

OXFAM TOOLKITS

HOW TO HOST AN OXFAM HUNGER BANQUET® EVENT DIRECTIONS AND TOOLS



OXFAM

DEAR FRIENDS,

Fifty years ago, something extraordinary began. On the Thursday before Thanksgiving in 1974, more than 250,000 people across the U.S. joined Oxfam's first Fast for a World Harvest, skipping a meal to take a stand against hunger and inequality. That simple act sparked a movement that continues to this day.

When you host an Oxfam Hunger Banquet event, you're carrying that legacy forward. You're joining a powerful community of people who believe that inequality is not inevitable, and that together we can build a fairer, more equal future. Over the past five decades, nearly one million people have gathered at Hunger Banquet events across the country to share stories, challenge assumptions, and take action for change.

This toolkit was designed to help you do the same. Inside, you'll find a step-by-step guide, updated data and insights from Oxfam experts around the world, and practical tools to make your event meaningful and impactful. If you have questions or need support, our team is here to help every step of the way.

Thank you for being part of this movement and for turning empathy into action. The future is equal, and it starts with you

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jana Jackson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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RESOURCES AND DOWNLOADS

Throughout the toolkit, this icon denotes links to digital resources.

4 THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

1. YOUR OXFAM HUNGER BANQUET® EVENT IS PART OF A MOVEMENT.

This interactive and memorable event has been changing people's lives for more than 50 years. Every year, thousands of people attend *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* events around the country—most of which are hosted by volunteers like you.

2. YOUR EVENT WILL BRING HUNGER AND POVERTY ISSUES TO LIFE.

When guests arrive at an *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event, they draw cards at random that assign each to a high-, middle-, or low-income tier—based on the latest statistics about poverty around the world. Each income level has a different experience. The 20% in the high-income tier are served a sumptuous meal; the 30% in the middle-income group eat a simple meal, like rice and beans; and the 50% in the low-income tier help themselves to small portions of rice and water. A master of ceremonies (MC) reads a script (see page 9) to guide participants through this interactive experience. Finally, your guests come together to share their thoughts and take action after the meal.

3. WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Oxfam has event experts on staff to answer your questions and offer advice. We also encourage you to use our [online registration form](#)  to let us know about your event, and once your event is over, we'd love to hear how it went!

Oxfam created this unique event more than 50 years ago, and we encourage others to use it in their schools and communities. We do ask that you credit Oxfam in the title of the event and in your promotion. For example, if you are hosting an event at Harvard University, you should name your event "Harvard University Oxfam Hunger Banquet®." If you have any questions, please refer to our [Licensing Agreement](#). 

Contact us via email at actfast@oxfamamerica.org.

4. YOU CAN MAKE AN IMPACT.

At the end of your *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event, people who attend will feel moved; they'll want to know what they can do to help. Make sure you invite them to take action on their phones. It's an easy yet meaningful way to get involved. And by growing our community, we increase our power to respond to global crises, raise awareness, and change the unjust laws that keep people trapped in poverty.

// I was really excited to come to my first Oxfam event. And I feel very grateful that it was an *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* [event]. It was incredibly moving. I even was choked up a few times. It's just a really important reminder about inequality and that it's not a choice which group you're in. It's all luck of the draw. //

—*Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event participant

PLANNING YOUR EVENT

To help make your *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event a success, Oxfam has compiled some tips and techniques for planning your event from start to finish. We've included advice gleaned from staff and volunteers who have organized events all over the country.

STEP 1: FIND PEOPLE TO HELP YOU

Recruit volunteers immediately and divide them into three committees:

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE (PUB)

This group handles publicity and media. The purpose of these publicity efforts is to get people to attend your *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event. By contacting local media, you can also share your message about poverty and hunger issues with an audience well beyond your guest list.

Your publicity should reflect the nature of the *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event, including the themes of inequality, hunger, and education. Sometimes organizers keep their publicity purposefully vague to intrigue prospective guests and to add an element of surprise.

LOGISTICS COMMITTEE (LOG)

This team's responsibilities are threefold: managing guest registration and sign-ups, soliciting donations, and recruiting additional volunteers to prepare for and staff the event. This committee's ultimate goal is to ensure that the *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event runs as smoothly as possible.

Many organizations run *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* events as fundraisers for Oxfam, so they try to spend as little as possible. Whether or not your event is a fundraiser, you will be working within a budget, so keeping expenses down will be important. Your budget will probably include allowances for food, publicity, a sound system, decorations, and possibly the cost of a venue and/or speaker(s). It is a good idea to make your own list before planning your fundraising strategy. Once you have a list, you can begin brainstorming ways to limit expenditures.

PLANNING COMMITTEE (PLA)

The planning committee oversees the structure and design of the program and makes sure that your *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event effectively conveys its message. This committee also plans the agenda and content of the program, including how much time is allocated to each part. It arranges for an MC, speakers, and VIP guests.

- ☐ Will your event be a fundraiser? Consider how you will collect funds and let participants know how to donate.

STEP 2: GET ORGANIZED & REGISTER YOUR EVENT

This suggested sequence of events will assist you as you prepare for your *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event.

FIVE TO EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE

- ☐ Set a date for the event. (LOG)
- ☐ Reserve a venue or decide on a platform, such as Zoom, if your event is virtual. (LOG)
- ☐ Select an MC and a speaker. (PLA)
- ☐ Create a list of local celebrities to invite. (PLA)
- ☐ Seek out food donations. (LOG)
- ☐ Register your event and download the income cards along with other free materials on our website at oxf.am/ohbregister.  (PLA)

FOUR WEEKS BEFORE

- ☐ Send invitations. (PUB)
- ☐ Post your event online. (PUB)
- ☐ Prepare a press release. You can find templates on our website after you register your event. (PUB)
- ☐ Determine seating arrangements or virtual breakout groups. (PLA)
- ☐ Decide on decorations. (PLA)
- ☐ Recruit volunteers and assign roles. (LOG)

THREE WEEKS BEFORE

- ☐ Publicize on social media. (PUB)
- ☐ Design menus. (PUB)
- ☐ Purchase or make decorations. (PLA)
- ☐ Put up posters. (PUB)
- ☐ Send out press releases and make follow-up calls. (PUB)
- ☐ Check all final details. (LOG)
- ☐ Review the suggested script. (PLA)
- ☐ Make follow-up calls to media. (PUB)

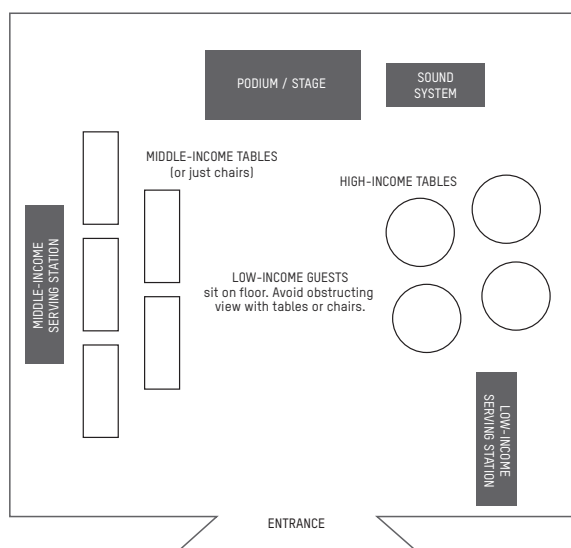
THREE DAYS BEFORE

- ☐ Print out or email cards for all income groups. (LOG)
- ☐ Buy food, pick up donated food, or review plans with chef. (LOG)
- ☐ Check on table settings for each group. (LOG)
- ☐ Make last-minute press calls. (PUB)

THE BIG DAY

- ☐ Continue publicity. (PUB)
- ☐ Set up and decorate room. (PLA)
- ☐ Orient volunteers. (LOG)
- ☐ Coordinate food for each income. (LOG)
- ☐ Greet guests and make sure everyone has a card. (PLA)
- ☐ Begin! (PLA)

SUGGESTED ROOM LAYOUT



typical *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event includes three different meals. Please note that the menu below is a suggestion. A variety of foods will work to illustrate the disparity the event highlights.

- High-income (20% of guests): pasta, sauce, salad, and juice
- Middle-income (30% of guests): rice, beans, and water
- Low-income (50% of guests): rice and water

POTENTIAL SPEAKERS

- Returned Peace Corps volunteers
- Professors or teachers
- University presidents
- Local elected officials
- Community leaders
- Directors of area nonprofits, such as food banks or refugee resettlement organizations
- Leaders of faith groups
- Local public figures or media personalities
- Chefs or sustainable food advocates

STEP 3: RUN YOUR EVENT

The big day is here! To ensure that everything goes smoothly, assign tasks to four people or groups:

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

This is the most demanding of all the responsibilities. If possible, we recommend having two MCs. The MC needs to have a commanding presence to hold the audience's attention for the duration of the *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event. It falls on the MC's shoulders to get the audience to participate in the sharing session, one of the most important parts of the event. Along with being an effective public speaker, the MC should have a good grasp of the *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event concept and objectives. Use our suggested event script on page 9 as a guide. The MC should be briefed on what food will be provided and how it will be served, as they will be expected to give directions concerning the food.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR(S)

The volunteer coordinator assigns people to specific tasks and leads the orientation for all volunteers before the event. Some volunteers will put up the decorations, set up the room, and perhaps prepare the food. Others will greet the guests, help them get their income cards, serve the food, and clean up once the *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event is over.

The volunteers need to be fully versed in their roles. Volunteers not only serve a practical purpose, but they are also the first people to interact with participants as they arrive, so they set the tone for the banquet. Volunteers also play an important role at the end of the event by helping guests sign up for Oxfam's online community.

SOUND SYSTEM MANAGER

The sound system is an essential feature of the *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event to keep the audience involved. An effective sound system that can be heard over the crowd, particularly while people are finding their way to their appointed areas, will help your MC maintain control of the event. Look into the quality of the acoustics when you select the site for your *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event, and arrange for at least two microphones (one or two for the MCs and at least one cordless microphone for the audience during the sharing period).

VIP GUEST RELATIONS

- Your VIP guest list may include public figures, speakers, and sponsors.
- Speakers need to be briefed on where to sit, as well as when they will speak during the program and for how long. They should be introduced to the MC and other speakers.
- Sponsors, whether individuals or businesspeople, should see how their support contributed to the event, and they should be thanked, both in person and by the MC as part of the program.

12 INSIDER TIPS TO MAKE YOUR EVENT A SUCCESS

1. Know your audience. Who's coming to your *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event? What are their interests? Their values? This will help you plan an event that resonates with them.
2. Consider distributing information to your guests beforehand. Will people have a better reaction if they're well-informed? Or will the element of surprise be more effective?
3. If you want your event to have a lasting impact, people should leave not only with a greater understanding of inequality, but also with knowledge of what they can do to help. Make sure you invite them to join Oxfam's online community by signing up on their phones at the event, so they can participate in the movement to end poverty and hunger.
4. Don't allow the event to go over the allotted time (ideally 90 minutes).
5. The MC's role is very important. Choose this person carefully, make sure they are prepared, and have them walk around in the audience and be a part of the banquet. If you think it might be easier or more engaging, you might ask two or more people to share the MC role.
6. Have the MC and volunteers emphasize that the event is based on examples of real people Oxfam has worked with.
7. If questions come up, you can always direct participants to Oxfam's website for more information about issues and statistics that demonstrate how resources are unequally distributed globally.
8. Consider adding your own elements to the event. You can add a story or example from your own community.
9. Use the hashtag **#oxfamhungerbanquet** to spread the word about your event on social media. Encourage guests to share their own photos and experiences.
10. During the group discussion, use audience comments to illustrate the point of the *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event. You'll be amazed what people feel inspired to share.
11. Access online resources for your event at oxf.am/hungerbanquet. 
12. Sometimes during the event, people may want to interact with the other income groups—exchanging food, switching seats, etc. Before doing so, they may ask a volunteer if this is allowed. Arm your volunteers with the line: "It's your world. Do what you'd like." This will leave the participants with flexibility and will add to the reflection portion of the event.

// [At *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* events] I have heard insightful thoughts from many people, from teens to veterans. No matter who is in the room, there's always evidence of a change in viewpoints. ... It helps create an environment where we can talk about what's wrong and how each of us can act with Oxfam to right these wrongs. **//**

—Event organizer

EVENT PLANNING GUIDE FOR 100 PEOPLE

This planning guide is intended to augment our tips on planning an *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event. This list addresses many particulars of the actual event; see page 3 for the recommended organization of the event in the weeks leading up to it.

Although an *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event can range in size from as few as 20 attendees to as many as 600, the following guide is based on 100 people attending the event. Please adjust as appropriate to your anticipated audience size. One hundred people translates into 20 in the high-income group, 30 in the middle-income group, and 50 in the low-income group. Base your planning on the minimum number of attendees that you can reasonably expect. Although this approach may seem counterintuitive, it will help you to avoid setting too many high-income seats and skewing the ratio of high- to lower-income participants. If your estimate proves to be too low, simply invite additional attendees to join the low-income group on the floor. For example, you may hope to have 150 people attend the banquet but feel certain that you'll get at least 100. Plan the setup, cards, and food for 100. Everyone over and above 100 can sit on the floor and share with the others in the low-income section.

FOOD

The 50 people in the low-income group typically receive about one-half cup of rice in a small bowl or paper plate. Often a large tray of rice is sufficient for this number of people. Water and cups are provided but usually no forks or spoons.

The 30 people in the middle-income group usually receive about one-half cup of rice and a spoonful of beans in a small bowl or plate. They also get a fork or spoon, a napkin, water, and a cup. Cups are often filled with water ahead of time and placed on a buffet table close to where this group is served so they can take their water as they go through the line.

The 20 people in the high-income group are served a meal often consisting of pasta, salad, bread, and juice. As this meal can be virtually anything other than rice and beans, it is easiest to ask the dining service or restaurant that is donating or preparing the food to give you a tray with 20 portions of whatever they are making that day, as well as a bowl of salad and some rolls.

Food can be your biggest expense—but through donations, it can often cost nothing at all! Try these tips to keep your food costs down:

- Dining services, restaurants, and others are far more likely to make a donation when you describe it as a pan of rice rather than dinner for 50! Be sure to emphasize how little you are actually asking for. A tray of pasta, a bowl of salad, or a bag of bread sounds much easier and less costly than numerous dinners.

- Emphasize the importance of ordering less rather than more food for this event. People often don't eat the small quantities given them, and having leftover food at an event that focuses on hunger can be very upsetting and frustrating.
- If you have a dining hall or cafeteria food service, begin by asking one of the managers about a food donation. They are often willing to supply most, if not all, of the food you will need.
- Ask local restaurants to help by providing the rice, beans, a large salad, etc.
- Spread the menu out among the organizers, asking each one to cook some rice or buy some rolls or juice, etc.
- Ask for donations from local restaurants and grocery stores. Let potential donors know that they will receive publicity through your event. When talking with potential sponsors, emphasize the positive nature of your *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event. Many businesses and organizations make it their policy to support social justice or public service efforts as a means of helping the community and maintaining a positive public image. Be sure to write a professional letter or email first and then follow up immediately with a call or a visit.

Asking for donations to feed dozens—even hundreds—of people may seem daunting, but with just a little coordination, you can get all your food donated. Remember: You aren't asking for full meals for each person. Be sure to send thank-you notes or emails to those who donated.

Finally, when planning your food service, consider ways to reduce the amount of waste from your event. Serve water from pitchers instead of plastic bottles, recycle silverware, and compost uneaten food.

FOOD CHECKLIST

LOW-INCOME GROUP

- ☐ 50 servings (i.e., one-half to three-quarters of a cup) of rice in a tray with one or two serving spoons
- ☐ 50 small paper plates or bowls
- ☐ 50 cups (do not offer plastic water bottles)
- ☐ Water in a bucket with a ladle or in pitchers

MIDDLE-INCOME GROUP

- ☐ 30 servings (i.e., one-half to three-quarters of a cup) of rice and beans in trays with serving spoons
- ☐ 30 small paper plates or bowls
- ☐ 30 forks or spoons
- ☐ 30 napkins
- ☐ 30 cups
- ☐ Water in pitchers or another container

HIGH-INCOME GROUP

- ☐ 20 dinner-size portions of pasta, salad, and rolls (or whatever is offered)
- ☐ 20 nice napkins
- ☐ 20 regular plates, glasses, forks, knives, and spoons
- ☐ Table linens for the tables
- ☐ Juice, tea, or another beverage for 20

PROGRAM

- **Keep the program to 90 minutes or less**, as it's difficult to hold people's attention when they're seated on the floor for too long. Let people know either through a program or at the welcome what to expect in terms of speakers, video, etc. This will help you avoid having people leave during or immediately following the meal portion of the banquet.
- **Be sure that any speakers have all the information they need**, including what the event is about; what their role is; where they need to be, at what time, and for how long.
- **The role of MC is central to the success of the event** and must be assigned to someone who can assume this responsibility, including spending time preparing for the role by familiarizing themselves with the script and understanding the intended outcome of the event. The MC will often lead the all-important sharing portion of the event and must be able to create an atmosphere that encourages people to speak up.
- **Do a run-through on all audiovisual (AV) equipment** and test the Wi-Fi, the Oxfam slideshow, the microphones, and the sound system. Make sure that everything is in working order and that a knowledgeable person is taking responsibility for operating everything. Give the AV person a script that indicates the various points at which each piece of equipment will be used and for how long.
- **Print Oxfam Hunger Banquet event income cards** in three distinct colors in the appropriate quantities (i.e., 20 high-income cards, 30 middle-income cards, and 50 low-income cards). You'll find the printable cards on the materials page once you register your event at oxf.am/ohbregister. Print as many as you need for the number of attendees—more than one person can have the same card. Distribute the income cards in at least two boxes, bags, or baskets.

- **Recruit eight to 10 volunteers for the event, and have them arrive 60–90 minutes beforehand**, depending on the setup required. Develop a list of volunteer roles, instruct all volunteers on what is about to happen and the goals of the event, and assign roles to volunteers. Give specific instructions regarding the significance and timing of each task.

SAMPLE VOLUNTEER CHECKLIST

- ☐ **Appoint one person to handle AV equipment.**
- ☐ **Appoint one person to greet and accompany the keynote speaker or other special guests.** Make sure the greeter knows who these people are and what their roles will be during the banquet.
- ☐ **Appoint two to four people to distribute income cards at the door** (determined by number of entrances to the room).
- ☐ **Appoint two to four people to answer questions and guide people to the area assigned to their income level.**

THESE SAME PEOPLE OR OTHERS CAN BE GIVEN THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL TASKS:

- ☐ **One person to advance PowerPoint slides (if using).**
- ☐ **Two people to serve and wait on the high-income group.**
This role may include actually putting the food on the plates in advance of the banquet. Note: It can be very distracting to have people preparing plates of food during the opening of the banquet. This potential distraction should be weighed against the need to keep the food warm. It all depends on the details of the venue and the way the food is provided.
- ☐ **Two people to serve rice and beans from a buffet table to the 30 people in the middle-income group.**
- ☐ **Two people to deliver the tray of rice with a serving spoon, plates/bowls, and the water and cups to the 50 people in the low-income group.** Participants will have to determine for themselves how to split the rice from the communal bowl.
- ☐ **Afterward, all stay to help clean up.**

SAMPLE OXFAM HUNGER BANQUET® EVENT SCHEDULE

5:00–6:00

- Volunteers arrive.
- Volunteer coordinator assigns volunteers to specific tasks.
- Volunteers set up and decorate site.

6:00–6:15

- Volunteers greet guests and have them draw cards.
- Volunteers remind guests to become familiar with the story on their income card.
- Volunteers direct guests to their income groups.

6:15–6:20

- Host gives welcome address.
- Host acknowledges sponsors, donors, and other people who made the event possible.

6:20–6:35

- MC reads *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event script.

6:35–6:50

- Attendees eat meal.
- Play slideshow (optional; this is offered in our suite of materials).
- Play music (optional).

6:50–7:15

- MC asks for a moment of silence to reflect on the *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event.
- MC leads sharing period.

7:15–7:30

- MC concludes and invites attendees to sign up to join the Oxfam community by scanning the QR code on the event slide and/or their cards.
- MC invites attendees to make a contribution if using this event as a fundraiser.

SAMPLE OXFAM HUNGER BANQUET® EVENT SCRIPT

Note: Throughout this script, you will see icons/prompts for the use of on-screen slides from the “Oxfam Hunger Banquet® event slides” PowerPoint file (available to download when you [register your event](#) ). The use of these slides is purely optional; they have been provided to enhance the visual experience of attendees, particularly with virtual events. It is recommended that there is a person designated to manage the process of screen-sharing the slides.



[OPTIONAL: PRESENT SLIDE 1
AS ATTENDEES ARRIVE/JOIN]

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event.



[FADE-OUT/STOP PRESENTING SLIDE 1]



[OPTIONAL: PRESENT SLIDE 2]

We are here today because 1.5 billion people are living in poverty in 2025. Those 1.5 billion people live on a daily income equivalent to less than \$4.20, which is the poverty line for low- and lower-middle income countries. They account for 18% of everyone on earth—this means nearly one of every five human beings live in poverty.



[OPTIONAL: TRANSITION TO SLIDE 3]

About 70% of people experiencing hunger live in countries affected by war, conflict, and violence. The number of people living in famine-like conditions is 700,000. Women, children, displaced people, informal workers, and disadvantaged groups continue to bear the greatest burden of this food crisis.



[FADE-OUT/STOP PRESENTING SLIDE 3]



[PAUSE]

In 2024, 2.6 billion people, or 32% of the world’s population, lacked the economic resources to afford a healthy diet that meets all of their nutrient intake requirements and helps prevent malnutrition.

Approximately 582 million people will be chronically undernourished in 2030.



[PAUSE]

Every day, 6,164 children under the age of 5 die from hunger and malnutrition or a related, preventable illness.



[PAUSE]

You may think hunger is about too many people and too little food. That is not the case. Our rich and bountiful planet produces enough food to feed every person on earth.



[OPTIONAL: PRESENT SLIDE 4]

Hunger is about power. Its roots lie in inequalities in access to resources. The results are illiteracy, poverty, war, and the inability of families to grow or buy food.

Hunger affects everyone, in countries rich and poor, in urban and rural areas. But some of us face greater challenges than others. Every day, resources like land and water are becoming harder to access. Global shifts in the climate are adding to the problem, making it difficult for people to sow and harvest crops.



[FADE-OUT/STOP PRESENTING SLIDE 4]

Let me give you an example of how inequality brings about hunger, especially for women and girls. In many low-income communities, women are the ones who collect food, water, and fuel. They maintain the home and look after children, the sick, and elderly people. When food is scarce, women often eat less so others can have enough. Adding to that, 54% of the primary-school-age children who are out of school are girls—over 32 million girls in all. Women also have fewer opportunities to learn new skills, access credit, or find decent-paying jobs.

But the situation is far from hopeless; we have made progress. Efforts like yours have helped to decrease the proportion of the world’s population living in hunger. But hundreds of millions of people still don’t have access to the food they need. Global food prices remain extremely volatile, meaning that for many people, food that is within reach one day may not be affordable the next. In July 2025, global food prices were up 1.6% over the previous month, and 7.6% higher than in July 2024, driven by rising prices for meat and vegetable oils.

Meanwhile, the gap between the wealthy few and the many living in poverty is steadily growing wider, with the pandemic intensifying those inequalities and putting progress further out of reach.

Your presence here today shows that you are concerned. You want to make a difference.

Today, you join Oxfam in the fight against world hunger.

For anyone who refuses to accept a world of poverty and injustice, Oxfam stands with you in tackling inequality at its roots. With your help, Oxfam offers lifesaving support in times of crisis and advocates for economic justice, gender equality, and climate action.

Oxfam recognizes that the fight to end poverty and injustice by tackling inequality is a long-term effort. Transforming broken systems takes time, even as people around the world are experiencing crises that demand immediate action.

For these reasons, Oxfam approaches their mission in two ways: (1) They partner with local organizations worldwide to offer lifesaving support to those who need it now, and (2) they tackle the root causes of poverty for the long term.

They demand equal rights, equal treatment, and equal opportunities so that everyone can thrive, not just survive. They fight inequality to end poverty and injustice—now and for the long term.



POVERTY IS SOLVABLE—
a problem rooted in injustice.
Eliminate injustice and you can
eliminate poverty.

[OPTIONAL: PRESENT SLIDE 5]

Poverty is solvable—it's a problem rooted in injustice. Eliminate injustice and you can eliminate poverty. It's not going to be quick or easy, but it can be done. Oxfam won't patch a problem and then disappear or stand by silently and watch others suffer.



POVERTY IS SOLVABLE—
a problem rooted in injustice.
Eliminate injustice and you can
eliminate poverty.

[FADE-OUT/STOP PRESENTING SLIDE 5]

Oxfam doesn't impose solutions. They see people's power to change their own lives. They believe that people have the right, and the understanding, to create solutions for their own communities and to control their own futures.

Although they are committed to community-based work, they know that there are also larger barriers that keep people from thriving. They take on the responsibility to hold the powerful accountable. That's why, together with communities, Oxfam calls on companies and governments to change the policies and practices that keep people trapped in poverty.

They also educate the U.S. public on hunger and poverty, which is what this *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event is all about.

This event illustrates how food and other resources are inequitably distributed in the world. As such, an *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event can only touch upon the issues. There are many complex ways inequality manifests itself. We will not have time to go into all the problems associated with lack of access to health care, education, and employment opportunities, and the realities of the day-to-day struggle for survival.



Everyone on earth has the
same basic needs; it is only our
circumstances—where we live
and the culture into which we
are born—that differ.

[OPTIONAL: PRESENT SLIDE 6]

The one thing to remember is this: Everyone on earth has the same basic needs; it is only our circumstances—where we live and the status into which we are born—that differ. Some of us

are born into relative prosperity and security, while millions—through no choice of our own—are born into poverty.



Everyone on earth has the
same basic needs; it is only our
circumstances—where we live
and the culture into which we
are born—that differ.

[FADE-OUT/STOP PRESENTING SLIDE 6]

As each of you walked in the door here today, you drew your lot at random. Look around, and you can see that equality and balance don't exist here.

Please note: No one section of this room represents a single country. While the United States is one of the wealthiest countries on earth, in 2023, more than 47 million people lived in food-insecure households. This means that at some point during the year, these households were uncertain of having or unable to acquire enough food to meet the needs of all their members due to lack of money and other resources. Overall, 13.5% of U.S. households were food insecure, but some households experienced even higher rates of food insecurity:

- 17.9% of households with children under age 6
- 23.3% of Black households
- 34.7% of households headed by single women with children

Stark inequalities prevail everywhere.

Now I would like to introduce you to the three segments of the world's population. But remember—it's too easy to measure this world purely in economic terms. It is really about each person's ability to achieve a sense of security and to access resources. And it's about the powerful role you can play when you decide to stand up against injustice.



HIGH INCOME GROUP
20% of world's population
\$10,950 per year minimum income

[OPTIONAL: PRESENT SLIDE 7]



[MOVE NEAR HIGH-INCOME GROUP.]

If you are sitting over here, you represent the 20% of the world's population with the highest per capita income.

To be a member of this very fortunate group, you need to earn a minimum income of just \$10,950 a year. Can you imagine—earning just \$30 a day gets you into this group?

Most of you are lucky enough to be able to afford a nutritious daily diet. Because some of you even exceed your daily requirement of calories, you are likely to face health problems such as heart disease and diabetes.

The good news is that many of you have access to the best medical care in the world. It's a given that your children will attend school; the only uncertainty is how many years they will study after high school. You and your family probably live in a comfortable and secure home. You may even own at least one car and two televisions. When you take your annual vacation, you don't worry about your job disappearing in your absence. You have access to virtually everything you need and the security to enjoy it.



HIGH INCOME GROUP
20% of world's population
\$10,950 per year minimum income

[FADE-OUT/STOP PRESENTING SLIDE 7]



[OPTIONAL: PRESENT SLIDE 8]



[MOVE NEAR MIDDLE-INCOME GROUP.]

If you are sitting here, you represent roughly 30 percent of the world's population. You earn between \$3,431 and \$10,950 a year. The levels of access and security you enjoy vary greatly. You live on the edge. For many, it would take losing only one harvest to drought or a serious illness to throw you into poverty.

You probably own no land and may work as a day laborer, a job that pays a paltry amount—but it's better than nothing. Your small income allows for some use of electricity and a few years of schooling for your children—especially if they are boys. Alternatively, you may have left your family to go work in the city. You hope that the money you earn from your less-than-minimum-wage job as domestic help or sweatshop worker will eventually allow you to move back home and make a better life for your family.

Let me put a name to a person in this middle-income group: Pablo (pahb-loh), who was born in Ecuador. Pablo's parents could only afford to send him to school through eighth grade, so as a teenager he took a job at an oil company. There, Pablo witnessed the unfair treatment of many workers, as well as grave destruction of the environment. It was hard for him not to speak up about what he saw, but he knew that if he made trouble, he might lose his job, and his family was relying on him.



[FADE-OUT/STOP PRESENTING SLIDE 8]



[OPTIONAL: TRANSITION TO SLIDE 9]



[MOVE NEAR LOW-INCOME GROUP.]

If you are sitting on the floor, you represent the majority of the world's population—just over 50 percent. Your income is less than \$3,431 a year—under \$9.40 a day—although many of you earn much, much less.

Every day is a struggle to meet your family's basic needs. Finding food, water, and shelter can consume your entire day.

For many of you women, it would not be uncommon to have to walk five to 10 miles every day to get water, spend several more hours working in the fields, and of course, take care of the children. And when food is scarce, you often eat less so that other family members will have enough.

Many of you, both women and men, are frequently hungry. It is quite likely that you don't get the minimum number of calories your hardworking life requires. Some of you are unhoused or living in structures so flimsy that a hard rain or strong wind could cause a major catastrophe.

Even though education is the single most powerful weapon against poverty, school is a luxury few of your children will ever experience. Most girls don't even bother to dream about school.

Adequate health care is out of the question. For most of you,

early death is all too familiar, with many mothers expecting to lose one or two children before they turn 5.

If you are lucky enough to work, you are probably a tenant farmer who must give your landowner 75% of your harvest. Or you may get occasional work as a day laborer at a large plantation growing bananas, sugar, or coffee for export. You reap few benefits from these crops; you'd prefer to grow food your children could eat.

Let me introduce you to a real person from this group: Flonira (Flo-NEERA) is a widowed mother of four in northern Rwanda. Her husband was shot during the war, and she is struggling to support her children. In her community, women are not seen as having a voice nor are they valued for their work.



[FADE-OUT/STOP PRESENTING SLIDE 9]

[GESTURES TO THE WHOLE ROOM]

Take a moment to look around you now. Some 80% of you are not seated at the table. That means 80% of you do not share in the bounty of our planet.

Now—ask yourself this: What can I do to make a difference? What can I do to tackle this injustice?

Now, I have some news that will affect several of you.

As we've said, no one can choose the circumstances into which they are born. Some people have the good fortune to change their lives for the better, but for most, the circumstances of life are determined by factors outside of their control.



[ASK TWO PEOPLE FROM MIDDLE-INCOME GROUP TO STAND.]

Please meet Dianke (Dee-AHN-kay) and Kerene (Keh-RAY-neh), farmers from a small village in eastern Senegal. Dianke, you earned a good income from the 29 acres of land where you grew groundnuts and other crops. Your family had worked this land for generations, thanks to land tenure granted by the local chief.

Then the government gave this land to a Canadian company intending to build a gold mine. Because you—like many rural Africans—did not have a land title, you received no compensation.

Kerene, you were able to keep your smaller farm nearby. But you suffered a serious setback to your income when one of your cows and two calves died after drinking water polluted by the chemicals used at the mine.

With your future uncertain, I invite both of you to make a place for yourselves in the low-income group.



[ASK ANY SIX PEOPLE FROM LOW-INCOME GROUP TO STAND.]

Meet Maritza (Mar-ee-sa), Eleni (Eh-leh-knee), and four other workers at a clothing factory in the Dominican Republic. For many years, all of you earned very low wages: just pennies an hour. Your bosses were abusive, and sometimes they locked you in the factory until late at night. Even with these long hours, Maritza, you sometimes could not afford food for your two children.

All of that changed when a new company bought your factory. This company made clothing, too, but the owners were committed to paying a living wage and respecting workers' rights.

Maritza, as president of the workers' union, you can now make sure that your fellow employees are treated fairly. And with the wages you earn, you've not only been able to feed your family—you've sent your daughter to university and your son to high school, fulfilling a longtime dream to educate your kids.

Today, the factory is doing good business selling to customers in the U.S. who don't mind paying a little more for clothes that they know are ethically made. But it's still the exception, rather than the rule, among factories in your area.

You lucky few can now move to the middle-income group. But before you go ...

? [ASK FOUR PEOPLE FROM MIDDLE-INCOME GROUP TO STAND.]

Let me introduce Siriaco (See-ree-AH-koh), his wife, and his two teenage sons. Siriaco, you planted corn and beans as usual this year, carefully tending your field high on the slopes of a mountain in Guatemala. But when the rainy season came and went, and very little rain fell, you started to worry.

You did everything you could short of making it rain, even fertilizing your field twice. But the harvest still failed. Most years, you can grow about 1,800 pounds of corn. This year, you got about a tenth of that.

Because your harvest is so much smaller this year and because you spent so much money trying to fertilize your field, selling your crops won't be enough to provide for your family.

In order to earn money to buy the food you need to survive, your family will have to migrate temporarily to work as pickers on a coffee plantation. As you prepare to leave your home, the four of you can now take your places in the low-income group.

👤 [PEOPLE EXCHANGE PLACES AND SIT. NOW TURN TO HIGH-INCOME GROUP AND ASK ANY MAN TO STAND. THEN TURN TO LOW-INCOME GROUP AND ASK ANY WOMAN TO STAND]

Now, I'd like to introduce you to two people: Pieter (P-Ter) and Nthabiseng [en-TAH-bee-seng]. They don't know each other, but they were born on the same day, not far apart, in the same country: South Africa.

[GESTURE TO MAN STANDING FROM HIGH-INCOME GROUP] Pieter was born in a wealthy suburb of Cape Town, to parents who are

both university-educated doctors.

[GESTURE TO WOMAN STANDING FROM LOW-INCOME GROUP] Nthabiseng was born to a poor family in the rural area of Limpopo. Neither of her parents went to school. Her father does odd jobs to support the family.

Though you two were born at the same time, your lives could not be more different. Nthabiseng, you went to a primary school for a few years and received good grades. But your family couldn't afford to keep paying for your books, school fees, transportation, and uniforms, so you had to drop out. If you decide to have children, it's highly likely that they will face the same situation.

Pieter, you recently graduated from college and are now contemplating going to medical school to become a doctor like your parents. Or maybe you'll travel the world first. You're not sure yet, but you have plenty of time to decide: You are likely to outlive Nthabiseng by more than 15 years. [ASK EVERYONE TO TAKE A SEAT. THEN TURN TO ADDRESS ENTIRE ROOM.]

These are just a few snapshots of life as it plays out each day around the globe.

Now we invite you to eat. Those of you in the high-income group will be served a nutritious meal. [MC MAY MENTION MEAL.]

Those in the middle-income group may proceed to the buffet tables, where rice and beans [IF THIS IS THE CASE] are available. Women in the middle-income group, we ask that you go to the end of the line and let the men serve themselves first. People in the low-income group seated on the floor, help yourselves to rice and water. Again, women, please wait and let the men take their rice first before you serve yourselves. [YOU CAN ALSO SERVE RICE IN LARGE BOWLS PLACED ON THE FLOOR AND HAVE PEOPLE SERVE EACH OTHER.] Bon appétit!

[AFTER PEOPLE FINISH EATING, MC ADDRESSES THE ROOM AGAIN.]

Please join me in a moment of silence to reflect on our experience here today. [MOMENT OF SILENCE]

[SHARING PERIOD: MC WALKS AMONG AUDIENCE MEMBERS, ASKING IF PEOPLE ARE COMFORTABLE SHARING HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT BEING IN THE GROUP THEY ARE IN. AFTER DISCUSSION PERIOD, MC RESUMES READING SCRIPT.]

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: Because these can be very personal questions for some participants, establish the room as a safe space.

YOUNG AUDIENCES

- Do you think it's fair that the world is divided this way? Why or why not?
- Do you think that the people who got the big meal should help the others? Why or why not?
- Why do you think the people in the low-income group are there?

OLDER AUDIENCES

- Would anyone like to share any thoughts they have on what has taken place here?
- Could someone read their card out loud and share their thoughts on the story that was shared?
- Can you think of examples where conflict, climate change, or policy decisions are contributing to hunger and inequality?

- What might we all do to bring about a fairer distribution of resources?
- Does anyone have any ideas on how our personal choices affect the world's unequal distribution of resources?
- How can we all work together to address gender inequalities that contribute to poverty?

If people are only focused on the dynamics of the banquet itself, remind participants that this is a simulation. Challenge the audience to discuss what this meal represents in the real world and ask what can be done to change things for the better.

There is still a lot of work to be done, yet there is also hope.

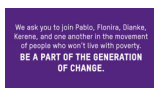
Many of the stories you've heard today are those of real people. Let me update you on some of the steps they've taken to change their situations.

At age 17, Pablo decided to voice his concerns to his supervisor at the oil company. Soon after speaking up, he was fired—but the experience inspired him to become a lawyer and defend the rights of his fellow workers. He spent many years working odd jobs during the day and studying for his degree at night, then went to work for a grassroots organization defending communities and the environment. Five years later, Pablo's efforts to protect Ecuador's rural people and land earned him a prestigious environmental award.

As for Flonira, she joined an Oxfam-affiliated tree tomato co-operative. She received training in production, marketing, and financial management. Not only is she making a profit, but she is helping supplement her son's college education abroad, helping him gain a leg up as well.

And in Senegal, Dianke and Kerene attended a training session run by a local human rights organization. With funding from Oxfam, this organization teaches villagers how to form groups and monitor problems related to mining. "We learned how to protect the water, to protect our animals, and we learned about our rights. We watch for rights violations," Dianke says.

By attending this *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event, you have deepened your awareness of world hunger and poverty. The test is how you put this knowledge to use. Our event ends here, but this is just the beginning for each of you. As I look around the room today, I can see that this experience has had an impact on many of you. **If what you've learned or experienced has stirred something in you, take action now. Today. Before you leave.**



[OPTIONAL: TRANSITION TO SLIDE 10]

We ask you to join Pablo, Flonira, Dianke, Kerene, and one another in the movement of people who won't live with poverty. Be a part of the generation of change.



[OPTIONAL: TRANSITION TO SLIDE 11]

If you haven't already, please take out your phones and scan the code on screen/on your cards to join the global movement of people working together to ensure that everyone, everywhere, has access to food, clean water, to education, and to a life free from poverty. You'll find these instructions on your character cards as well.

[IF APPLICABLE, YOU MAY WANT TO MENTION HOW SOMEONE CAN MAKE A DONATION RIGHT AT THE EVENT, AND MATERIALS FOR THOSE WHO MAY BE INTERESTED IN HOSTING THEIR OWN *OXFAM HUNGER BANQUET*® EVENT.]

[PAUSE TO ALLOW TIME FOR PEOPLE TO TAKE THIS ACTION ON THEIR PHONES. RESUME WHEN IT APPEARS MOST HAVE DONE SO.]



[FADE-OUT/STOP PRESENTING SLIDE 11]

Thank you.

I want to leave you with the words of someone whom many have found inspiring, in large part because—despite what seemed like insurmountable obstacles—he was able to bring about changes that few believed possible. I quote from a speech he made to a group of people like you at an event organized by Oxfam some years ago. I am honored to close with his words:

Massive poverty and obscene inequality ... rank alongside slavery and apartheid as social evils. ... In this new century, millions of people ... remain imprisoned, enslaved, and in chains. They are trapped in the prison of poverty. It is time to set them free.

Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome. ... Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.

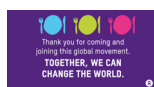
We thank you for coming here today. Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.

Of course the task will not be easy. But not to do this would be a crime against humanity, against which I ask all humanity now to rise up.

[PAUSE]

The speaker was the late Nelson Mandela.

Together, we can change the world. Rise up. Thank you for coming and for joining this global movement.



[OPTIONAL: TRANSITION TO SLIDE 12 AND LEAVE UP FOR DURATION OF EVENT]

WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH OXFAM AMERICA

Do you have a good story to tell about your *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event?
Have questions?

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Whenever mentioning your *Oxfam Hunger Banquet* event on social media, be sure to tag us using **#oxfamhungerbanquet**.

TAKE ACTION

There are two simple but critical steps that you can take to foster a global community and maximize the impact of your event:

Register your event. [Use our online form](#)  to share the basic details of your event.

Have attendees sign up to join Oxfam's community. Attendees will want to take action, so invite them to scan the QR code available on their income card (also available in the event slides). Encourage people to sign up to join Oxfam's community of concerned global citizens.

VOLUNTEER

Learn more about Oxfam's Action Network for an Equal Future, a community of inequality-fighting activists across the U.S. and other volunteer opportunities. Join us: oxfamamerica.org/volunteer 