

THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE
2008 NORMAN E. BORLAUG INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
Confronting Crisis: Agriculture and Global Development in the Next Fifty Years
October 15-17, 2008 - Des Moines, Iowa

THE ROLE OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE IN ELIMINATING HUNGER

October 16, 2008 – 11:30 – 12:00

Speaker: Josette Lewis – Director, Office of Agriculture, USAID

Ambassador Kenneth Quinn

President - World Food Prize Foundation

My task was to now introduce the administrator of AID, Henrietta Fore, and many of you know Henrietta will know that that is not she sitting here. I spoke to Henrietta this morning, and she got to the airport and became very ill and had to go back home. And I spoke with her and said that we all hope that she's feeling better.

I always, I try very hard to have the administrator of AID on our program almost every year, and the reason for that is that when I began my career as a diplomat – you can imagine a kid who grew up in Dubuque, Iowa, when I passed the Foreign Service exam and I was going off to Washington and I had visions of, I would be in London or Paris or Vienna, Stockholm if I had to, and I'd be sipping aperitifs in chandeliered ballrooms and doing whatever it was that diplomats did (I wasn't really quite sure) – and instead I was trained in Vietnamese and put on the single-engine plane and landed in the Mekong Delta in 1968 and sent out to win the hearts and minds of the people and advise the government on economic development. You know, a daunting task for a 26-year-old. And I was assigned to AID. So I began my life as an AID rural development officer.

And I spent six years in Vietnam, and I learned the lesson of my life that AID taught me; because I saw that on the one hand we were building rural roads and upgrading them into villages, and on the other the new miracle rice, IR8 rice, developed by the 1996 World Food Prize Laureate, Hank Beachell. And here was the first time that villagers were getting to use it. And everywhere the new road went, the new rice went, and people's lives were transformed. And when the road stopped – even though there was no sign saying “No IR8 rice beyond this point” – it didn't go, and life was unchanged as it was from a hundred years earlier.

And the other thing that happened was that wherever the road went and the IR8 rice went, the infrastructure and the guerilla infrastructure disappeared. The road and the rice did what the B52s and all the ground troops couldn't do.

And so in 1990 when I was deputy assistant secretary of state and Henrietta Fore was assistant [AID] administrator for Asia, we had \$11 million – not very much money – for Cambodia where there were 25,000 Khmer Rouge, the genocidal mass murderers who had killed 2 million people in four years out of a population of 7 million. And they controlled almost all the countryside. And we took that \$11 million, and I sat in a hotel coffee shop in Tokyo and sketched on the back of the little paper that was under our plate there what the plan would be, which was to go and rent all

the road-grading equipment we could get in Thailand and bring it in and start building rural roads and bring agricultural technology with it.

And there are other things that happened, but nine years later when I left Cambodia, on my last day as ambassador, the last Khmer Rouge surrendered, and they were no more. And roads and agricultural technology from AID had done what no one else could do and to the great benefit of those poor, poor people in that country who had suffered so much.

So I told Andrew Natsios when he was the administrator, I told Henrietta, and whomever will be the next administrator, that there's always a place at the World Food Prize for you. And so Henrietta was coming today. Her remarks are in hand, and Josette Lewis, Dr. Josette Lewis, the director of the Office of Agriculture of USAID, is here to step in for Henrietta.

She's a molecular biologist, previously USAID senior biotechnology advisor, and was named director of that office just two weeks ago. So a wonderful way to follow on to, Bob Thompson, your panel. And we're so grateful to you and Jerry Steiner, all the members of the IPC who are here.

But now join me as I welcome Dr. Josette Lewis.

Josette Lewis

Director of Office of Agriculture, USAID

Thank you, Ambassador Quinn, and let me reiterate the administrator's regrets that she is not able to join you today. She has made the issue of food security and the renewed wake-up call to invest in agriculture a very important priority for herself, and indeed for our president, in the last nine months as we better understand the implications of the global food crisis and the reminder that agriculture plays a fundamental role in poverty and hunger alleviation.

This is a remarkable group of people here today – ambassadors, ministers, government officials from around the world joining us with members of the business community, academics, researchers, foundations, nongovernmental organizations, and private voluntary organizations. With all the intellect and resources in this room, we must think boldly. We are all committed to making progress in agriculture and the implications that that has for poverty and hunger.

As we gather here on a beautiful fall afternoon, there is no more important question taken up at a more critical time than the one before us here today: how finally and decisively we can end hunger and its chronic and debilitating implications in our lifetime.

In 1914, the year Dr. Borlaug was born, the world population was 1.4 billion people. A few years later in a one-room schoolhouse in Iowa, he began a lifelong education that would teach him how to teach the world how to feed itself, an education that would eventually save upward of a billion lives.

His example inspires us all to do more, by reminding us of how one person armed with a simple dream, a clear vision, and unwavering dedication can really make a difference in the lives of millions. And in a world that must support nearly five times the population it did when Dr. Borlaug launched the Green Revolution, we must and can do more.

I'm proud to be here representing AID, because we are a foot soldier in that revolution. As we join each of you in honoring this year's World Food Prize Laureates, Senators Bob Dole and George McGovern, both have been important figures in Mr. Borlaug's revolution. They are living examples of how creative bipartisanship is so essential to progress in feeding the world's hungry. We got a good reminder of the human side of the political discourse last night.

Their efforts have made a critical difference in the lives of millions of children around the world by devoting more of the world's attention to the resources necessary to create opportunities for children, particularly girls. All of the data show that school-feeding programs and water wells at schools enable parents to educate their children – their daughters, who might otherwise be kept at home for work, or to care for elderly family members or siblings.

You all understand the multiplier effect that a good meal and what that means for literacy, health, the battle against HIV/AIDS, and the positive economic prospects that deferred maternity and prosperity result from.

USAID has carried the torch lit by Senators Dole and McGovern around the world. In Bolivia, every morning, through our programs, over 500,000 children enjoy produce grown locally by farmers who have abandoned coca production. In northern Senegal, a school principal named Thierno Diop tells us that he has seen immediate results as children are able to stay in school longer and earn more each day.

In Afghanistan, the Sultana Razia Girls' School was formerly closed, destroyed and abandoned during the Taliban regime. It is now educating 5,000 girls a year, one of the 1,000 such schools restored and reopened by AID.

And through our Food for Education program, AID feeds more than 7,000 children annually in collaboration with the 12 governments with which we work. We are also working with the African Union to pilot the Home Grown School Feeding and Health Program, sourcing from smallholder farmers through local purchasing and building private-sector capacity to deliver milk and juice products to local schools.

In addition, we have helped form the African Network for School Feeding Programs, which now feeds an estimated 20 million children each day.

As you all know, we are facing a more systematic challenge to food security worldwide, a challenge that will demand a far greater level of coherence and coordination from all of us than we have ever managed before. Although the prices for some basic foods upon which so many rely for survival have come down in recent months, food prices are still significantly higher than they were at this time last year. This hits developing countries the hardest, because meeting basic food needs can consume up to 70 percent of a family's income, forcing impossible choices between a visit to a clinic, sending a child to school, or having to eat.

We do not believe these are temporary price shocks. Although global agricultural productivity continues to rise, its growth has slowed. Over the past decade, annual productivity gains have decreased from 2-3 percent per year down to 1 percent. At the same time we are seeing larger demands from the global food system. Without market increases in productivity that exceed demand, the price levels we are seeing now are expected to remain high for the near future.

The United States is acting now, as we have in the past, on the principle that humanitarian assistance is essential to our role in the world community. We have a duty to encourage the economic development and self-sustaining growth of other nations, and that prosperity is a vital precursor to security and global stability.

Working closely with our international partners, we are acting on an immediate, integrated strategy to ensure rapid relief and broad-based, self-sustaining growth. President Bush acted decisively by calling for three-pronged response.

First, by providing immediate humanitarian aid to countries most vulnerable to rising food prices. Second, by helping countries boost stable food production by driving greater agricultural productivity and easing infrastructure constraints. And third, by encouraging broad markets for agricultural products, technology, and trade that will help countries around the world feed themselves.

To address the immediate need, I'm very pleased to say that the U.S. Congress has responded to the President's request by authorizing \$1.8 billion for emergency food and agricultural assistance for this year and next. This brings the total U.S. assistance to over \$5.5 billion through next year to fight the challenge of global hunger.

As the largest food donor in the world, the United States provided over 60 percent of global food aid last year. We take this commitment seriously.

We are equally determined to make humanitarian-assistance dollars more effective than ever, by reducing delivery time by using local and regional procurement and transportation wherever possible, improving the nutritional value of the commodities we ship, and refining our community-based nutritional monitoring and rehabilitation tools, by sharpening our forecasting abilities to better anticipate and target emergency needs, and most importantly by building country capacity to anticipate and respond to immediate food and health crises on their own.

As we address these urgent needs, we must also make important changes to ensure food security for the longer term. I was encouraged by what Administrator Fore saw last month at the U.N. General Assembly. President Bush joined with leaders from around the world, representing the public, the private sector, and the not-for-profits, to highlight successful agricultural partnerships that commit to and expand those partnerships across the food value chain, from the seed to the table.

CEOs from corporations such as John Deere, Land O' Lakes, and Monsanto made it clear that American businesses are ready to step up to increase their investments and to work with the public-sector commitments.

I sensed a clear and determined commitment to drive better communication and coordination between agribusinesses, universities, foundations, nongovernmental organizations, and donors from around the world. And that's the type of coordination and commitment that we'll need.

This is a multifaceted partnership that transcends just government programs, and it represents a model for the future. It is imperative, and I would like to focus more of our attention in this direction.

The first of the Millennium Development Goals, to halve the portion of people who suffer from hunger and extreme poverty by 2015, represents an absolute and unwavering commitment on the part of the Bush Administration, and I am confident that it will be no less important to the next administration.

USAID is laying the groundwork for significant progress against hunger. I'd like to share with you our vision for the next five years. I will start by announcing five objectives that we are pushing to systematically address hunger.

We will work closely with our partners in 25 to 30 developing countries most threatened by food insecurity to ensure that over the next five years we reduce the number of hungry people by half, lifting 300 million people out of poverty and hunger.

Second, that we double the productivity of key staples, such as rice and maize, in Africa.

Third, that we double the incomes of an estimated 60 million households.

Fourth, improve the nutritional status of 50 percent of the children under five years of age.

And fifth, that we reduce reliance on international food aid for chronic food insecurity by 75 percent.

Attaining these goals cannot be a matter of business-as-usual. The systematic nature of global food security in today's world calls for an entirely new and different approach. It is time for a second Green Revolution, a revolution that enlists a broader array of actors – public, private, not-for-profit, academic, foundations, and individuals – to respond in ways that we have not before.

And for government that means committing the resources necessary to double agricultural productivity. It's an audacious goal and entirely achievable. That is what is envisioned in the Casey-Lugar Food Security Act of 2008 now before Congress – legislation that will harness America's best minds and resources in science, technology, and education to help developing countries double their own productivity in the next generation of agriculture.

We must move quickly to ramp up domestic production in food-insecure countries, with a focus on smallholder producers; strengthen every link of the food value chain from agricultural research, credit, and financing, to new seeds and new practices that give higher yields with more drought and disease-resistant crops, to methods of cultivation and irrigation; to expand extension and veterinary services so small farmers will know how to use them, to biotechnology, water management, post-harvest techniques for smallholders, storage, processing, transportation, and delivery. We know it works because we've seen it work.

Consider for a moment Mr. Mbaye Ba, a Senegalese farmer. After drought and locusts cut his production of seed stock, he enrolled in an AID-sponsored program to learn about seed selection and storage. He went back to his fellow villagers and convinced them to start a seed bank. Today that seed bank now reliably supplies 60 households, protecting them from the seasonal threats that they experienced before.

Or consider Anes Chikadzuma, a central Malawian farmer. After her husband died, she could only grow enough food for four months every year. She became desperate. The loss of food security was not an abstraction for her family – until she joined a village savings-and-loan group where families make small contributions to a shared fund from which they extend credit far below rates that local moneylenders offer, and that fund grows every year. This year she told us, “I still have food reserves in the house. Everything I have learned is in my head, and I will never depend on handouts again.”

I’ve had the privilege of hearing similar stories, every one of them remarkable, from the Bolivian Andes to the Horn of Africa – stories of initiative, energy, and creativity, from people who only need the basics to ward off hunger and make their own way in the world. In that context, it seems only reasonable that governments, that government leaders, should strive to be equal in their commitment. If people like Mbaye and Anes can manage through droughts and locusts, surely policymakers can craft reasonable regulatory regimes and allow trade in food commodities.

We can create supportive environments for the self-sustaining enterprises of all sizes that are so crucial to broad-based economic growth and prosperity. For example, financing for rural small- and medium-sized enterprises is critical. We can also drive greater private-sector investment, innovation, and technology transfer through creative partnerships that help everyone involved. We can and we must.

The second Green Revolution will be different, because it will enlist not only the best researchers and academic minds and governments, but also a broad range of local and international private-sector players. We already know there is enormous potential.

Since 2001, AID has created nearly 700 global development alliances, enlisting the real comparative advantage of more than 1,700 unique public, private, and academic partners, and effectively leveraging more than \$9 billion. Our partners here are not taxpayers making donations, as important as that is – these are enterprises making investments. And I believe these partnerships represent the future of development assistance, because they lead to the kind of self-sustaining results that lift people out of poverty and hunger permanently.

Imagine the prospect of ending hunger in our lifetime by enlisting the creativity of everyone from a small farmer looking for a secure livelihood to the world’s leading scientists, to the most innovative NGOs and foundations, to the leading multinational CEOs and the shareholders they work for. What could be more crucial or more compelling than that? What could possibly matter more?

We have been thinking about the shape our immediate humanitarian response must take and considering an aggressive agenda to lift 300 million people out of hunger and poverty over the next five years. And we hope that you’ll agree that, while none of it will be easy, all of it is entirely within our reach.

In fact, while the prospect of hunger and deprivation are undeniably frightening, the promise of eliminating hunger in our lifetime, once you realize that it is possible, is undeniably inspiring.

We understand now, in ways that we never have before, how tightly interlinked world markets are, how dependent our well-being is, and how integral our actions and outcomes are with

our environment around us, as well as with each other. We have the tools and the technology, the capacity to eliminate hunger and deprivation entirely, provided that we have the will.

Dr. Borlaug's conviction over his lifetime showed us that a world that could only feed 1.4 billion people when he was born can feed 6.6 billion people today. The critics who underestimated Norman Borlaug found themselves on the wrong side of history. And anyone who underestimates the talent, imagination, and commitment of the people in this room will wind up on the wrong side of history in five decades from now.

Is it possible to end hunger? Can the sum of our efforts in our universities, laboratories, board rooms, villages, and fields bring us to the day that we will never have to ask that question again? Dr. Borlaug showed us that one person can make a world of a difference. All we have to do is strengthen our conviction and make that difference.

Of this I am absolutely certain: There is no work on earth that is more worth doing.

Thank you very much.

Margaret Catley-Carlson

Chair, World Economic Forum Advisory Council on Water

Thank you. Thank you very much, Dr. Lewis, for first of all, stepping in at a very last-moment – and I hope you will please pass on the best wishes of this entire room to the Administrator. We're very sorry she wasn't with us this morning, but very glad to have had you.

Thank you for a message that reached out to the broadest themes of science, technology, policy, wrapped these in an envelope that took into account realities of government policy, but also reached down to show how these could come to life in the personification of people that are actually struggling in these areas.

We were very glad to hear you express your confidence that, no matter what the results of the next few weeks, that there would continue to be a strong conviction within this country on the Millennium Development Goals and the need to meet them and to find new and innovative ways to do that. Every one of us draws hope from that confidence.

And we would also wish you, perhaps, an easier administrative environment with which to carry that out. Those who have watched USAID know that their struggles are also considerable, and that has a huge impact on the way that they can bring the good things that you've talked about to fruition. So there's much at stake in the next while.

Thanks so much for being with us. Thank you for ending this morning on a note of real hope. We've looked into many abysses this morning, and I think it's responsible and right that we do so. But it is very comforting that you end this on a note of hope, expressing the fact that the knowledge and wisdom of those in this room and of the great circle of colleagues of these people around the world are equal to getting out of those abysses and into the land of hope.

Thank you very much. Session is adjourned.