BOROUGH HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY PAPERS 2005

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Food Bank For New York City
Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research

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ABOUT THE FOOD BANK FOR NEW YORK CITY

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The Food Bank's Government Relations, Policy and Research division develops policy and conducts innovative research to ascertain trends regarding the degree of hunger throughout the city, socio-demographic profiles of programs and participants, changes in demand for food assistance and community needs assessments.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 6

BRONX HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY PAPER 2005 8

BACKGROUND 8
BRONX HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY 9
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION 11
PARTICIPANTS IN FIRST HUNGER TASK FORCE MEETING, JUNE 20, 2005 13

BROOKLYN HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY PAPER 2005 14

BACKGROUND 14
BROOKLYN HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY 15
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION 18
PARTICIPANTS IN FIRST HUNGER TASK FORCE MEETING, JUNE 20, 2005 19

MANHATTAN HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY PAPER 2005 21

BACKGROUND 21
MANHATTAN HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY 22
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION 24
PARTICIPANTS IN FIRST HUNGER TASK FORCE MEETING, JUNE 20, 2005 26

QUEENS HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY PAPER 2005 27

BACKGROUND 27
QUEENS HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY 28
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION 31
PARTICIPANTS IN FIRST HUNGER TASK FORCE MEETING, JUNE 20, 2005 32

STATEN ISLAND HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY PAPER 2005 33

BACKGROUND 33
STATEN ISLAND HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY 34
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION 37
PARTICIPANTS IN FIRST HUNGER TASK FORCE MEETING, JUNE 20, 2005 39

INTRODUCTION

In September 2004, the Food Bank For New York City released *Hunger Safety Net 2004: Measuring Gaps in Food Assistance in New York City.* The study showed that at least two million New York City residents are at risk of hunger and that emergency food programs (EFPs) provide assistance to approximately half of those at risk.[1]

The findings highlighted specific and varying issues in different communities and boroughs, indicating the need to strengthen community-based responses to hunger. For instance, more than half of those at risk of hunger on Staten Island are not accessing services, many of them residing in the middle or on the south shore of the Island where very few EFPs exist. Conversely, in other areas with high percentages of people at risk who are not accessing food assistance but where there is a heavier concentration of EFPs, as is the case in the South Bronx, the challenge is more about program capacity.

The report also underlines the isolation of many EFPs from collective policy initiatives to end hunger in the city. For example, EFPs in Queens have the lowest average annual budgets, at $17,385, less than half the overall city average annual budget. Such EFPs are almost entirely reliant on a volunteer base and struggle to provide basic services, and therefore lack the resources to engage in coalition building with other hunger organizations. Separate from, and in addition to, the research findings, many groups report having little or no contact with elected leaders in their community – again, due to lack of resources.

Hunger Safety Net 2004 sought to address these issues by recommending the creation and development of community initiatives – borough-based hunger task forces to bring together emergency food providers, New Yorkers at-risk, funders, elected and appointed officials, community leaders and other stakeholders. These task forces could help EFPs to focus on issues of unmet need in their communities, address funding concerns, and work in partnership with local community and political leaders to move beyond food assistance and towards permanent solutions to hunger. Beginning with the development of collaboration among existing EFPs in different communities, the task forces could seek to engage elected officials and funders to fully support needed hunger relief efforts. Simultaneously, the task forces could prioritize public education and collaboration with other local social service programs so that each community can develop the ability to use all of its resources to address the poverty that causes hunger.

Since releasing the key findings in September 2004, the Food Bank has convened a range of meetings and presentations to ensure that emergency food providers, community groups and elected officials are engaged with the research. Within the last year, the research has inspired legislative and community responses, public education, as well as funding decisions and new funding opportunities.

[1] Emergency food programs (EFPs) provide community-based emergency food assistance to people at risk of hunger. In this paper, EFPs refer to soup kitchens and food pantries.

NYC Hunger Summit 2005, held on June 20, 2005, harnessed this overwhelming response to the report and equipped emergency food providers with the opportunity to plan next steps. This very first policy summit on hunger for the network of New York City EFPs was organized by a planning committee (established by the Food Bank) that included EFP representatives from each borough, the five Borough Presidents, elected officials from throughout the city, academics representing an array of colleges and universities, funders and other nonprofit partners. The summit had a two-pronged goal: to bring together elected officials with staff, volunteers and program participants of EFPs, and to officially launch the Borough Hunger Task Forces.

More than five hundred people attended the summit, as well as twenty-five elected representatives and/or staff. A key group of elected/appointed officials delivered presentations during the legislative hour and breakout sessions, including Assembly Member Felix Ortiz, Chair of the New York State Assembly's Task Force on Food and Nutrition Policy, Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum, Council Member Bill de Blasio, Chair of the City Council General Welfare Committee, Council Member Eric Gioia, Chair of the City Council Oversight and Investigations Committee, Council Member Margarita Lopez, Council Member Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión and Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Human Resources Administration Jane Corbett.

The offices of the five Borough Presidents, in conjunction with EFP staff and participants, delivered the main presentation during which the five Borough Hunger Task Forces were launched. The first official meetings of the task forces were convened during afternoon breakout sessions, and each group discussed and outlined a plan to address hunger in their respective borough.

The following is the strategy developed by each of the Borough Hunger Task Forces.[2] Included is a snapshot of hunger in each respective borough summarizing the primary issues addressed and prioritized during the first hunger task force meeting, the recommendations for meeting the local needs of the community, and the next steps as discussed by the groups.[3]

[2] A list of participants in each task force meeting on June 20, 2005, is included at the end of the strategy papers.

[3] All figures in this section are calculated from the data collected for the *Hunger Safety Net 2004* report. For further information on the methodology used to collect this data, please see Food Bank For New York City/Food Policy Institute (2004) *Hunger Safety Net 2004: Measuring Gaps in Food Assistance in New York City*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research. pp. 6-7.

BRONX HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY PAPER 2005

Background

People at Risk of Hunger in the Bronx[4]

Hunger Safety Net 2004 demonstrates that at least two million people in New York City are at risk of hunger with approximately half a million (472,949) of these individuals residing in the Bronx. Forty-five percent of this at-risk population – 212,470 individuals – are not accessing food assistance, including WIC, the federal Food Stamp Program, and emergency food assistance.[5] Twenty-nine percent of the at-risk population in the Bronx – 137,143 individuals – access only government food assistance and not emergency food assistance. Conversely, 21 percent of the at-risk population – 100,211 individuals – access only emergency food assistance and not government food assistance. Only five percent of the at-risk population – 23,126 individuals – access both emergency and government food assistance.

Distribution of At-Risk Population in the Bronx

The communities with the highest numbers of people at risk are concentrated in some of the poorer neighborhoods of central Bronx. These areas include Belmont and East Tremont (Community Board 6), Kingsbridge Heights and Bedford Park (Community Board 7) and Morris Park and Bronxdale (Community Board 11) – 63,909 individuals, 61,879 individuals and 57,771 individuals respectively.

Hunger, however, is not confined to just the poorer communities of the Bronx. One of the wealthiest districts, Community Board 8 (Riverdale and Fieldstone) is home to upwards of 15,000 residents at risk of hunger but not accessing food assistance. Other areas with a critically high number of people at risk who are not accessing food assistance are Highbridge and Concourse (Community Board 4), Parkchester and Soundview (Community Board 9) and Morris Park and Bronxdale (Community Board 11) – 36,527 individuals, 29,201 individuals and 29,201 individuals respectively. Compared to all of New York City, the Bronx ranks highest in the total number of people at risk not accessing food assistance services.[6] In fact, the borough is home to more than one-third of the overall number of people at risk who are not accessing food assistance in the entire city.

Emergency Food Programs (EFPs) in the Bronx[7]

The average budget for EFPs in the Bronx is $36,198. The average budget for all EFPs in New York City is $49,445 with approximately half of all programs reporting a budget of less than $17,500. As of this writing, there are a total of 202 food pantries and 80 soup kitchens in the Bronx.[8] Of that total, 139 food pantries and 36 soup kitchens are Food Bank For New York City members or participating member programs.[9]

Emergency Food Participants in the Bronx

Hunger impacts a diverse population in the Bronx including working individuals and families. In fact, accounting for almost one-quarter (23 percent) of emergency food participants, the Bronx is the

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[4] Findings in this section are calculated by population density, which refers to findings within borough populations rather than the city as a whole.

[5] Emergency food assistance is provided by community-based EFPs such as soup kitchens and food pantries.

[6] Based on the distribution of people for all of New York City, the Bronx has the highest number of people at-risk not accessing services (472,949 individuals). This is in contrast to the proportion of people at risk not accessing services for the whole borough. In this case, the Bronx (at 45 percent) ranks second to Staten Island where more than one-half (52 percent) of its at-risk population is not accessing government or emergency food assistance resources.

[7] All New York City EFP findings in this section are extracted from the Food Bank For New York City/Food Policy Institute (2004) *Hunger Safety Net 2004: Measuring Gaps in Food Assistance in New York City*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research.

[8] These figures are based on the number of EFPs registered with the New York State Department of Health as of August 2005. The figures were extracted from the FeedNYC database.

[9] The current figures for program numbers are based on internal Food Bank data as of August 2005.

borough with the highest percentage of employed EFP participants.[10] The Bronx can also claim the highest percentage of participants with some college education (12 percent).[11] Nevertheless, lack of access to education is also a clear priority for the borough as nearly one-half (46 percent) of Bronx EFP participants have less than a high school education.

Demographically speaking, the population of Bronx EFP participants resembles the city's EFP participants both ethnically/racially and in the percentage of single women with children. Twenty-one percent of participants in the Bronx are single women with children, compared to 22 percent of EFP participants citywide. In terms of racial and ethnic composition, Black/African Americans comprise the largest proportion of EFP participants in the Bronx (43 percent), while 35 percent are Latino/Hispanic, seven percent are White, one percent are Asian or Asian Indian, and three percent are multiracial or other. By comparison, 53 percent of EFP participants citywide are Black/African American, while 34 percent are Latino/Hispanic, nine percent are White, two percent are Asian or Asian Indian, and three percent are multiracial or other.

In contrast to the citywide averages, Bronx EFP participants differ in the percentages of elderly participants (65 and older), and in the percentages of participants who rent their housing. Overall, a lower percentage of participants in the Bronx are elderly. Whereas almost one-quarter (24 percent) of all New York City participants are 65 and older, only 12 percent of Bronx participants fall into this age category. Additionally, more Bronx participants rent their housing – especially public housing – and fewer participants own their homes. Eighty-two percent of emergency food participants in the Bronx rent their places of residence, with 46 percent living in public housing and 36 percent in private rental accommodations. In contrast, 78 percent of EFP participants citywide live in rental accommodations, (33 percent live in public housing and 45 percent in private housing). Only three percent of Bronx EFP participants own their homes in contrast to nine percent of EFP participants citywide. Similar to the average (12 percent) for all of New York City, 13 percent of participants in the Bronx are homeless.

Bronx Hunger Task Force Strategy

Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión launched the Bronx Hunger Task Force. The first official meeting, moderated by Allison L. C. de Cerreño of New York University, Tim Evans of the Bronx Borough President's Office and Rabbi David Edelstein of the Jewish Community Council of Pelham Parkway, was attended by 60 staff, volunteers and participants of the Bronx EFPs. The following is an overview of the session including the recommendations developed by the group. This strategy will serve as the foundation for the group's work this year and focuses on increasing food stamp participation, spurring job development and making hunger a priority on the political agenda.

Increase Food Stamp Participation

Increasing the number of people enrolled in the federal Food Stamp Program stands out as one of the most pressing hunger relief priorities in the Bronx. While 160,269 Bronx participants currently access food stamps, this figure represents little more than one-third (35 percent) of total EFP participants. In addition to feeding greater numbers of Bronx participants, increasing enrollment in the federal Food Stamp Program would benefit the borough's economy. Participants using food stamps would draw federal money into the Bronx economy by purchasing their food at local supermarkets. And since the program is federally subsidized, the government has already allocated funding that would cover any increase in the cost of benefits.

[10] Employment statistics among EFP participants for the other boroughs are as follows: 14 percent of Brooklyn participants, 18 percent of Manhattan participants, 21 percent of Queens participants and 19 percent of Staten Island participants.

[11] Education levels among EFP participants for the other boroughs are as follows: six percent of Brooklyn participants have attended college, as have eight percent of Manhattan participants, 11 percent of Queens participants and five percent of Staten Island participants.

To increase the number of EFP participants enrolled in the federal Food Stamp Program, the Bronx Hunger Task Force will develop a strategy that addresses administrative obstacles, including language barriers and complications with the application process for people who have a disability or face other hardships. In addition, recognizing that the success of this proposal hinges upon widespread dissemination of food stamp information, the Bronx Hunger Task Force will also reach out to and partner with local and citywide organizations to initiate a food stamp awareness and enrollment drive at EFPs. An information flyer that briefly describes the federal Food Stamp Program, eligibility requirements and enrollment sites and times, both in English and Spanish, will be made available to all EFP participants. The task force will target six neighborhoods in particular during this drive – Highbridge, Concourse, Parkchester, Soundview, Morris Park and Bronxdale, as these communities have the highest numbers of people not receiving any food assistance.

As mentioned in the previous section, approximately one-quarter (23 percent) of Bronx EFP participants are currently employed while just under one-third (30 percent) are disabled, slightly higher than the New York City averages of 19 percent and 28 percent for each respective sub-population. Since the majority of these participants are potentially unable to attend face-to-face appointments to enroll in the federal Food Stamp Program, the task force will also advocate for measures – like the current legislation proposed by the City Council – that improve access to food stamps for participants who are working, disabled or facing other hardships.[12] The task force will further seek to link to existing initiatives such as the new partnership between the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA), New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH) and FoodChange to increase access to the federal Food Stamp Program.[13]

The task force also discussed potential long-term strategies that it might seek to implement in partnership with the city and other organizations that promote food stamp awareness, including television advertising and the development of food stamp enrollment at EFP sites.

Spur Job Development

Job development represents the second critical issue facing the Bronx Hunger Task Force**.** Of all the boroughs, the Bronx has the highest percentage of employed individuals accessing EFPs – 23 percent. Such a substantial percentage of employed individuals accessing EFPs indicates a low quality of employment in the Bronx. Some local jobs therefore do not provide sufficient income to enable employees to sustain their households. More than residents in any other borough, over one-quarter (27 percent) of Bronx residents believe that they would not be able to afford food after a loss of income.[14] This statistic represents an increase of 35 percent from 2003.[15] Forty-one percent of residents found it difficult to afford food in 2004, also an increase from 2003, and the highest percentage of any borough.[16] Furthermore, almost one-fifth (19 percent) of Bronx residents could not buy food at some point in 2004, accounting for a staggering 46 percent increase from 2003.[17] Taken together, these statistics depict a workforce mired in low-paying employment. Although one-quarter (27 percent) of residents are able to provide for themselves, they live without any savings.[18] If these individuals were to miss a paycheck they too would slip into the at-risk population, and stand in need of food assistance.

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[12] City Council INT. NO. 593 mandates the distribution of food stamps applications at all soup kitchens and food pantries; INT. NO. 594 requires the City to develop an on-line food stamps application system; and INT. NO. 615 requires HRA to better accept food stamps applications by fax, waive face-to-face interviews for food stamp applicants for whom the interviews constitute a hardship and provide a receipt to each applicant.

[13] The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is providing a grant of $945,000 over three years to fund a partnership between HRA, NYCCAH, and FoodChange to increase access to the federal Food Stamp Program by simplifying the enrollment process for EFP participants at certain pilot food pantries and soup kitchens who already qualify for exemptions from face-to-face interviews (certain working, disabled and elderly people).

[14] Ibid. p. 12.

[15] See Food Bank For New York City/Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (2004) *Attitudes Towards Hunger in New York City: How New York City Residents View Hunger*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research. p. 13.

[16] Ibid. p. 11. In 2003, the number of Bronx residents who found it difficult to afford food was 37 percent. For the other boroughs, the number of residents who found it difficult to afford food in 2004 are as follows: 31 percent in Brooklyn, 21 percent in Manhattan, 32 percent in Queens and 28 percent in Staten Island.

[17] Ibid. p. 11. In 2003, this figure was 13 percent.

[18] Ibid. p. 12.

The task force expressed a concern that economic developers within the Bronx do not employ Bronx residents in their renewal projects. It may be possible for the task force to address this matter in conjunction with the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (BOEDC). The Borough President could spearhead an initiative to ensure that all new employment opportunities in the borough are posted on the BOEDC's Bronx At Work Job Bank, an online career source for metropolitan job and career positions and placement. At the same time, the task force will promote greater public awareness of the Bronx At Work website and make information about this vital resource available to EFP participants. These measures will promote wider awareness of employment opportunities throughout the Bronx.

The Bronx Hunger Task Force will also partner with other social service organizations to advocate for job creation and a living wage with benefits. This work will likely begin by encouraging legislators to revisit the question of increasing the minimum wage before 2008 to more accurately reflect New York City living costs.

Make Hunger a Priority on the Political Agenda

Finally, the Bronx Hunger Task Force will also raise hunger awareness among elected officials. The vast majority (90 percent) of Bronx residents believe that hunger is a pressing problem in their borough, and almost three quarters (73 percent) of Bronx residents feel that hunger increased in 2004.[19] The task force recognizes the need to communicate this widespread concern to the people's representatives, and to advocate for a community that often goes unnoticed.

This will better allow the Bronx hunger community to make hunger a priority on the political agenda, thereby ensuring support and resources for emergency food services and long-term solutions to hunger. The Borough President, the Food Bank and task force members with existing relationships with legislators will help connect the task force with local community boards and elected officials.

A first step for the task force will be the development of a platform, which will include the measures outlined in this paper, as well as other pertinent hunger issues and needed solutions that will be identified by the task force in future meetings. An equally important step will be for task force members to receive updates about relevant legislative happenings. In addition, the task force will convene trainings on how to conduct meetings with elected officials prior to scheduling legislative visits to discuss the hunger platform.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Following the first meeting of the Bronx Hunger Task Force at the NYC Hunger Summit 2005, the following action plan was developed. The Food Bank For New York City will work in conjunction with the Bronx Hunger Task Force to implement this plan.

Increase food stamp participation by:

1) Linking with HRA and community-based organizations (that are currently creating food stamp awareness) to initiate a campaign to raise awareness of the federal Food Stamp Program and the availability of enrollment assistance.
2) Advocating for legislation that improves access to food stamps for particularly vulnerable groups.
3) Exploring other long-term strategies including food stamp enrollment at EFP sites and television advertisements to inform the public of hunger-relief services.

[19] See Food Bank For New York City/Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (2004) *NYC Hunger View 2004: Affording Food in a Year of Recovery*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research. p. 11.

Spur job development by:

1) Working via the Bronx Borough President's office to ensure that all new employment opportunities in the borough are posted on the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation's Bronx At Work Job Bank.
2) Increasing awareness of the Bronx At Work website among EFP participants.
3) Partnering with other social service organizations to advocate for job creation and a living wage with benefits.

Make hunger a priority on the political agenda by:

1) Working with the Bronx Borough President, Food Bank For New York City and other organizations to establish relationships with community boards and elected officials.
2) Developing a hunger platform to incorporate key issues and needed solutions identified by the Bronx Hunger Task Force.
3) Coordinating training sessions on how to conduct visits to elected officials and scheduling meetings with legislators to discuss the task force's platform.
4) Maintaining awareness among task force members of relevant legislative developments.

The Bronx Hunger Task Force seeks to increase coordination and collaboration among EFPs while decreasing the percentage of the at-risk population not accessing either government or emergency food assistance.

Increasing residents' access to needed food provisions must include both short- and long-term solutions. Thus, to this end, the Bronx Hunger Task Force prioritized increasing enrollment in the federal Food Stamp Program, spurring job development and establishing relationships with legislators as the primary issues for the task force to address. By increasing enrollment in the Federal Food Stamp Program, tens of thousands of individuals will have improved access to adequate food. In addition, EFPs could utilize their existing resources more flexibly, perhaps increasing their ability to reach out to those at risk not accessing services. Further, initiatives to spur job development would increase residents' purchasing power, and in the long term help impoverished communities break the cycle of poverty. These objectives are best achieved by working in partnership with legislators who can help ensure that hunger be addressed as a priority issue across the borough and the city.

The next meeting of the Bronx Hunger Task Force will take place in the autumn, as the task force develops strategies to implement the proposed initiatives.

Participants in the first Bronx Hunger Task Force meeting, June 20, 2005

Launched by Bronx Borough President
Adolfo Carrión, Jr.

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Co-Facilitator: Courtney O'Reilly Smith
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Love Gospel Assembly
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BROOKLYN HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY PAPER 2005

Background

People at Risk of Hunger in Brooklyn[20]

Hunger Safety Net 2004 demonstrates that at least two million people in New York City are at risk of hunger with approximately 752,950 individuals residing in Brooklyn. Over one-quarter (27 percent) are not accessing food assistance, including WIC, the federal Food Stamp Program, or emergency food assistance.[21] Twenty percent of the at-risk population in Brooklyn – 150,571 individuals – access only government food assistance and not emergency food assistance. Thirty-eight percent of the at-risk population – 284,061 individuals – access emergency food assistance and not government food assistance. Fifteen percent of the at-risk population in Brooklyn – 114,621 individuals – access both emergency and government food assistance.

Distribution of At-Risk Population in Brooklyn

The communities of East New York and Starrett City (Community Board 5) are home to the highest numbers of people at risk of hunger, with 67,359 individuals. Greenpoint and Williamsburg (Community Board 1) are home to the next highest number of at-risk individuals with 66,952 people, followed by Borough Park (Community Board 12) with 66,307 individuals. Furthermore, the communities with the highest numbers of people at risk not accessing either government or emergency food assistance are Borough Park (Community Board 12) with 46,904 individuals, Greenpoint and Williamsburg (Community Board 1) with 46,123 individuals and Sheepshead Bay (Community Board 15) with 26,706 individuals. The reappearance of the same communities in these statistics demonstrates that many of the neighborhoods with substantial at-risk populations are struggling to provide food assistance for those in need.

Emergency Food Programs (EFPs) in Brooklyn

The average annual budget for EFPs in Brooklyn is $20,450, the second lowest average budget of all the boroughs.[22] The average budget for all EFPs in NYC is $49,445 with approximately half of all programs reporting a budget of less than $17,500. As of this writing, there are 334 food pantries and 134 soup kitchens in Brooklyn;[23] of these, 213 food pantries and 69 soup kitchens in Brooklyn are Food Bank For New York City members or participating member programs.[24] Of all the boroughs, Brooklyn has the highest number of EFPs; thus, one unique aspect to the hunger safety net in Brooklyn is the sheer volume of programs.[25]

Emergency Food Participants in Brooklyn[26]

Currently, three-quarters of a million (752,950) people in Brooklyn are at risk of hunger – almost one-third (31 percent) of all Brooklyn residents. This means that Brooklyn is home to 38 percent of the overall number of people at risk of hunger in the entire city.

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[20] Findings in this section are calculated by population density, which refers to findings within borough populations rather than the city as a whole.

[21] Emergency food assistance is provided by community-based EFPs such as soup kitchens and food pantries.

[22] The average EFP budgets for the rest of the boroughs are as follows: Manhattan EFPs have an average annual budget of $137,330, $36,198 for the Bronx, $28,490 for Staten Island and $17,385 for Queens.

[23] These figures are based on the number of EFPs registered with the New York State Department of Health as of August 2005. The figures were extracted from the FeedNYC database.

[24] The current figures for program numbers are based on data extracted from internal Food Bank data as of August 2005.

[25] For the other boroughs, the program numbers are as follows: 282 in the Bronx, 419 in Manhattan, 268 in Queens and 54 in Staten Island.

[26] All New York City EFP findings in this section are extracted from the Food Bank For New York City/Food Policy Institute (2004) *Hunger Safety Net 2004: Measuring Gaps in Food Assistance in New York City*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research.

Demographically speaking, EFP participants in Brooklyn resemble the city's EFP participant population in their education level, gender composition, age and in the percentage of single women with children. Single women with children comprise 21 percent of Brooklyn families accessing EFPs, compared to 22 percent citywide. The gender ratio of participants in Brooklyn is the same as the New York City ratio (56 percent female, 44 percent male). In addition, one-half (52 percent) of Brooklyn participants have less than a high school education, while the New York City average is 47 percent. In regards to age, four percent of Brooklyn participants are 18 to 29, 46 percent are 30 to 49, 24 percent are 50 to 64 and 25 percent are 65 and older. By comparison, five percent of participants citywide are 18 to 29, 42 percent are 30 to 49, 28 percent are 50 to 64 and 24 percent are 65 and older.

In contrast to citywide averages, more Brooklyn participants are not in the labor force, more rent their housing, fewer own their homes, and more participants are people of color. Sixty-three percent of Brooklyn EFP participants are Black/African American, nearly one-third (30 percent) are Latino/Hispanic, less than one percent is Asian or Asian Indian, two percent are multiracial or other, and nine percent are White. Throughout all of New York City, 53 percent are Black/African American, over one-third (34 percent) are Latino/Hispanic, two percent are Asian or Asian Indian, three percent are multiracial or other, and six percent are White. As with findings citywide, a majority (82 percent) of EFP participants rent their living accommodation while 12 percent of participants are homeless. However, different from citywide findings, 28 percent of EFP participants live in public housing, in contrast to 33 percent citywide. Furthermore, more participants in Brooklyn are not in the labor force – 29 percent are disabled and 30 percent are retired, in contrast to the New York City average of 25 and 26 percent, respectively. Regarding employment, 14 percent of participants are employed and 27 percent are unemployed, not just lower than the citywide average of 19 percent and 30 percent, respectively but the lowest rates compared to all other boroughs.[27]

More than one-half (53 percent equaling 398,682 individuals) of the at-risk population in Brooklyn access EFPs. Twenty-nine percent of these participants receive food stamps, lower than the citywide average of 31 percent. In Brooklyn, therefore, a population that needs and already accesses food assistance is not enrolled in available government food assistance programs, thereby exacerbating hunger throughout the borough.

Brooklyn Hunger Task Force Strategy

The Office of Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz launched the Brooklyn Hunger Task Force at the NYC Hunger Summit 2005. The first official meeting, moderated by Darrick Hamilton from the New School University, Melissa Harris from the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President, and Ed Fowler from Neighbors Together, was attended by approximately 100 staff, volunteers and participants of Brooklyn EFPs. The following is an overview of the session including the recommendations developed by the group. This strategy will serve as the foundation for the group's work this year and focuses on increasing collaboration, increasing access to food assistance services, increasing program funding and promoting affordable housing.

Increase Collaboration

Between 2003 and 2004, the percentage of Brooklyn residents who found affording food either 'somewhat difficult' or 'very difficult' increased from one-quarter (24 percent) to one-third (31 percent).[28] Because greater numbers of people at risk places more stress on already struggling

[27] Findings show that 23 percent of Bronx EFP participants are employed and 36 percent are unemployed; the figures for other boroughs, respectively, are as follows: Manhattan – 18 percent and 38 percent; Queens – 21 percent and 28 percent; and Staten Island – 19 percent and 21 percent.

[28] See Food Bank For New York City/Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (2004) *NYC Hunger View: Affording Food in a Year of Recovery*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research. p. 11.

EFPs, the task force discussed ways to meet this demand. As part of the solution, the task force identified increased communication and collaboration so that all EFPs can better help those in need. While the group recognized that the high number of EFPs (468) in the borough serves as a valuable resource, they determined that the coordination of service days and time among the programs will help to maximize efficiency throughout the Brooklyn network.

Specifically, the group discussed how the need for increased collaboration is most apparent in central Brooklyn where a very high number of EFPs are located. Members agreed that, in order to improve communication concerning program services and to maximize existing resources, programs will share and update information about program hours of operation, days of service, location and other information that is important to providers and participants. To this end, the task force also suggests holding zip code meetings with key players and food providers in order to spur innovative thinking about how to improve and increase services in outer communities as well as to increase coordination among the network of programs in central Brooklyn.

Increase of Food Assistance Resources

Some of Brooklyn's neighborhoods are particularly challenged because of limited food assistance services. As mentioned in the previous section, over one-quarter (27 percent) of at-risk residents (amounting to over 200,000 people) are not accessing either government or emergency food assistance in Brooklyn. Compounded by low enrollment of EFP participants in the federal Food Stamp Program (29 percent) and the increasing number of people having difficulty meeting the food demands of their households discussed above, the need to find innovative ways to increase access to food assistance services is evident.

The task force recognized that an important step to increasing services to at-risk resident is to increase participation in the federal Food Stamp Program. In addition to feeding greater numbers of Brooklyn participants, increasing food stamp enrollment would benefit the borough's economy. Participants using food stamps would draw federal money into the Brooklyn economy by purchasing their food at local supermarkets. And since the program is federally subsidized, the government has already allocated funding that would cover any increase in the cost of benefits.

To increase the number of EFP participants enrolled in the federal Food Stamp Program, the task force will reach beyond the emergency food network and collaborate with local and citywide organizations (that are currently creating food stamp awareness) to initiate a food stamp awareness and enrollment drive at EFPs. The task force will further seek to link to existing initiatives such as the new partnership between the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA), New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH) and FoodChange.[29] To start, this drive will target four neighborhoods in particular – Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Borough Park and Sheepshead Bay – as these communities have the highest numbers of people at risk not receiving any food assistance. The task force also suggested holding food stamp workshops at other local venues such as schools and libraries. These drives would help to determine eligibility and provide the necessary information and paperwork for individuals to more easily enroll in the program. The task force will also work with government and elected officials to promote initiatives that support the federal Food Stamp Program locally such as the current City Council legislation aimed at improving access to food stamps for participants who are working, disabled or facing other hardships.[30]

[29] The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is providing a grant of $945,000 over three years to fund a partnership between HRA, NYCCAH, and FoodChange to increase access to the federal Food Stamp Program by simplifying the enrollment process for EFP participants at certain pilot food pantries and soup kitchens who already qualify for exemptions from face-to-face interviews (certain working, disabled and elderly people).

[30] City Council INT. NO. 593 mandates the distribution of food stamp applications at all soup kitchens and food pantries; INT. NO. 594 requires the City to develop an on-line food stamps application system; and INT. NO. 615 requires HRA to better accept food stamp applications by fax, waive face-to-face interviews for food stamp applicants for whom the interviews constitute a hardship and provide a receipt to each applicant.

To further strengthen the hunger safety net, the task force will ensure that individuals at risk are aware of all resources in their neighborhood, in addition to government food assistance. Awareness among Brooklyn residents of a food assistance program in their neighborhood (35 percent, compared to 38 percent citywide) is lower than citywide findings.[31] One easy way to increase awareness about and access to food assistance programs is to promote the Food Bank For New York City's 24-hour, toll-free phone service, 1-866-NYC-FOOD (692-3663) as well as the New York City Hunger Hotline (1-866-888-8777). Both phone lines provide information about how and where to access food assistance.

Increase Program Funding

The task force also recognized that in order to increase and improve services to at-risk residents it is necessary to increase EFP funding. EFPs struggle to provide basic emergency food assistance because of high demand and limited resources to meet that demand. Increased funding will translate to increased services, which in turn will ensure that more residents receive the food assistance they need. As a first step, the task force recommends that members encourage EFP staff and volunteers to attend grant-writing workshops sponsored by the Food Bank For New York City and other agencies. The task force also suggests that EFPs apply for funding together, which would enable them to better collaborate and utilize funding more efficiently. Additionally, this unified approach will improve the likelihood of receiving a grant.

Task force members discussed how increasing funding and political advocacy are intertwined issues, so that by engaging in both efforts simultaneously, the group will be met with greater success. It is essential to build relationships with elected officials in order to raise political awareness of hunger priorities. Greater political attention can help obtain increased funding for EFP services and other initiatives that aim to end hunger. Meetings by zip code will be a useful venue for further exploring methods to increase funding and political advocacy.

Promote Affordable Housing

Finally, a long-term plan to end hunger in Brooklyn must include a discussion of affordable housing. As stated in the previous section, 82 percent of Brooklyn residents accessing EFPs reside in rental accommodations. Many low-income individuals in the borough are rent poor, and by the time they have paid their high and ever-increasing rents, have little money left to pay for other basic necessities including food. Consequently, these residents come to rely on EFPs for food assistance. In order to address this issue, the task force will examine existing resources to connect participants with affordable housing. The task force will also partner with advocates in the housing community to promote maintenance of existing and creation of new low-income affordable housing.

Throughout its campaigns, the task force will embrace a holistic, community-based approach to eliminating hunger. The task force will therefore collaborate not only with participants and EFPs, but also with housing advocates and all others who combat poverty within the community. Only by addressing poverty will the task force successfully reduce hunger; and it is only by uniting with other social service organizations that the task force will help eliminate poverty.

[31] See Food Bank For New York City/Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (2004) *NYC Hunger View: Affording Food in a Year of Recovery*. p. 11.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the discussion held at the first borough hunger task force meeting, the following action plan was developed. The Food Bank For New York City will work with the Brooklyn Hunger Task Force to coordinate this plan.

Increase collaboration by:

1) Coordinating and adjusting EFPs' hours/days of operation, so as to maximize efficiency.
2) Holding meetings by zip code to develop innovative strategies for coordination.

Increase food assistance resources by:

1) Linking with HRA and community-based organizations (that are currently creating food stamp awareness) to initiate a campaign to raise awareness of the federal Food Stamp Program and the availability of enrollment assistance.
2) Advocating for legislation that improves access to food stamps for particularly vulnerable groups.
3) Raising residents' awareness of existing food assistance programs by promoting hunger hotlines.

Increase program funding by:

4) Encouraging EFP staff and volunteers to attend grant writing seminars.
5) Recommending that EFPs apply for grants jointly.
6) Communicating with elected officials at all levels of government to ensure that food assistance remains a political priority.

Promote affordable housing by:

1) Increasing awareness of low-income housing opportunities by providing information and referrals at EFPs.
2) Partnering with organizations that promote maintenance of existing and creation of new low-income affordable housing.
3) Partnering with other anti-poverty groups to develop a holistic and community-based approach to reduce borough poverty.

The main goal of the task force in Brooklyn is to increase services for outer areas of the borough while improving coordination and collaboration amongst EFPs in central Brooklyn. Improving participation in the federal Food Stamp Program, as well as WIC and other government programs, is also critical to strengthening the hunger safety net in Brooklyn.

A long-term action plan to end hunger must include a solution to the lack of affordable housing in the borough. The task force will work to develop ways to target services, especially housing referrals for this vulnerable population and to work in close collaboration with housing groups in these efforts.

Throughout the remainder of 2005, zip-code meetings will occur throughout the borough, and another meeting of the Brooklyn Hunger Task Force will take place in the autumn at the Brooklyn Borough President's Office. By working to voice the needs of Brooklyn's at-risk communities and by encouraging government and local action to strengthen the hunger safety net for vulnerable families, the task force intends to create a long-term plan to eliminate hunger in Brooklyn.

Participants in the first Brooklyn Hunger Task Force Meeting, June 20, 2005

Launched by Deputy Brooklyn Borough President Yvonne Graham
Office of the Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz

Moderator: Darrick Hamilton
New School University
Co-Facilitator: Melissa Harris
Office of the Brooklyn Borough President
Co-Facilitator: Ed Fowler
Neighbors Together

Agency Listing
(Alphabetized by Agency Name)

Anna Castillo
Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Colleen Downes
Bay Ridge Community Service Center
Linda Farrell
Bay Ridge Community Service Center
Veda Drummond
Bethany United Methodist Church
Ivy Renton
Bethany United Methodist Church
Alda Mann
Bethel S.H.A.R.I.N.G Ministries
Irene Evans
Bridge Street AME Church
Adrienne Williams
Brooklyn East Family Center
Lee-Ann Hanham
Brooklyn East Family Center
Davanie Jackson
Brooklyn Rescue Mission
Rev. Robert Jackson
Brooklyn Rescue Mission
Reverend Norma Canty
Cathedral of Joy Church of God
Georgina Frese
Central Baptist Community Outreach
Sister Burley
Chance For Children
Della Whitaker
Chance For Children
Anna Alleyne
Christian Crossroads
Elizabeth Smalls
Christian Fellowship Life Center
Jacquline Brooks
Christian Fellowship Life Center
Florencia Chang
Christian Fellowship SDA
Lois Toon
Church of God of East Flatbush
Beverly Wright
Church of God of East Flatbush
Sister Vivian
Church of God of Salvation
Bishop Lazard
Church of God of Salvation
Lael Tikili
Church of God Seventh Day Pentecostal
Claude Chan
Church of God Seventh Day Pentecostal
Beverly Smith-Hutson
Church of St. Mark
Pastor William Clark Jr.
Church of the Holy Redeemer
B. Sandra Evans
Church of the Holy Redeemer
Liston Davis
City Mission
Dorothy Quick
Cornerstone Baptist Church
Gwenda Shaw
Crown Ministry
Jonathan Shaw
Crown Ministry
Cecilio Diaz
Door To Life Ministry
Taritad Roussau
Ebeneezer French SDA Church
Reverend Lidya Mendoza
End Times Pentecostal Church, Inc.
Linda Fergerson
Family Life Development Center
Trudy Fergerson
Family Life Development Center
Jays Nelson
First Baptist Church of Brownsville
Mary Jones
First Baptist Church of Brownsville
Bishop Shirley King
First Mary Magdaline Temple
Rosie Seelal
First Mary Magdaline Temple
Reverend Melony Alton Samuels
Full Gospel Tabernacle of Faith
Marcella Inc
God's Deliverance Temple
Irene Rowan
Good News Deliverance Tabernacle
Edna John
Good News Deliverance Tabernacle
Gladys Martinv
Goodwill Industries - SAP

Susie Wiggins
Hanson Place SDA Community Service
Kudy Wilkson
Hanson Place SDA Community Service
Dorothy Crawford
Holy House of Prayer
Coreen Joyner
Holy House of Prayer
Tena White
Homeless and Needy Volunteer
Patricia Edwards
Homeless and Needy Volunteer
Grace Brathwaite
Hope City Empowerment Center
Marina McCoy
Hope City Empowerment Center
Pastor Julio Rivera
Iglesia Luz Del Mundo
Muriel Keel
International Pentecostal
Avrohom Hecht
Jewish Comm Council
Naama Asaerva
Jewish Comm Council
Betty Weatherspoon
Liberty Baptist Church
Sandra Barrett
Liberty Hall Church of God
Frances Barcleft
Little Sun People Inc.
Gloria Evans
Los Redimidos
Julia McKinnon
Los Redimidos
Calvin Redwood
Mt. Sinai Spiritual Church
Joseph Rubenfield
National Comm. for Futh.of Jewish Ed.
Curran Gaughan
Neighbors Together
Addy Williams
Nkeanyl Support Services
Meldred Moore
Northside Senior Center
Virginia Singleton
Old Mt. Zion Food Pantry
Donna Hilton
Old Mt. Zion Food Pantry
Doris Reddig
Open Door Church
Beatrice Brown
Our Lady of Mercy RC Church
Judy Agart
Our Lady of Refuge R.C. Church
Elena Smith
Our Lady of Refuge R.C. Church

Bishop Thomas Anderson
Pentecostal Rescue House of Prayer for All Nations
Elder Barbaroustine Glover
Pentecostal Rescue House of Prayer for All Nations
Gita Katz
Pesach Tikvah/Door of Hope
Tara Kohut
Project Samaritan, Inc.
Mariana Deliz
Salvation Army Brownsville
Capt. Johnson Germaine
Salvation Army Brownsville
Shoshana Antonovsky
Shorefront Jewish Community Council
Maria Zuniga
South Brooklyn SDA Church
Aleain Williams
St. Anthony Baptist Church Fellowship Kitchen
Reverend White
St. James Holiness Church
Bueller Dudley
St. James Holiness Church
Yemi Oyename
St. John's Bread and Life Program, Inc.
Florence Gurdon
St. Vincents Church
Consuelo Tomlinson
St. Vincents Church
Servio Paniagua
Templo De La Alabanza
Ariella Zycherman
Trinity Human Services Corp
Yandira Deras
Trinity Human Services Corp
Yvonne Shannon
Union Baptist Church
Olivia High
Union Baptist Church
Mattie Coleman
United Grand Chapter of Eastern Star
Helen Thompson
United Grand Chapter of Eastern Star
Yehuda Schupper
United Jewish Organization of Williamsburg
Rabbi David Niederman
United Jewish Organization of Williamsburg
Naomi Collins
Unity Faith Outreach
Michael Collins
Unity Faith Outreach
Barbara Mascheck
Universal Love Peace and Joy
Julissa Lewis
Urban Strategies Family Support
Kimberly Wright
Urban Strategies Family Support

MANHATTAN HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY PAPER 2005

Background

People at Risk of Hunger in Manhattan[32]

Hunger Safety Net 2004 demonstrates that at least two million people in New York City are at risk of hunger with 361,818 individuals residing in Manhattan. Over one-third (35 percent) of the at-risk population in Manhattan – 127,825 individuals – access government food assistance, (including WIC, and the federal Food Stamp Program) and not emergency food assistance.[33] Over one-half (56 percent) of the at-risk population – 203,637 individuals – access emergency food assistance and not government food assistance. Less than one-fifth (17 percent) of the at-risk population – 61,257 individuals – access both emergency and government food assistance.

Distribution of At-Risk Population in Manhattan

The communities with the highest numbers of people at risk are concentrated in some of the poorer neighborhoods of Manhattan. These areas include Washington Heights and Inwood (Community Board 12), the Lower East Side and Chinatown (Community Board 3) and East Harlem (Community Board 11) – 75,757 individuals, 56,706 individuals and 50,283 individuals respectively. In addition to having the highest number of people at risk, Washington Heights, Inwood, the Lower East Side and Chinatown are also among the communities with the greatest number of people at risk not accessing any food assistance – 26,238 in Washington Heights and Inwood, and 6,950 in the Lower East Side and Chinatown.

Hunger, however, is not confined to just the poorer communities of Manhattan. One of the wealthiest districts, Community Board 8 (Upper East Side) is home to approximately 10,000 residents at risk of hunger but not accessing food assistance. Other areas with a high number of people at risk not accessing food assistance are Morningside Heights and Hamilton (Community Board 9) with about 5,000 residents.

Emergency Food Programs (EFPs) in Manhattan[34]

The average annual budget for EFPs in Manhattan is $137,330, with approximately half of all EFPs reporting an annual budget at or below $25,000. In contrast, the average budget for all EFPs in NYC is $49,445 with approximately half of all programs reporting a budget of less than $17,500. As of this writing, 245 food pantries and 174 soup kitchens are located in Manhattan.[35] Of these programs, 137 food pantries and 70 soup kitchens are Food Bank For New York City participating members.[36] Manhattan has the second highest number of EFPs; thus, a noteworthy aspect to the hunger safety net in Manhattan is the number of programs in the borough.[37]

Emergency Food Participants in Manhattan

Demographically speaking, the at-risk population in Manhattan is unique in contrast to the rest of the city. Firstly, while women comprise the greater part of EFP participants citywide – 56 percent female compared to 44 percent male – the opposite is true for Manhattan EFPs where men are in the majority (60 percent male to 40 percent female). In addition, Manhattan EFP participants differ from

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[32] Findings in this section are calculated by population density, which refers to findings within borough populations rather than the city as a whole.

[33] Emergency food assistance is provided by community-based EFPs such as soup kitchens and food pantries.

[34] All New York City EFP findings in this section are extracted from the Food Bank For New York City/Food Policy Institute (2004) *Hunger Safety Net 2004: Measuring Gaps in Food Assistance in New York City*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research.

[35] These figures are based on the number of EFPs registered with the New York State Department of Health as of August 2005. The figures were extracted from the FeedNYC database.

[36] The current figures for program numbers are based on internal Food Bank data as of August 2005.

[37] For the other boroughs, the program numbers are as follows: 468 in Brooklyn, 282 in the Bronx, 268 in Queens and 54 in Staten Island.

the city's EFP population in terms of ethnic/racial composition. In Manhattan, two-thirds (66 percent) of EFP participants are Latino/Hispanic, followed by 23 percent Black/African American, six percent White, three percent Asian or Asian Indian and another three percent multiracial or other. Throughout New York City, however, over one-half (53 percent) of EFP participants are Black/African American, followed by over one-third (34 percent) Latino/Hispanic, nine percent White, three percent multi-racial or other and two percent Asian or Asian Indian. Findings also show that over two-thirds (67 percent) of Manhattan participants are born outside of the United States (contrast to a citywide average of 44 percent). Finally 83 percent of participants report living within ten blocks of an EFP, in contrast to 77 percent citywide.

The Manhattan EFP population does share some similarities with the EFP population citywide. Like citywide findings, one-fifth (21 percent) of participants are single women with children. In regards to age, the distribution of Manhattan EFP participants is also similar to the citywide findings: five percent are 18 to 29, 40 percent are 30 to 49, 25 percent are 50 to 64 and 29 percent are 65 and over. In comparison, for all New York City participants, five percent are 18 to 29, 42 percent are 30 to 49, 28 percent are 50 to 64 and 23 percent are 65 and over. Additionally, 80 percent of participants live in rental accommodations, with 42 percent in private rental accommodations and 38 percent in public rental accommodations. Comparatively, 78 percent of New York City EFP participants live in rental accommodations – 45 percent in private rental accommodations and 33 percent in public rental accommodations. Finally, 18 percent of Manhattan participants are employed – similar to the city average of 19 percent – while more than one-quarter (26 percent) are retired, the same as the citywide figure.

Manhattan Hunger Task Force Strategy

Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields launched the Manhattan Hunger Task Force at the NYC Hunger Summit. The first official meeting, moderated by Calum Turvey from Rutgers University, Dominic Muntanga from the Office of the Manhattan Borough President and Doreen Wohl from the West Side Campaign Against Hunger, was attended by 40 staff, volunteer and participants of Manhattan EFPs. The following is an overview of the session including the recommendations developed by the group. This strategy will serve as the foundation for the group's work this year and focuses on increasing collaboration and funding, and reducing the demand for food assistance.

Increase Collaboration

The task force discussed the overwhelming demand for emergency food assistance in Manhattan and recognized that the high number of EFPs (419) in the borough serve as a valuable resource. The good news is that Manhattan EFPs have been successful in creating widespread distribution and awareness of programs throughout the borough. Nearly one-half (46 percent) of Manhattan residents are aware of a neighborhood food assistance program,[38] and the vast majority (83 percent) of participants live within ten blocks of an EFP. Nonetheless, because of the high demand for food assistance, EFPs are having difficulty meeting the needs of their communities, and as a result, some task force members reported turning people away due to a lack of food and other resources. As part of the solution, the task force identified increased communication and collaboration between the programs so that all EFPs can better help those in need. In order to advance this goal, the task force recommends the development of a website where agency representatives can network, update their schedules, and advertise hunger relief events.

In addition, the task force discussed the expansion of services at EFPs to include assistance beyond food provision. Some EFPs already offer additional services that previously were not offered such as referral and enrollment counseling for food stamps. The task force recommends that all EFPs

[38] See Food Bank For New York City/Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (2004) *NYC Hunger View: Affording Food in a Year of Recovery*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research. p. 12.

seek to offer such services and can do so by linking to existing initiatives like the new partnership between the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA), New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH) and FoodChange to increase access to the federal Food Stamp Program.[39]

The task force also recommends collaboration and partnerships with other social service organizations beyond the emergency food network. The group recognizes that a first step in this discussion would be to initiate and organize meetings with leaders from other social service organizations. In addition, the task force also recommends involving participants at task force meetings so as to empower and engage at-risk residents in the process of strengthening the safety net. By developing working relationships between key providers and also including EFP participants in the discussion, a holistic approach to ending poverty – the root cause of hunger – would emerge.

Increase Funding

The recommended initiative to increase the efficiency of the hunger network creates an impetus to examine other limiting factors in the distribution of food. For example, EFPs discussed difficulty providing more meals because of a lack of space to store supplies, prepare foods, or, for soup kitchens, to seat participants. Other needed resources include additional staff members and volunteers. Funding is needed to offset the cost of these overheads.

In addition, while some larger food pantries and soup kitchens have greater access to funds, smaller EFPs often have more difficulty accessing similar resources. The task force recommends that larger EFPs lend support and guidance to smaller, developing programs. The group also suggests that EFPs take advantage of all opportunities for program development such as attending the various grant-writing and fundraising workshops which are held by citywide organizations like the Food Bank For New York City. Additionally, the task force will facilitate funding collaboration among EFPs such as joint applications for funding grants.

Reduce the Demand for Food Assistance

While it is vital to ensure that food is available to all in need, the task force also discussed the need to reduce dependence on emergency food assistance. That is, to eliminate hunger in Manhattan it is necessary to ultimately create an economic environment in which people are able to sustain themselves, without emergency food assistance from EFPs. Over one-fifth (21 percent) of Manhattan residents had difficulty affording food over the past year,[5] punctuating the critical need to promote policies that will bolster enrollment in government programs and enable residents to become financially self-sufficient.

More than one-half (54 percent) of EFP participants in Manhattan have less than a high-school education, and only eight percent of EFP participants have college degrees. These figures demonstrate that a lack of access to education is one of the causes of hunger. Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields voiced her support for increased emphasis on education as a means to reducing the number of hungry individuals in Manhattan. Part of this strategy, then, is for the task force to reach beyond the emergency food network and partner with education organizations to address this issue.

Eighteen percent of Manhattan participants are employed while 16 percent of Manhattan residents would not be able to afford food for themselves and their families after missing only one paycheck.[40]

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[39] The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is providing a grant of $945,000 over three years to fund a partnership between HRA, NYCCAH, and FoodChange to increase access to the federal Food Stamp Program by simplifying the enrollment process for EFP participants at certain pilot food pantries and soup kitchens who already qualify for exemptions from face-to-face interviews (certain working, disabled and elderly people).

[40] The first statistic is extrapolated from the *Hunger Safety Net 2004* data. For the second data point, see Food Bank For New York City/Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (2004) *NYC Hunger View: Affording Food in a Year of Recovery*. p. 11. For the other

Taken together, these findings indicate a low quality of employment in Manhattan and show that some local jobs do not provide sufficient income to enable employees to sustain their households. To address this issue, the task force recommends collaborating with local job training and placement programs to allow EFPs to provide referrals to their program participants. Additionally, the task force will partner with other social service organizations to advocate for job creation and a living wage with benefits. This work will likely begin by encouraging legislators to revisit the question of increasing the minimum wage before 2008 to more accurately reflect New York City living costs.

More than two-thirds (67 percent) of Manhattan EFP participants were born outside the United States (in contrast to 44 percent citywide), the highest percentage of all the boroughs.[41] Such a substantial percentage of immigrants accessing emergency food assistance illustrates the particular vulnerability of the immigrant population, and the difficulty they often experience in meeting the food demands of their households. The task force discussed the barriers that impede this population from accessing government assistance programs, such as the federal Food Stamps Program, including misinformation, lack of information and confusion about rules and eligibility requirements. For example, confusion abounds since the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, and the subsequent legislative changes that altered eligibility requirements for immigrants. The Office of the Borough President also voiced particular concern for this population. The task force recommends partnering with local and citywide immigrant organizations to increase awareness of and enrollment in government food assistance programs among the immigrant population.

The task force strategy is based on the basic human right to food and aims to advocate for new policy initiatives. For this reason, the aforementioned recommendations require that EFPs, participants and agencies continue to outreach to government and elected officials, so as to ensure that hunger remains a political priority.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Following the first meeting of the Manhattan Hunger Task Force at the NYC Hunger Summit 2005, the following action plan was developed. The Food Bank For New York City will work in conjunction with the Manhattan Hunger Task Force to implement this plan.

Increase collaboration by:

1) Sharing and updating EFP service information, including program locations and hours of operation.
2) Linking with HRA and community-based organizations that are currently providing food stamps awareness.
3) Supporting EFP collaboration and partnerships with other social service organizations beyond the emergency food network.
4) Inviting emergency food participants to task force meetings.

boroughs, the rates are as follows: 40 percent of Bronx participants, 35 percent of Brooklyn participants, 36 percent of Queens participants and 38 percent of Staten Island participants.

[41] For the other boroughs, the EFP participant rates for foreign-born participants are as follows: 42 percent of Bronx participants, 45 percent of Brooklyn participants, 34 percent of Queens participants and 16 percent of Staten Island participants.

Increase funding by:

1) Promoting ongoing communication among smaller and more established EFPs about where to access funds.
2) Encouraging EFPs to work in coalition to seek and apply for grants.
3) Discussing new funding possibilities and resources at upcoming task force meetings.
4) Advising all task force members and local EFPs to attend grant writing workshops organized by the Food Bank For New York City and other organizations.

Reduce the demand for food assistance by:

1) Promoting policies to bolster enrollment in government programs that would enable at-risk residents to become financially self-sufficient.
2) Encouraging task force members and Manhattan EFPs to support a living wage for all residents.
3) Working with education organizations to improve access to education for at-risk residents.
4) Engaging organizations that frequently work with the immigrant population to address the particular obstacles that impede this community from accessing food assistance.
5) Outreaching to government and elected officials to ensure that hunger remains a political priority.

The main objective of the Manhattan Hunger Task Force is to ensure that all those in need receive food assistance, while alleviating the demand for this assistance by enabling residents to become self-sufficient. Improving participation in the federal Food Stamp Program, as well as WIC and other government food programs, is also critical to strengthening the hunger safety net in Manhattan.

An action plan to end hunger must address the lack of access to education in the borough, as well as the need for increased services for immigrants. Considerable outreach to government and elected officials is necessary in order to establish new policies and modify existing initiatives regarding hunger and poverty. The task force will continue to develop an action plan in the upcoming year during its regular meetings, and will work with the local hunger network, the Food Bank For New York City and elected officials to combat hunger in the borough. In addition to the action plan described above, the task force intends to create a long-term plan to eliminate hunger in Manhattan – one that addresses poverty as the underlying cause of hunger.

Participants in the first Manhattan Hunger Task Force meeting, June 20, 2005

Launched by Manhattan Borough President
C. Virginia Fields

Moderator: Calum Turvey
Rutgers University
Co-Facilitator: Dominic Muntanga
Office of the Manhattan Borough President
Co-Facilitator: David Palmer
New York City Rescue Mission

Agency Listing
(Alphabetized by Agency Name)

Charles Walker
Anthony Create House
Ferdinand Plowden
Bethany Baptist Church
Sue Bethel
Bethel AME Church
Peter Wargo
BRC Human Services Corp.
Eleanor Donaldson
Broadway Community Inc.
Nidia Sierra
Cabrini Immigrant Services
Raquel Granda
Cathedral Community Cares
Craig Murphy
Cathedral Community Cares
Vernon Crawford
Central Harlem Alcohol Crisis
Carlos Rodriguez
Children's Defense Fund
Jeanne McArthur
Christ & St. Stephen's Brown Bag Program
Andrea Dormier
Community League of the Heights
Joyce Williams
Dewitt Reformed Church
Carol Vedral
Father's Heart Ministries
Chinar Mahadkar
Father's Heart Ministries
Cassandra Daigle
Feed the Solution
Sister Marie Patricia
Fraternite Notre Dame Inc.
Chardell Christensen
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Julie Marx
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Gina Rofich
George Daly House
Nimai Pandit Das
Hare Krishna Food Relief
Pandit Madhn
Hare Krishna Food Relief
Laura Kollins
Hamilton Madison House
Siu Ling Wong
Hamilton Madison House
Amanda Kaufmann
HANNYS
Nicole Garfield
Iris House
Pura Cruz
Little Sisters of the Assumption
Jewel Jones
Love Kitchen
Gail Topp
Momentum Project Inc. @ Lex, St. Cecelia's Church
Derrick Mitchell
New York City Rescue Mission
Jim VarnHagan
New York City Rescue Mission
Barbara Hughes
Project Renewal
David Waugh
Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries
Virgen Valentin
Sacred Heart of Jesus
Stephen Weyer
St. Francis Xavier
Fr. Gavin
St. John's Bread of Life
Kate Janoski
Strive-East Harlem Employment Services
Ella Ewart
Urban Justice Center
Doreen Wohl
West Side Campaign Against Hunger
Caroline Fanning
World Hunger Year
Christine Caruso-Gibson
World Hunger Year
Brook Pieri
Yorkville Common Pantry
Roland Woodland
Yorkville Common Pantry

QUEENS HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY PAPER 2005

Background

People at Risk of Hunger in Queens[42]

Hunger Safety Net 2004 demonstrates that at least two million people in New York City are at risk of hunger with approximately 418,333 of these individual residing in Queens. Over one-third (34 percent) of this at-risk population – 140,528 individuals – do not access any form of food assistance, including WIC, the federal Food Stamp Program, or emergency food assistance.[43] Eleven percent of the at-risk population in Queens – 47,502 individuals – access government food assistance and not emergency food assistance. Forty-four percent of the at-risk population – 184,243 individuals – access emergency food assistance and not government food assistance. Eleven percent of the at-risk population – 46,061 individuals – access both emergency and government food assistance.

Distribution of the At-Risk Population in Queens

The communities with the highest numbers of people at risk are Astoria and Long Island City (Community Board 1), Jamaica and Hollis (Community Board 12) and Elmhurst and Corona (Community Board 4) – 49,717, 46,979 and 42,890 individuals respectively. In addition to having the highest numbers of people at risk, Astoria, Long Island City, Elmhurst and Corona are also among the communities with the greatest number of people at risk not accessing any food assistance. Of the 140,528 Queens residents at risk of going hungry not accessing either government or emergency food assistance, 38,598 reside in Astoria and Long Island City and 33,594 reside in Elmhurst and Corona. Flushing and Whitestone (Community Board 7) also have a high at-risk population not accessing food assistance, amounting to 25,916 people.

Emergency Food Programs (EFPs) in Queens

Although EFPs provide services to 55 percent of the at-risk population, they operate on the smallest budgets of any borough. The average annual budget for a Queens EFPs is $17,385, well below the New York City average of $49,445.[44] As of this writing, 206 food pantries and 62 soup kitchens operate in Queens.[45] Of these EFPs, 141 food pantries and 36 soup kitchens are Food Bank members or participating member programs.[46]

Emergency Food Participants in Queens[47]

Citywide, women and the elderly account for a high percentage of the population at risk of hunger. In Queens, however, these two groups are particularly vulnerable. The people turning to EFPs in Queens are, on average, older than those who access EFPs in other boroughs. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of Queens participants are over the age of 50, while throughout New York City approximately one-half of EFP participants fall into this same age category (51 percent).[48] In terms of gender composition, almost two-thirds (62 percent) of Queens EFP participants are women, and more than one-quarter (27 percent) of all Queens participants are single women with children.

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[42] Findings in this section are calculated by population density, which refers to findings within borough populations rather than the city as a whole.
[43] Emergency food assistance is provided by community-based EFPs such as soup kitchens and food pantries.
[44] The average budget for EFPs in Manhattan is $137,330, in the Bronx $36,198, in Staten Island $28,490, and in Brooklyn $20,450.
[45] These figures are based on the number of EFPs registered with the New York State Department of Health as of August 2005. The figures were extracted from the FeedNYC database.
[46] The current figures for program numbers are based on internal Food Bank data as of August 2005.
[47] All New York City EFP findings in this section are extracted from the Food Bank For New York City/Food Policy Institute (2004) *Hunger Safety Net 2004: Measuring Gaps in Food Assistance in New York City*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research.
[48] More specifically, seven percent of Queens participants are aged 18 to 29, 30 percent are 30 to 49, 33 percent are 50 to 64 and 30 percent are 65 and older. In contrast, for all New York City participants, five percent are 18 to 29, 42 percent are 30 to 49, 28 percent are 50 to 64 and 23 percent are 65 and older.

Figures for New York City are much lower, as 56 percent of EFP participants are women and one-fifth (20 percent) are single women with children.

Queens EFP participants also differ demographically from EFP participants citywide in terms of ethnic/racial composition, education level, and in the percentage of people who own their homes. While – similar to the rest of the city – the majority of Queens participants are people of color, in Queens there is a greater concentration of Black/African American participants than throughout the city. Sixty-three percent of Queens EFP participants are Black/African American, 21 percent are Latino/Hispanic, 10 percent are White, two percent are Asian or Asian Indian and three percent are multiracial or other. In contrast, more than one-half (53 percent) of EFP participants citywide are Black/African American, over one-third (34 percent) are Latino/Hispanic, six percent are White, two percent are Asian or Asian Indian and three percent are multiracial or other. In relation to EFP participants citywide, Queens participants have a slightly higher level of education. Eleven percent of Queens participants have had some college education, although 38 percent have received less than a high school education. For all New York City EFP participants, these figures rise to close to one-half (47 percent) with less than a high school education and drop to nine percent with some college education. In terms of home ownership, 19 percent of Queens EFP participants own their homes, in contrast to nine percent citywide. Fewer Queens residents rent their places of residence, as 72 percent of Queens participants live in rental accommodations, lower than the citywide figure of 77 percent.

Research findings also indicate that insufficient income is driving many Queens residents to EFPs. More than one-fifth (21 percent) of EFP participants are employed, indicating that some local jobs do not provide sufficient income to enable employees to sustain their households. Thirteen percent of residents also said that they would not be able to afford food after a loss of income.[49] Although they are currently able to provide for themselves, were these households to miss a paycheck they too would slip into the at-risk population and stand in need of food assistance. Another considerable sub-population in Queens struggles to subsist on fixed incomes, comprised principally of the retired (34 percent of Queens EFP participants) and the disabled (18 percent of Queens EFP participants). Statistics therefore demonstrate that fixed incomes are too low for these two sub-groups to support themselves financially, as substantial numbers of the retired and disabled depend upon EFPs.

Queens Hunger Task Force Strategy

The Office of Queens Borough President Helen Marshall launched the Queens Hunger Task Force at the NYC Hunger Summit 2005. The first official meeting, moderated by Lewis Clark from the New York State Department of Health, Ricardo Fernandez from the Office of the Queens Borough President, and Dianna Cruz from the Sunnyside Community Services, was attended by over 60 staff, volunteers and participants of Queens EFPs. The following is an overview of the session including the recommendations developed by the group. This strategy will serve as the foundation for the group's work this year and focuses on increasing collaboration, political awareness and funding.

Increase Collaboration and Improve Services

Currently, a low level of awareness among providers about existing local resources – including other EFPs and social service organizations within the community – hinders coordination among EFPs. Unable to pool resources, or even to refer participants to other organizations, Queens EFPs struggle to provide basic assistance to those in need. Furthermore, residents remain relatively unaware of the existence of neighborhood food assistance programs, with little over one-third (36 percent) claiming

[49]See Food Bank For New York City/Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (2004) *NYC Hunger View: Affording Food in a Year of Recovery*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research. p. 12

that they are familiar with one.[50] This lack of awareness on the part of residents impedes EFPs from launching community-based campaigns to eliminate hunger in the borough.

In order to increase collaboration among EFPs, the task force will encourage community meetings among programs based on community board districts, where providers would exchange information regarding hours of operation and services. Meetings would enable EFPs to coordinate their operations so that they may be open on alternating days, thereby reducing overlap. These community groups would represent the most basic unit of the task force, and serve as forums on local hunger issues, and on the resources available within the neighborhood.

A specific concern raised by the task force was the low level of enrollment among Queens EFP participants in the federal Food Stamp Program. Less than one-quarter (23 percent) of Queens participants access this federal relief program, which is substantially lower than the citywide average of 31 percent and is the lowest percentage of any borough.[51] Increasing food stamp participation is one potential benefit of increased collaboration among EFPs. EFPs reported during the task force meeting that they were not aware of the food stamp counseling assistance available within their own neighborhoods. Greater food stamp enrollment would benefit emergency food participants and providers in important ways, by increasing purchasing power for individuals and relieving some of the stress placed upon these EFPs. In addition to feeding greater numbers of Queens participants, increasing enrollment in the federal Food Stamp Program will benefit the borough's economy. Participants using food stamps will draw federal money into the Queens economy by purchasing their food at local supermarkets. And since the program is federally subsidized, the government has already allocated funding that will cover any increase in the cost of benefits.

To this end, the task force recommends EFPs work together to organize a food stamp awareness and enrollment drive. Members will create and disseminate an informational flyer describing the program and eligibility requirements, while also listing enrollment times and locations. The awareness drive will target the communities of Astoria, Long Island City, Elmhurst, Corona, Ridgewood, Maspeth, Bayside and Little Neck, as these communities are home to the highest concentration of individuals at risk of hunger not accessing emergency or government food assistance.

A food stamp campaign will also provide the task force with an opportunity to forge a holistic approach to food assistance. The task force will reach out to other anti-poverty organizations beyond the EFP network for support in their campaign and partner with them to coordinate food stamp application assistance trainings and forums. The task force will invite food stamp experts to these meetings to instruct EFP staff and volunteers on how to aid participants in the application process. Finally, the task force recommends that EFPs link into existing initiatives like the new partnership between the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA), New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH) and FoodChange to increase access to the federal Food Stamp Program.[52] The group recognizes that hunger represents just one manifestation of poverty; therefore, only by working together can hunger be effectively combated.

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[50] See Food Bank For New York City/Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (2004) *NYC Hunger View: Affording Food in a Year of Recovery*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research. p. 12

[51] For the rest of the city, enrollment of EFP participants in the Food Stamp Program is: 35 percent in the Bronx, 29 percent in Brooklyn, 37 percent in Manhattan and 40 percent in Staten Island.

[52] The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is providing a grant of $945,000 over three years to fund a partnership between HRA, NYCCAH and FoodChange to increase access to the federal Food Stamp Program by simplifying the enrollment process for EFP participants at certain pilot food pantries and soup kitchens who already qualify for exemptions from face-to-face interviews (certain working, disabled and elderly people).

Increase Political Awareness

In a borough where over three-quarters (78 percent) of residents view hunger as a problem,[53] the task force stressed partnering with the borough's elected officials. The task force will voice the needs of the at-risk community to these representatives, encouraging them to initiate policies and legislation to reduce hunger. The task force agreed that only by actively engaging elected officials can EFPs ensure that food assistance receives the political attention it merits.

In order to increase political awareness, the task force will develop a strategy to reach out to elected officials, culminating in visits to representatives' offices. The first stage of this process will entail preparing a platform of hunger-related priorities, which would include improved access to food stamps and increased funding for EFPs. Once the task force has developed its platform, it will first coordinate training sessions for EFPs on how to conduct visits with elected-officials and then schedule visits with these representatives.

In this effort, it would be best to start locally, and then gradually approach higher levels of elected office. The task force will thus partner with local community boards. Task force members will sit in on community board meetings, invite community board members to task force meetings, and seek the support of individual community board members. By engaging their respective community board, EFPs will create an institutional structure within the task force to parallel the local city government.

Increase Funding

As was previously mentioned, Queens EFPs operate with the lowest average annual budgets of any borough. Small budgets necessarily result in limited services. Queens' EFPs therefore struggle to provide basic food assistance not only because of a lack of funding for food, but also from an inability to staff their sites, as they tend to rely upon volunteers instead of paid staff. Furthermore, EFPs are unable to provide information about and referrals for social services needed like enrollment assistance for food stamps, and income security and job training. Increased funding translates to improved services, which in turn ensures that more residents receive the food assistance and other services they need.

The task force recommends that all local EFPs attend the annual Borough President's Non-Profit Conference,[54] which is designed to help community non-profits apply for funding and voice their funding needs. Additionally, the task force encourages EFPs to attend grant writing workshops sponsored by the Food Bank For New York City and other organizations. The task force advises that EFPs apply for funding together, which would enable programs to better collaborate and utilize their funding more efficiently. Additionally, this unified approach will improve the likelihood of receiving a grant.

Finally, the task force recognized that increasing funding and political advocacy are intertwined issues, so that by engaging in both efforts simultaneously, they will be met with greater success. The more vocal the task force becomes, the more attention its concerns will garner from elected-officials, and in turn, the more funding it can reasonably expect to receive.

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[53] See Food Bank For New York City/Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (2004) *NYC Hunger View 2004: Affording Food in a Year of Recovery*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research. p. 12.

[54] The Non-Profit Conference is held each autumn by the Borough President's office to provide training and resources on building capacity for non-profit organizations in Queens.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Following the first meeting of the Queens Hunger Task Force at the NYC Hunger Summit, the following action plan was developed. The Food Bank For New York City will work in conjunction with the Queens Hunger Task Force to coordinate this plan.

Increase collaboration by:

1) Convening meetings of Queens EFPs, for the purpose of sharing information, discussing food assistance issues, and coordinating hours of operation and services provided.
2) Coordinating a food stamp awareness and enrollment drive with task force meetings also serving as training sessions for application assistance.
3) Linking with HRA and community-based organizations that are currently creating food stamp awareness.

Increase political awareness by:

1) Drafting a platform of hunger-related priorities.
2) Coordinating training sessions on how to conduct visits to elected officials.
3) Scheduling meetings with elected officials to discuss the task force's platform.
4) Developing partnerships between task force members and their respective community boards.

Increase funding by:

1) Encouraging all task force members and local EFPs to attend the Queens Borough President's Non-Profit Forum and the Food Bank For New York City's grant writing workshops.
2) Advising multiple EFPs to apply for grants together.

The Queens Hunger Task Force seeks to develop strategies that will decrease the percentage of the at-risk population not accessing government and emergency food assistance.

Collaboration represents a vital first step in improving access to food assistance. Working together and with social service organizations beyond the EFP network, a food stamps awareness and enrollment campaign will be developed to increase the number of food stamps participants. Hindered by limited funding, increased collaboration will also enable Queens EFPs to utilize their resources more efficiently, and therefore provide better services for EFP participants. While expanding social services stands as a long-term objective for the EFP network, in the immediate future, programs can improve their outreach by pooling their resources.

The task force must also continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with vital organizations, including the Queens Borough President's Office, the Food Bank For New York City, and local community boards. These groups have access to forums and workshops that can enable EFPs to increase their funding. By regularly communicating with these bodies the Queens Hunger Task Force also ensures that elected-officials remain aware of hunger issues in the districts they serve.

The next meeting of the Queens Hunger Task Force will take place in the autumn, as the task force develops strategies to implement the proposed initiatives.

Participants in the first Queens Hunger Task Force meeting, June 20, 2005

Launched by Ricardo Fernandez
Office of the Queens Borough President
Helen Marshall

Moderator: Lewis Clarke
New York State Department of Health
Co-Facilitator: Ricardo Fernandez
Office of the Queens Borough President
Co-Faciliator: Diana Cruz
Sunnyside Community Center

Agency Listing
(Alphabetized by Agency Name)

Aya N'Goran Harper
African Women's Dream Inc.
Carline Azor and Judy Pedraza
AIDS Center of Queens County
Theresa Watkins and Catherine Cooper
Apostolic Temple of Jesus Christ
Charles Easley
Bea Fuchs
Sophia Zambrano
Betel of America, Inc.
Anita Castelazo
Betel of America, Inc.
Marie E. Exilien and Marie Jean-Pierre
Bethlehem SDA French Church
Levinnia Stevenson
BFFY Hillcrest Senior Center
Vada J. Jennings
Calvary Baptist Church
Debra Sheldon
Citizens for NYC
Indrani Muthusamy
Christine Home Care Food Pantry
Anthony Miranda and Pauline Collao
Elohim Community Development and Outreach, Inc.
Anthony Joiner
Fellowship with Christ Ministries
Claudia Milton
First Presbyterian Church (Far Rockaway)
Jene Bryant
First Presbyterian Church Of Jamaica
Simon Thaston and Claire Thaston
First Reformed Church of Jamaica
Rev. Kim
First United Methodist Church
Joyce Turner and Gwendolyn Baker
H.O. Scott Education and Comm. Ctr.
Josie Ansaly and Douglas Falconer
Hollis Avenue Congregation Church
Doris Johnson
Holy Ghost Upper Room Filling Station Ministry Inc
Sister Teresa Fitzgerald
Hour Children
Raymond Lilois
House of Prayer Inc.
Carmen Cruz
Iglesia Biblica Restauracion
Fr. Miranda
Iglesia De Dios
Charles Ukegbu
Jackson Heights SDA
Pierre Sanon
Jackson Heights SDA
Miriam Sandy
Just Shall Live
Janet Meyer and **Rosa Hall**
Mt. Zion Baptist Church Mission Outreach
Zofia Mossakowska
Polonians Organized Ministry to Our Community, Inc
Michele Gibbs and Isadora Gibbs
Queens Tabernacle Church
Luz Negroni and Jackie Eradiri
Ridgewood Presbyterian Church
Sandra Marinelli
River Fund NY
Durga Das
River Fund NY
Emline Musonza
Salvation Army Astoria Corps
E. Jams-Brady
St. Clement Pope Roman Catholic Church
Mr. White
St. Lukes Baptist Church
Marthe Helmany and Margarita DoPruell
St. Vincent De Paul St.Pius V
Rev. Lemuel Rodriguez
The Promise Community Resource Center

STATEN ISLAND HUNGER TASK FORCE STRATEGY PAPER 2005

Background

People at Risk of Hunger on Staten Island[55]

Hunger Safety Net 2004 demonstrates that at least two million people in New York City are at risk of hunger, with 56,484 individuals residing on Staten Island. More than one-half (52 percent) of this at-risk population on Staten Island – 29,192 individuals – is not accessing food assistance, including WIC, the federal Food Stamp Program and emergency food assistance.[56] This statistic represents the highest percentage of any borough; in contrast, 28 percent of all New York City residents at risk of hunger fall into this same category. Twenty-one percent of the at-risk population on Staten Island – 11,741 individuals – access only government food assistance and not emergency food assistance. Twenty-five percent of the at-risk population – 14,093 individuals – access emergency food assistance and not government food assistance. Three percent of the at-risk population on Staten Island – 1,458 individuals – access both emergency and government food assistance.

Distribution of the At-Risk Population on Staten Island

The communities of Stapleton and St. George (Community Board 1) in the northernmost part of Staten Island are home to 31,091 people at risk of hunger. Forty three percent of this population is not accessing government or emergency food assistance. Because the vast majority of at-risk individuals on the Island reside in this community board district, it is not surprising that a majority of the food assistance resources are also concentrated in this area. This district also contains some of the most impoverished neighborhoods on the island.

Hunger, however, is also present in the wealthier sections of Staten Island. In fact, the communities of South Beach and Willowbrook (Community Board 2) are home to 15,204 people at risk and the communities of Tottenville and Great Kills (Community Board 3) have 10,189 people at risk. These more affluent communities have the highest percentages of people at risk not accessing any form of food assistance on Staten Island. Nearly two-thirds of the at-risk population in both these areas (64 percent of Community Board 2 and 61 percent of Community Board 3) are not accessing either emergency or government food assistance. Low levels of participation in food assistance is a likely result of the few EFPs located in these communities, as only a handful of programs serve both areas.

Emergency Food Participants on Staten Island[57]

Further analysis of the *Hunger Safety Net 2004* reveals that hunger manifests differently on the Island than in the rest of the city. Staten Island has the highest percentage (48 percent) of residents with disabilities relying on emergency food, as well as the highest percentage of homeless emergency food participants (25 percent). These percentages are nearly twice as large as those for New York City, as one-quarter (25 percent) of the city's EFP participants are disabled, and 12 percent are homeless.

Demographically speaking, EFP participants on Staten Island differ from the city's EFP population in terms of ethnic/racial composition, gender and age. Although – similar to the rest of the city – single women with children comprise nearly one-fifth (20 percent) of the families accessing EFPs, the

[55] Findings in this section are calculated by population density, which refers to findings within borough populations rather than the city as a whole.
[56] Emergency food assistance is provided by community-based EFPs such as soup kitchens and food pantries.
[57] All New York City EFP findings in this section are extracted from the Food Bank For New York City/Food Policy Institute (2004) *Hunger Safety Net 2004: Measuring Gaps in Food Assistance in New York City*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research.

gender composition of participants on Staten Island is primarily male (53 percent male compared to 47 percent female). In contrast, 56 percent of participants citywide are female, while 44 percent are male. Like all the other boroughs, in terms of race and ethnicity, Black/African Americans comprise the greatest proportion of EFP participants on the Island (43 percent, compared to 53 percent citywide). The next largest group, however, is not Latino/Hispanic residents as it is in the other boroughs – only 15 percent of Staten Island participants are Latino/Hispanic, one-half of the citywide figure of 34 percent. Instead, Staten Island's proportion of White EFP participants is almost five times as large as the citywide figure – 41 percent in contrast to 9 percent for all of New York City. The remaining two percent of participants on Staten Island are multiracial or other, in comparison to three percent citywide.[58] In relation to EFP participants in other boroughs, Staten Island has the lowest proportion of elderly participants and the highest proportion of adults ages 30-64.[59]

A low level of education among EFP participants (38 percent have less than a high school education) contributes to hunger on Staten Island. Lack of access to a good standard of education usually results in lower paying, expendable employment. Low wages in turn reduces an individual's purchasing power, leaving the working poor unable to afford basic necessities including food. Other findings on Staten Island show that the high cost of housing exacerbates the Island's hunger problem. Over one-half (53 percent) of all EFP participants rent their places of residence and have difficulty meeting the food demands of their households. The one-quarter (25 percent) of EFP participants who are homeless further shows the inability of some residents to pay for housing.

Emergency Food Providers on Staten Island

The average annual budget for EFPs in Staten Island is $28,490. Citywide, the average budget for all EFPs is $49,445 with approximately half of all programs reporting a budget of less than $17,500. As of this writing, there are 40 food pantries and 14 soup kitchens on Staten Island;[60] of those, 26 food pantries and six soup kitchens on Staten Island are Food Bank For New York City members or participating member programs.[61]

Staten Island Hunger Task Force Strategy

The Office of Staten Island Borough President James Molinaro launched the Staten Island Hunger Task Force at the NYC Hunger Summit. The first official meeting, moderated by Fazana Saleem-Ismail of the Robin Hood Foundation, Joanne Nuzzo of the Office of the Staten Island Borough President, and Reverend Terry Troia of Project Hospitality, was attended by 18 staff, volunteers and participants of Staten Island EFPs. The following is an overview of the session including the recommendations developed by the group. This strategy will serve as the foundation for the group's work this year and focuses on collaboration, distribution of EFPs, government food assistance, program development, funding and promoting affordable housing.

Increase in Program Collaboration

A lack of coordination among EFPs impedes food assistance on Staten Island. EFPs report that they remain relatively unaware of the services and hours of operation of other programs, which compromises their ability to make referrals. Thus, when one EFP experiences a shortage of food, they struggle to refer those participants to other EFPs. The task force recognizes this challenge and

[58] To note, zero percent of Staten Island's EFP participants are Asian or Asian Indian compared to two percent of the city's EFP participants are Asian or Asian Indian. For future studies, the sampling size for Staten Island will be increased in order to ensure that this is not due to a sample bias error.

[59] The age distribution of EFP participants is as follows: zero percent are 18-29, 66 percent of Staten Island EFP participants are 30 to 49, 27 percent are 50 to 64 and seven percent are 65 and older. In contrast, five percent of participants citywide are 18 to 29, 42 percent are 30 to 49, 28 percent are 50 to 64 and 24 percent are 65 and older.

[60] These figures are based on the number of EFPs registered with the New York State Department of Health as of August 2005. The figures were extracted from the FeedNYC database.

[61] The current figures for program numbers are based on internal Food Bank data as of August 2005.

recommends developing a stronger referral network through increased communication and collaboration among EFPs. The task force also recommends increased collaboration among programs to decrease gaps in service times. This coordination would prevent repetition of services, and would increase the efficiency of the EFP network. For instance, EFPs in close proximity can coordinate their hours of operation to reduce overlap and provide more consistent access to food.

The task force will encourage new and developing programs to partner with more established programs. This coordination will strengthen the hunger safety net by encouraging EFPs to pool their resources. Specifically, EFPs will collaborate on funding and strategic planning. One opportunity to pool resources and forge working relationships with neighboring EFPs would be through grant-writing. The task force recommends that EFPs apply for funding together, which will enable programs to better collaborate and utilize their funding more efficiently. Additionally, this unified approach will improve the likelihood of receiving a grant.

The group further recommends the development of a website where agency representatives can network, update their schedules, and advertise hunger relief events. The task force suggests developing a partnership with the borough president and other elected leaders on the island to seek funding for establishing and supporting this initiative.

While emphasizing the need to increase coordination among EFPs, the task force also recognized that EFPs must involve residents in a community-based approach to eliminate hunger. Raising the public's awareness of food assistance therefore remains an essential responsibility of the task force. According to Food Bank findings, residents' perceptions of hunger do not mirror their actual experiences buying food. On Staten Island, residents who think that hunger is not a problem doubled from six percent in 2003 to 12 percent in 2004.[62] Thirteen percent of Staten Island residents did not buy food needed by their households at some time during the past year, triple the number in 2003.[63] Research also suggests that community members are not aware of where EFPs are located, as only 38 percent of Staten Island residents can identify an EFP in their neighborhood.[64]

To address this issue, the task force suggests increasing awareness of the Food Bank For New York City's online agency database that enables searches for food pantries and soup kitchens. Alternatively, local newspapers can post information about the network of EFPs. The task force also recognized that one tactic to increase awareness and access to food assistance is to promote the Food Bank For New York City's 24-hour, toll-free phone service, 1-866-NYC-FOOD (692-3663) as well as the New York City Hunger Hotline (1-866-888-8777). Both phone lines provide information about how and where to access food assistance.

Increase Government Assistance Participation

As discussed in the background section, with such a high percentage of at-risk residents not accessing available food assistance, it is necessary to increase participation in government food assistance programs. One of the primary goals of the task force, then, is to improve access to the federal Food Stamp Program. In addition to feeding greater numbers of Staten Island participants, increasing enrollment in the federal Food Stamp Program would benefit the borough's economy. Participants using food stamps would draw federal money into the Staten Island economy by purchasing their food at local supermarkets. And since the program is federally subsidized, the government has already allocated funding that would cover any increase in the cost of benefits.

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[62] See Food Bank For New York City/Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (2004) *NYC Hunger View: Affording Food in a Year of Recovery*. Division of Government Relations, Policy and Research. p. 10.
[63] Ibid. p. 11.
[64] Ibid. p. 12.

Findings reveal that many programs provide meals for immigrants – in fact, 16 percent of EFP participants on Staten Island are foreign-born. Given this finding, the task force discussed the barriers that impede the immigrant population from accessing government assistance programs, such as the federal Food Stamps Program, including misinformation, lack of information and confusion about rules and eligibility requirements. For example, confusion abounds since the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, and the subsequent legislative changes that altered eligibility requirements for immigrants. Often, immigrants who do not receive government aid turn to EFPs for food assistance. Since EFPs currently struggle to serve EFP participants, increasing enrollment in food stamps would both provide food to more people at risk, and also relieve some of the stress placed upon EFPs.

To achieve this objective, the task force will develop a strategy to increase food stamp outreach and enrollment by partnering with local EFPs, community-based organizations (that are currently creating food stamps awareness), and the New York City Human Resource Administration (HRA). Together, the task force and these organizations will coordinate local public awareness campaigns on the availability of government food assistance and on how to apply for these programs. The task force will also work with the Office of the Borough President to organize subcommittees that will reach out to particular at-risk populations (such as the elderly and people with disabilities). These subcommittees will strive to increase awareness of food assistance resources among sub-populations not accessing government food assistance.

Improve Program Development

The task force agreed that one of the most pressing food assistance priorities on Staten Island is to create a more even distribution of EFPs. Most existing EFPs are located on the North Shore (Community Board 1), while few programs are situated in the middle of the Island (Community Board 2) and on the South Shore (Community Board 3). The task force discussed the importance of developing EFPs in these areas, since some neighborhoods have no programs. Exacerbating the need for more EFPs, the percentage of residents who found it 'very difficult' to afford food increased from zero percent in 2003 to 13 percent in 2004.[65] The demands of a potentially growing at-risk population must therefore be met with new and expanded food assistance services.

Additionally, the task force recognized that many participants have to endure hardships in order to reach an EFP. Often, these participants commute for an extended period of time, and will then have to walk long distances to reach a soup kitchen or food pantry. Transportation difficulties particularly afflict participants in the middle and southern parts of the Island, where there is a dearth of EFPs. Inadequate access therefore makes reaching an EFP time-consuming and costly, especially for those participants who are elderly or disabled.

To this end, the task force encourages bringing services to the underserved areas of the Island and developing new EFPs. Members cited an initiative to fund a mobile food van for mid-island and the South Shore, allowing small pantries to increase their hours of operation and accommodate more participants, as one example of these efforts. The task force also recommends further exploring ways to quantify the distance participants must travel to reach the nearest EFP. This information will help to guide strategy towards program development.

Increase Program Funding

With a growing population of at-risk individuals – a considerable portion of whom are not accessing food assistance – and a shortage of EFPs, program development stands out as a clear and pressing objective for the task force. In order to realize this goal, however, it is necessary to increase program funding. As mentioned in the previous section, EFPs on Staten Island operate on budgets nearly half the size of the average New York City EFP budget ($28,490 in contrast to the city

[65] Ibid. p. 11

average of $49,445). Efforts to improve program development, however, would create overhead costs and give rise to additional expenses related to staffing and maintaining these new and expanded EFPs.

In order to increase program funding, the task force recommends that EFPs attend the various grant-writing and fundraising workshops held throughout the city by organizations like the Food Bank For New York City. As was previously mentioned, the task force also advises EFPs to apply for funding together.

Promote Affordable Housing

Finally, a long-term plan to end hunger in Staten Island must include a discussion of affordable housing. As stated in the previous section, over one-half (53 percent) of Staten Island residents accessing EFPs reside in rental accommodations while one-quarter (25 percent) are homeless. These findings demonstrate that on the one hand, many low-income individuals in the borough are rent poor, and by the time they have paid their high and ever-increasing rents, have little money left to pay for other basic necessities including food; and on the other, that many residents simply cannot afford basic shelter or food. Consequently, these residents then come to rely on EFPs for food assistance. In order to address this issue, the task force will examine existing resources to connect participants with affordable housing. The task force will also partner with advocates in the housing community to promote maintenance of existing and creation of new low-income affordable housing.

Throughout its campaigns, the task force will embrace a holistic, community-based approach to eliminating hunger. Only by addressing poverty will the task force successfully reduce hunger; and it is only by uniting with other social service organizations that the task force will help eliminate poverty.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Following the first meeting of the Staten Island Hunger Task Force at the NYC Hunger Summit 2005, the following action plan was developed. The Food Bank For New York City will work in conjunction with the Staten Island Hunger Task Force to coordinate this plan.

Increase program collaboration by:

1) Coordinating the hours of operation of neighboring EFPs.
2) Encouraging EFPs to jointly engage in strategic planning.
3) Developing a website where EFP representatives can network, update their schedules, and advertise hunger-relief events.
4) Increasing public awareness by promoting the Food Bank's 24-hour, toll free phone service and the New York City Hunger Hotline.

Increase government assistance participation by:

1) Partnering with HRA and community-based organizations (that are currently creating food stamp awareness) to sponsor a public awareness drive that will inform Staten Island residents of government food assistance programs.
2) Working with the Staten Island Borough President's office to form subcommittees that will reach out to particular at-risk populations. These subcommittees will seek to outreach to at-risk communities on the availability of public food assistance.

Improve program development by:

1) Using the *Hunger Safety Net 2004* report findings to target communities with high at-risk populations not accessing EFPs, but few programs, for new program development.
2) Further exploring ways to quantify the distance participants must travel to reach the nearest EFP.

Increase program funding by:

1) Advising programs to apply for funding jointly.
2) Encouraging program staff to attend grant-writing and fundraising workshops, like those sponsored by the Food Bank For New York City.

Promoting affordable housing by:

4) Increasing awareness of low-income housing opportunities by providing information and referrals at EFPs.
5) Partnering with organizations that promote maintenance of existing and creation of new low-income affordable housing.
6) Partnering with other anti-poverty groups to develop a holistic and community-based approach to reduce borough poverty.

The principal goal of the task force on Staten Island is to seek increases in services for underserved areas of the borough while improving coordination and collaboration amongst EFPs. The task force will also develop partnerships with local EFPs, HRA and other community organizations beyond the EFP network to increase participation in government food assistance programs. In addition, the task force will work to increase program funding for all Staten Island EFPs.

A long-term action plan to end hunger must address the large number of residents with disabilities relying on emergency food, as well as the lack of affordable housing. The task force will work to develop ways to target services, especially housing referrals for this vulnerable population and to work in close collaboration with housing groups in these efforts.

Finally, the task force will encourage governmental and local action to strengthen the hunger safety net for vulnerable families and to ultimately craft a holistic, community-based approach to eliminate hunger in Staten Island.

The task force will continue to coordinate efforts with the Food Bank For New York City and will work to articulate the needs of Staten Island's at-risk communities. The next meeting of the Staten Island Hunger Task Force will take place in the autumn, as the task force develops strategies to implement the proposed initiatives.

Participants in the first Staten Island Hunger Task Force Meeting, June 20, 2005

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