WHAT'S A HUNGER BANQUET® EVENT?

Few experiences bring to life the inequalities in our world more powerfully than an Oxfam America Hunger Banquet event. Unique and memorable, the Hunger Banquet event allows organisers and participants alike to experience first hand how our decisions affect others in the world.

Here’s how it works: Guests draw tickets at random that assign them to either a high-, middle-, or low-income tier—based on the latest statistics about the number of people living in poverty. Each income level receives a corresponding meal:

**THE 15 PERCENT IN THE HIGH-INCOME TIER ARE SERVED A SUMPTUOUS MEAL**

**THE 35 PERCENT IN THE MIDDLE-INCOME SECTION EAT A SIMPLE MEAL OF RICE AND BEANS**

**THE 50 PERCENT IN THE LOW-INCOME TIER HELP THEMSELVES TO SMALL PORTIONS OF RICE AND WATER.**

Guests can also assume characterisations that describe the situation of a specific person at the income level to which they’ve been assigned. Finally, all guests are invited to share their thoughts after the meal and to take action to fight poverty.

After an Hunger Banquet event, few participants leave with full stomachs, but all possess a greater understanding of the problems of hunger and poverty and will feel motivated to do something about them.

How you run your event is really up to you! It depends on the time you have, the resources and the number of participants. This is simply a guide to get you started and your brain thinking.
TIPS ON HOW TO GET STARTED

STEP 1: GET PEOPLE ON BOARD
Tell friends and family about your Hunger Banquet and build some hype!

STEP 2: GET ORGANIZED
Where will the event be hosted? Book the space. Make a budget. Invite local community figures to attend. Select someone to be the MC. Print flyers and advertise. Seek out food donations. Think up decorations. Assure the correct number of tables and chairs (low income will be seated on the floor).

STEP 3: THE MENU
A typical Hunger Banquet event includes three different meals.

- **HIGH-INCOME** (15 percent of guests): pasta, sauce, salad, and juice
- **MIDDLE-INCOME** (35 percent of guests): rice, beans, and water
- **LOW-INCOME** (50 percent of guests): rice and water

FOOD CHECKLIST (100 PERSON EVENT)

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

**MIDDLE-INCOME GROUP**
- 35 servings (i.e., one-half to three-quarters of a cup) of rice and beans on trays with serving spoons
- 35 small paper plates or bowls
- 35 forks or spoons
- 35 napkins
- 35 cups
- Water in jugs or another container

**HIGH-INCOME GROUP**
- 15 dinner-size portions of pasta, salad, and rolls (or whatever is offered)
- 15 nice napkins
- 15 regular plates, glasses, forks, knives, and spoons
- Table linens for the tables
- Juice or other beverages for 15

POTENTIAL SPEAKERS:

- Professors or teachers of International Studies, Humanities or another related subject area.
- Local elected officials or community leaders.
- Directors of area food banks, community initiatives or other local non-governmental organisations.
- Local celebrities or media personalities.
THE BIG DAY TIPS

- Do not allow the event to go over the allotted time (ideally 90 minutes).
- Have the MC walk around in the audience and be a part of the banquet.
- To get participants to play their roles, have the MC and volunteers emphasize that the banquet is theater.
- Emphasize that the Hunger Banquet event is only meant to demonstrate the unequal distribution of global resources.

- If people in the low-income group do not eat their food, point this out. In reality, this is not a reasonable choice for hungry people.
- Use audience comments to illustrate the point of the Hunger Banquet event.
- Consider ways to reduce the amount of waste from your event. Serve water from jugs instead of plastic bottles, recycle cutlery, and compost uneaten food.
- Oxfam can help you plan if you get stuck. Contact us at www.oxfam.org.au/my/contact_us

SAMPLE EVENT TIMELINE

Some simple guidelines for the big day!

SET-UP (1 HOUR)
- Volunteers arrive. Volunteer coordinator assigns volunteers to specific tasks.
- Volunteers set up and decorate site, designating an area for sign-ins and information.

ENTRANCE (15 MIN)
- Volunteers greet guests and have them draw tickets.
- Volunteers ask people to sign in and take information.
- Volunteers direct guests to their income groups.

WELCOME (15 MIN)
- Host gives welcome address.
- Host acknowledges sponsors and people who made the event possible.
- Host introduces the idea of the Hunger Banquet and the issues at large.

MEAL (15–20 MINS)
- Attendees eat meal.
- Play music, show a slideshow or video.
- MC asks for a moment of silence to reflect on the Hunger Banquet event.
- MC leads sharing period or reflection.

CALL TO ACTION (10 MINS)
- MC concludes and invites attendees to take action
SUGGESTED REFLECTION QUESTIONS

If people are only focused on the dynamics of the Hunger Banquet itself, remind participants that this is a simulation, not reality for most of us. Challenge the audience to discuss what this represents in the real world and ask what can be done to change things for the better.

YOUNG AUDIENCES
- Do you think it’s fair that the world is divided this way? Why or why not?
- Do you think that the people who got the big meal should help the others? Why or why not?
- Do you think people in the low-income group are there because they don’t work hard? Or why do you think the people in the low-income group are there?

OLDER AUDIENCES
- Would anyone like to share any of the thoughts they have on what has taken place here?
- Has anyone witnessed poverty or gender discrimination in the Australia or elsewhere that they would like to share?
- Does anyone have any ideas on how our personal choices as Australians affect the world’s unequal distribution of resources?
- What might we all do to bring about a fairer distribution of resources?
- What kind of actions can we take that might help women farmers like the ones whose stories we’ve just heard?
- How can women and men work together to address the inequalities that keep women in poverty?

NEED SOME HELP? CAN’T SEEM TO GET STARTED?

Oxfam has plenty of resources for you to utilise for your Hunger Banquet. You can find videos to play, statistics, posters to hang around your school or neighborhood and much more at: www.oxfam.org/hungerbanquet

TELL US ABOUT YOUR EVENT

We want to hear about your amazing Hunger Banquet. How did it go? How did you use our guide to make a unique and interactive event? Do you have photos? Have a lot to say? Write a blog for us!

Whatever you have to share about your event, we’d love to hear from you. Write to us at: www.oxfam.org.au/my/contact_us