

Summary of 2008 Successes

Empowering Grassroots Activism

What we did: Because it's the collective efforts of our staff and grassroots activists that create success, expanding our presence in congressional districts across the country is critical for greater impact. In 2008, we made starting new chapters a top priority. We also worked to bring in a wider variety of voices through our Diversity, Youth in Action, and Faith in Action task forces.

Outcomes: We started 28 new RESULTS chapters — growing our network by over 30 percent! Our new and seasoned volunteers and staff:

- Held over 360 outreach events nationwide, educating and mobilizing communities to take action;
- Had 122 face-to-face meetings with senators and representatives, and hundreds of meetings with congressional aides; and
- Generated 313 pieces of media, including editorials, op-eds, articles, letters to the editor, and radio and TV spots,

All of which created the remarkable successes described below.

Ending Poverty Around the World

Global Health

What We Did: As Congress began the year working to re-authorize the United States' global AIDS initiative, RESULTS launched a multi-pronged effort to ensure the legislation addressed the scourge of tuberculosis (TB), which is the biggest killer of people with HIV/AIDS. First, we worked closely with members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee to incorporate the Stop TB Now Act into the legislation. The act, which RESULTS activists had advocated for, had previously been passed by the House, but not signed into law.

Next, RESULTS and RESULTS Educational Fund (REF) capitalized on key media opportunities to build support for TB programs within Congress. In February, the World Health Organization released a report documenting the highest rate ever of drug-resistant TB. REF organized a conference call for journalists featuring WHO experts, and hosted a press briefing on Capitol Hill. RESULTS and REF helped orchestrate a hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Global Health and Africa to examine the report's findings.

In April, the House passed the Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008, and RESULTS activists turned their attention to the Senate. RESULTS successfully pressed for the inclusion of concrete funding and treatment targets for TB in the Senate version. When the bill stalled in the Senate and looked like it may not be put to a vote, RESULTS used media to generate political pressure, generating 12 editorials, two op-eds, and four letters to the editor in a single month. The Senate finally passed the bill on July 16, just as the RESULTS International Conference lobby day was concluding.

Following the bill's passage, we continued to build public awareness about the particular threat of drug-resistant TB. REF partnered with TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) to lead the advocacy component of a global awareness-raising campaign featuring the work of award-winning photojournalist James Nachtwey. Nachtwey's photographs and messages about TB were broadcast in Times Square, London, Los Angeles, and around the world, and were featured in the pages of *Time* magazine. In conjunction with the event, REF worked to secure statements from then-candidates Barack Obama and John McCain expressing their support for fighting TB.

What We Achieved: On July 30, the historic bipartisan Lantos-Hyde Act was signed into law, authorizing \$48 billion over five years for life-saving AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria programs. Due to the efforts of RESULTS, the bill included \$4 billion for TB and a goal of treating 4.5 million people with life-saving TB treatment. This achievement was the cumulative result of years of dedicated advocacy. When RESULTS and REF began advocating for TB funding in 1997 as a key poverty and health issue, the U.S. was providing less than \$1 million in global TB funding annually.

Access to Financial Services for the Very Poor

What We Did: Though the World Bank's mission is to alleviate poverty, it invests only a tiny fraction of its resources in one of the best tools for reducing poverty — microfinance. In 2008, REF allied with members of Congress to push for specific policy proposals that would drastically improve World Bank support for microfinance for the very poor.

We began the year by supporting letters from members of the House and Senate to the World Bank president, Robert Zoellick, urging more investment in microfinance. The impressive list of signers showed bipartisan support and included then-Senators Clinton and Obama as well as conservative Senators Bennett, Hatch, and Lugar. Our activists rallied to support an even more ambitious December 2008 letter that proposed a set of initiatives that would increase financial access for the poor and marginalized, including \$200 million for a special grant facility, "Centers of Excellence" to encourage good practices, and a sub-Saharan Africa funding mechanism to make capital available to programs that reach the poorest. More than 110 members of Congress signed this important letter, which got the attention of — and action from — the World Bank.

This is a potential ground-breaking development — and not a moment too soon. The global financial crisis is hitting the poorest the hardest, including microfinance institutions and their borrowers. Now more than ever, a robust World Bank investment in microfinance for the very poor is needed to mitigate the impact of the financial crisis and ensure microfinance institutions can continue to invest in the people who need this ladder out of poverty most.

Outcomes: In February 2009, President Zoellick informed members of Congress that the World Bank is implementing our proposals. With continued congressional leadership, it is possible that these initiatives could be operational by the end of 2009, thereby creating an urgent source of funding to help the poorest and most marginalized access financial services. RESULTS activists continue to support members of Congress to maintain pressure on the World Bank in order to ensure that these proposals are implemented and that the focus remains specifically on the very poor.

Foreign Aid Reform: Improving and Expanding Efforts to Achieve Education for All

What We Did: In 2008, RESULTS and REF built congressional and presidential support for achieving universal primary education, advocated for increased funding, and urged members of Congress to insist that USAID improve its basic education programs.

To build congressional understanding of and support for Education for All, RESULTS asked members of Congress to cosponsor the Education for All Act of 2007. The Act, which was not put to a vote, authorized the resources and leadership necessary to help ensure a successful international effort to provide all children with a quality basic education. REF produced the report “Redesigning the Basics,” which highlights the urgent need for the U.S. to make education aid more effective and offers recommendations to ensure aid is comprehensively tracked and evaluated, better targeted, and coordinated so that efforts are leveraged to improve access to and quality of basic education services and to get the biggest bang for the buck.

In response to President Obama’s campaign commitment of \$2 billion for a global education fund, REF participated in civil society policy dialogues to develop recommendations for the fund. The principles developed — such as transparency, accountability, enhanced multilateral cooperation, and participatory governance — have helped frame important discussions. The recommendations were shared with the Obama Transition Team, participants of the UNESCO High Level Group on Education for All, and NGO partners.

Outcomes: Lobbying by RESULTS activists for increased funding contributed to longer-term efforts to ramp up Basic Education spending. However, due to a continuing resolution, education funding was flat-lined at \$700 million. In light of the economic downturn, our advocacy was crucial to protect FY2009 funding levels. We are working with congressional leaders to ensure that FY2010 funding levels bring the U.S. closer to meeting our fair share commitment to achieving Education for All. The REF education report, which was shared with key congressional leaders, as well as discussions on aid effectiveness have laid the groundwork to improve the quality of U.S. education funding in FY2010.

The potential to significantly expand U.S. leadership through a Global Fund for Education represents the biggest opportunity in a decade to achieve the Education for All goals. Should our recommendations for an effective multilateral coordination and funding mechanism for EFA — a Global Fund for Education — be implemented, the U.S. will be well placed to ramp up funding levels to those outlined in the Education for All Act, as well as to improve the delivery of U.S. Basic Education Assistance.

Ending Poverty in the U.S.

Health Care for All

What we did: Recognizing that access to health care is a huge barrier for almost 47 million uninsured Americans, including 9 million children, we continued a multi-year advocacy campaign to provide quality and affordable health care for all. Lack of quality and affordable health care causes and deepens poverty for millions of American families.

In 2008, we tackled the problem from several angles. We used the historic 2008 election process to raise awareness of the desperate need for reform of the U.S. health system. At town hall meetings, debates, candidates' forums, and other events, including ones sponsored by RESULTS, our volunteer activists urged candidates to support comprehensive, meaningful health reform if elected.

We also focused on the issue of racial and ethnic health disparities. Unfortunately, in 21st century America the color of your skin can be a key determinative factor on the type of health care you receive. For example, African-American men are four times as likely as their white counterparts to have a limb amputated because of diabetes. To address these injustices, we endorsed and lobbied for the Health Equity and Accountability Act, which would invest resources in assessing and correcting health disparities.

Finally, RESULTS endorsed the National Health Insurance Act, H.R.676. This bill would create a publically-financed, privately-delivered health care system in the U.S. (single-payer model). RESULTS believes that a national health program is the most effective and efficient model. It also meets all the principles espoused by the Institute of Medicine, which RESULTS endorsed in 2005 as our template for reform.

Outcomes: Our work on expanding access to health care saw fruition as 2009 began. President Obama signed into law the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act, which our activists had worked so hard on in 2007, and called it a "down payment" on coverage for every American. The economic recovery bill also included funding for Medicaid that RESULTS had advocated for: the \$87 billion will help states continue to provide health care services for the poor. And health care reform was indeed at the top of the political agenda.

Ending Hunger through the Farm Bill

What we did: With the Farm Bill up for reauthorization, we took strategic actions to ensure that the bill would put hungry families and struggling rural communities first. Although the nutrition title of the Farm Bill is the largest section of the bill, funding for programs like the Food Stamp Program and other anti-hunger programs has been inadequate to meet the needs of hungry families. In 2007, food stamp benefits averaged \$1 per meal per person. Funding to support food banks via the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) had also not kept up with growing demand.

In addition to putting our weight behind increased resources for these nutrition programs, RESULTS urged Congress to enact meaningful commodity payment reform. Commodity payments, or farm subsidies, are income supports paid to farms that grow certain crops. Unfortunately, most of the money from these programs goes to already wealthy farms. We urged Congress to reform the commodity program by eliminating payments to high-income farms, redirect resources to rural development programs, and use the savings generated to strengthen nutrition programs.

Outcomes: Despite being told by members of Congress that no new resources were available for nutrition programs, RESULTS and our allies successfully persuaded Congress to find resources to combat hunger. As a result, the nutritional title of the Farm Bill received the largest increase in funding of any title of the Farm Bill, \$10.4 billion over ten years. Food stamps received the bulk of these resources (almost \$8 billion), which will help raise benefit levels and expand the program to more people. Food stamps also got a new name — the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). (SNAP got another, temporary, boost of \$20 billion in early 2009 from the economic recovery bill.) TEFAP received increased funding as well, which will help food banks better serve those in need.

Congress did invest more in rural development programs, including funding for infrastructure improvements, emergency services, broadband internet access, and small business development. However, despite a nation-wide lobbying campaign, only minor changes were made in the commodity payment system.

Make Taxes Fair

What we did: Once RESULTS' Farm Bill work was completed in June 2008, we began work on our Make Taxes Fair: Creating Economic Opportunity for All campaign. This campaign recognizes the power of a fair tax code to help lift people out of poverty with tax credits that benefit low-income families and policies that encourage saving. Provisions like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) can provide much-needed financial resources to low-income families to help them make ends meet. Programs like the Saver's Bonus and Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) help people build savings and assets, which is the most direct path out of poverty.

RESULTS urged Congress to lower the eligibility threshold for the CTC so that more low-income children (and their families) would qualify. We also supported making the CTC fully refundable, so that if a family's credit is higher than their tax liability, they would receive the difference as a refund. We lobbied Congress to expand EITC benefits, particularly for single workers with no children. These workers receive less than one-tenth the credit as a family of four, an amount we sought to triple. Finally, we endorsed the Saver's Bonus Act, which would allow low-income people to direct their tax refunds into qualified, matched savings accounts.

Outcomes: Congress responded to our pressure by lowering the income eligibility threshold for the CTC. Before the change, a family needed to earn \$12,050 before they could receive the credit. RESULTS and our allies were able to get this amount lowered to \$8,500. As a result, an additional 3 million low-income children will receive the credit, while 10 million more will get a larger credit.

We ramped these efforts up again in early 2009 to ensure that critical investments in anti-poverty measures were included in the economic recovery legislation. The CTC threshold was lowered further to \$3,000 — as a result, 13 million *more* low-income children and their families will receive the CTC through 2011. The EITC was also increased for large families and married couples. These temporary changes, along with increased resources for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly food stamps), Head Start, and Medicaid, will help millions of struggling low-income families and counter what would otherwise have been a major spike in child poverty.