Toward the end of 2012, the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Agriculture released new data revealing that hunger and poverty in America remain high, especially among children.1

Alarmingly, the African-American and African-American child hunger and poverty rates are even greater than the national averages—sometimes nearly twice as high.

A Snapshot of Hunger and Poverty in America

More than 1 in 7 Americans, or 15 percent of the entire population, live below the poverty line ($22,811 for a family of four with two children).

Hunger closely mirrors the poverty figures: 14.9 percent of households in the United States (50.1 million Americans, or 1 in 6) are food insecure—meaning that the people in the household are unsure of how they will provide for their next meal at some point during the year.2

Households with children are more likely to experience food insecurity. Around the country, nearly 1 in 4 children—16.7 million—lives in a food insecure family.3 More than a quarter of all children under age 5 lived in poverty in 2011.4

Hunger and Poverty and the Impact on African-American Children

The most recent food insecurity data released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture reveal that 25.1 percent of African-American households are food insecure.5 Among African-American households with children, 29.2 percent are food insecure, compared to 20.6 percent of all U.S. households with children.6

Similarly, 27.6 percent of African-Americans live in poverty. The African-American child poverty figures are particularly disturbing: 38.8 percent of children under age 18 and 42.7 percent of children under age 5 live below the poverty line.7

The table on the right shows the 20 states with the highest African-American child poverty rates in the country.8 The figures are particularly dismal in some major metropolitan areas. On the next page is a list of the 20 metropolitan areas...
in the country with the highest African-American child poverty rates, compared to overall child poverty in those same regions.11

Safety-Net Programs Make a Difference in the African-American Community

As the economy continues to rebound, federal initiatives play a tremendous role in protecting African-American children and families from falling into hunger and poverty. These initiatives include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

- **SNAP:** During the recession of 2008, poverty and unemployment skyrocketed while the number of hungry people held relatively steady, due largely to programs like SNAP. In 2011, more than 3.9 million African-American families received SNAP benefits.12

- **WIC:** The health and potential of some of our most vulnerable community members are safeguarded through monthly packages of food that supply important nutrients to mothers and their infants and children under age 5. WIC served nearly 9 million women and children in 2012. The most recent racial and ethnic data, published in February 2012, found that 20 percent of women and children enrolled in WIC are African-American.13

Setting a Goal for Ending Hunger

Now is the time for President Barack Obama to work with Congress on setting a goal to end hunger. As the president and lawmakers work to reduce our federal deficit, Bread for the World urges lawmakers to protect the programs that help keep hunger at bay for low-income African-Americans—and all hungry Americans.