to think about what it means to be hungry and what we can do about it. Help raise awareness about this silent killer!

Find out more about world hunger and Freedom from Hunger Day at www.freefromhunger.org.