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## **NETWORK Responds to New Poverty Statistics**

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*Washington DC:* In response to today's U.S. Census Bureau's release of 2012 poverty statistics, Sister Simone Campbell, Executive Director of NETWORK, stated:

"The poverty statistics released today underscore once again the continuing grim reality that millions in our nation struggle at the economic margins.

"Congress continues to attack the very programs that help lift people out of poverty – such as food and housing assistance – while offering preferential government policies and tax breaks to a far smaller group at the top.

"We call on Congress to immediately halt efforts to decimate programs that help people live lives of dignity and promise. "

***NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, also released the following statement:***

NETWORK is deeply dismayed by our wealthy nation's continuing inability to unite political will and dramatically lower poverty rates. We also deplore congressional proposals to cut funding for vital programs proven to help people lift themselves out of poverty. Those same legislators, however, continue to foster tax policies that strongly favor people at the top. That is wrong. That is why NETWORK is continuing to focus education efforts on income inequality, both in Congress and among people of faith.

As Sister Simone Campbell recently reminded the [U.S. House Budget Committee](#), more than one-fourth of U.S. jobs pay wages below the poverty level. When you combine low-wage earners with the millions of unemployed and underemployed Americans, it is clear that cutting funding for responsible government programs only exacerbates the continuing crisis of poverty in our wealthy nation. And yet, that is what is happening.

For example, congressional efforts to undermine the SNAP (food stamp) program are mean-spirited and not in keeping with American values. SNAP does more than any other program to lower the number of Americans struggling in deep poverty, that is, below half the poverty line. It deserves our full support.

NETWORK will continue to press for legislation and government actions that reduce the wealth gap, create fair tax policies that bring in reasonable revenue for responsible programs, and help our entire nation – the 100% – instead of just the favored few.

Congress should immediately redirect its efforts toward the good of all.

#### ABOUT THE NUMBERS

There is no statistically significant difference in the Census Bureau Poverty Data comparing 2012 to 2011. However, these statistics represent real people. NETWORK took a closer look at the situations of the elderly and children.

300,000 more of our elderly community members are living in poverty than they were just one year ago. Over 3.4 million elderly rely on SNAP (food stamps), which some members of Congress want to cut drastically. Millions of seniors also rely on “Meals on Wheels” for their only hot meals. Due to sequestration, many of these meals are being denied to hundreds of thousands of seniors. How many of these are in the 300,000 who have moved into poverty in 2012? These same 300,000 elderly are facing proposed cuts to Social Security, by application of a new formula for payments (Chained-CPI), and are at risk of higher prescription out-of-pocket costs if the ACA loses funding.

The overall poverty rate for children (under age 18) remains statistically the same and continues to be higher than the poverty rate for the general population. The younger you are, the more likely you are to be poor. A shocking 56 percent of children under the age of six are being raised in families lacking finances to provide them with sufficient resources for strong growth and development.

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*NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace—educates, organizes and lobbies for economic and social transformation. Founded in 1971 by 47 Catholic sisters, NETWORK is supported by thousands of groups and individuals committed to working for social and economic justice. For more information, see [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org).*