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Transforming Ideas into Action

IFPRI Plans Africa Conference

Africa is the only region in the world where the number of malnourished people is rising, and its food crisis has reached alarming proportions. Each night roughly 200 million Africans go to bed hungry—and 38 million of them face the threat of starvation. Yet recent developments suggest that Africans have their best chance in years to end hunger. A new commitment to change has emerged at some of the highest political levels within Africa and in the international community, a situation that provides unique opportunities for decisive action.

"While Africa's return to the international agenda is promising, we Africans are the ones who must act to meet our food and nutrition needs in a sustainable way," Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said recently in reference to the possibility for change.

To help seize the opportunity, IFPRI is organizing an international conference hosted by the Ugandan government in Kampala, April 1–3, 2004. A wide range of stakeholders will deliberate on how to effect changes that will yield food and

(continued on page 7)



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Food Security When the Fighting Stops

Peace has broken out in a number of countries recently, raising hopes for establishing food security. But restoring the foundations of food security after conflict can be complicated and dangerous.

The guns are mostly silent now in several of the world's most brutal conflicts. A ceasefire is holding in Angola, rebels are engaged in peace talks with the government in Sudan, and Eritrea and Ethiopia are abiding by a peace agreement. The fighting has largely ended in Afghanistan and Iraq. And hope exists for the

Democratic Republic of the Congo that the international forces moving in may facilitate rebuilding soon, at least in parts of that huge country. These conflicts killed millions of people and left millions more wounded, sick, and hungry. Now that these wars are over, humanitarian

(continued on page 8)

Inside IFPRI FORUM

High-Level Food Safety Meeting	2
A Safe Space to Discuss GM.....	2
Policy Process Puzzles	3
Giving Water Rights Their Due.....	3
Interview with James Morris	4
Biofortification	6
First Lady of Mali Visits IFPRI	7
Out of the Economic Doldrums	7
The G8 and Rural Poor People	9
Quick Poll	12

High-Level Food Safety Meeting

Biotechnology and international trade are at the forefront of global debate, as the United States and the European Union continue to hold dramatically different positions over this contentious issue. Though much discussion centers on conflicting US and EU policies, hunger is the bottom line for millions of poor people in developing countries.

"We are concerned," said IFPRI director general Joachim von Braun recently, "that transatlantic conflict over food safety has adverse effects on developing countries and the poor, and that food safety issues are diverting attention from the hunger problem." Given the increased attention to this situation, IFPRI and the Johns Hopkins University School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS) Center for Transatlantic Relations sponsored a meeting of high-level policymakers from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the

United States. The consultation, "Food Safety, Food Security, and Trade—How to End the Conflicts," was held at IFPRI on June 21. Fifty people attended.

Featured speakers included Luis P. Lorenzo, Jr., secretary of agriculture in the Philippines; Rodney J. Brown, deputy undersecretary in the US Department of Agriculture; Walter Ruiz, vice minister of Agriculture and Livestock in Costa Rica; Lester M. Crawford, deputy commissioner at the United States Food and Drug Administration; and Wilberforce Kisamba-Mugerwa, minister of agriculture in Uganda. Renate Kuenast, Germany's federal minister for consumer protection and agriculture, joined the discussion via video-link.

Participants discussed how differing perceptions of food safety keep developing countries from achieving food security and benefiting from free trade. They cited the importance of building capacity in developing countries and agreed that a long-term view of the problem was necessary. To promote continued and effective dialogue, they suggested a "science summit" of representatives from all relevant sectors. ■

A Safe Space to Discuss GM

If you were starving, would you reject a donation of food? That's what governments in southern Africa did when offered thousands of tons of food aid to save their starving populations. Why? Because the food included genetically modified (GM) grain.

Genetic modification has sparked seemingly insoluble disagreements. Even experts can't seem to agree on whether GM crops represent progress or poison. Where the molecular geneticist excitedly promises huge productivity gains, the social historian cautions darkly about unanticipated risks. Where the modernist equates scientific and technological advances with progress, the postmodernist fears unleashing powerful destructive forces. And where the global North talks nobly of its obligation to help, the South remains ever wary that emergency food aid opens the door to a new form of exploitation by the United States and Europe.

To help bridge these radically divergent perspectives, IFPRI, in partnership with the Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), is facilitating dialogue on biotechnology, agriculture, and food security among policymakers and opinion shapers in southern Africa. The first of several planned dialogues—all aimed at being highly participatory and inclusive—took place April 25 and 26 in Johannesburg. John Mugabe, executive director of the New Partnership for African Development's (NEPAD's) Science and Technology Forum, ably moderated the meeting.

"Biotechnology remains a driving force for economic and social development," IFPRI director general Joachim von Braun said in his opening remarks. "The questions are: For whom? For what? What regulations should be put in place? How can biotechnology work for the poor? And what technological policy options are environmentally sustainable, efficient, and effective?" Julius Mugwagwa of the Biotechnology Trust of Zimbabwe noted the challenge of raising public awareness and eliminating biases. "How can we get information to the lay public about the pros and cons of biotechnology without being driven by our emotions and by whomever is providing our funding?" To confront these challenges, the second dialogue is planned for later this year; the third is expected to take place toward the middle of next year. ■

From left to right:
Wilberforce Kisamba-Mugerwa (Uganda),
Joachim von Braun (IFPRI),
Esther Brimmer (SAIS), and
Walter Ruiz (Costa Rica).



Policy Process Puzzles

What's a well-intentioned organization like IFPRI to do when its rigorously researched, science-based policy recommendations are ignored by the very governments they are intended to help? How can IFPRI have a greater impact on government decisionmaking? IFPRI researchers have long speculated about the vagaries of the policymaking process. Now some good folks at IFPRI have turned from speculation to analysis of the process itself.

"Anti-hunger programs sometimes fail more because of the politics that befall policymaking and implementation than because of technical or managerial constraints," says Lawrence Haddad, director of IFPRI's Food Consumption and Nutrition Division. "We need to

gain a better understanding of how policy gets made. This will involve explicitly locating and analyzing the policy cycle within social processes."

To that end, IFPRI has started doing research on the policy process, with input from nutrition and political science researchers at leading universities. The project will analyze how the values, motivations, and capacities of different actors affect (a) the way in which policy options get onto a government's decisionmaking agenda, (b) the shape of ultimate policy choices, (c) the way in which adopted policies are implemented in practice, and (d) the accountability mechanisms put in place to ensure intended impact.

Researchers hope the work will shed

light on such puzzles as why some successful nutrition programs, like Mexico's PROGRESA, expand in spite of political shifts, while other beneficial initiatives are forgotten, and why some places, like Kerala, India, have a higher commitment to investments in human capital while some much wealthier places seem unconcerned with human development.

"Clearly, the framing of problems and the alternatives considered have a lot to do with the values, interests, and identities of the policyshapers at the table," says Haddad. "If we want to influence anti-hunger efforts, we first need to know more about the 'policy space' we're working in, and how our perspective is shaped by our own values as investigators." ■

Giving Water Rights Their Due

"Water, water, everywhere/Nor any drop to drink," the British poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote nearly 200 years ago. These words were never truer than they are today. Around the world, 1.1 billion people lack access to sufficient, safe drinking water and 2.4 billion have inadequate sanitation. Population growth, agricultural intensification, industrialization, and urbanization have all contributed to sharply rising water use. As water becomes scarcer, poor communities often lose out in the increased competition for its use.

To focus attention on these issues the United Nations has declared 2003 the International Year of Freshwater. "There is a general recognition by high-level officials, led by the UN, that now is the time to act," says IFPRI senior research fellow Mark Rosegrant, who with Ximing Cai and Sarah Cline wrote *World Water and Food to 2025: Dealing with*

Scarcity, a seminal book on the future of water and food.

But what needs to be done first? Establishing rights to water is the foundation for improved equity and widened access to the resource. To explore options for fair and effective water-rights policies, IFPRI invited key decisionmakers, managers, and researchers from 15 countries to a conference on "Water Rights: Institutional Options for Improved Water Allocation." Conference cosponsors were InWEnt (Capacity Building International, Germany), the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank's Netherlands Water Partnership Program, and the CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food.

Held in February in Hanoi, the four-day event enabled stakeholders to meet in small discussion groups to share experiences from their own countries. Topics addressed included water-rights laws,

transferable rights and water markets, and the technical requirements of water-rights systems. One important theme emerged: Policymakers must respect local traditions and customs that might not be reflected in law. In Muslim nations, for example, new techniques won't catch on if they violate Islamic laws governing water use.

Participants gained a sharpened understanding of how to define and implement water-rights systems while promoting equitable water distribution. South Africa's example, among many others, of allocating water rights to provide first for basic human needs and environmental flows will continue to inspire participants as they follow up at home, where their real work takes place. ■

“In the immediate post-crisis period, WFP tries to integrate mitigation and developmental approaches, while also maintaining safety nets and an emergency response capacity to address any setbacks in the recovery process.”



James Morris, Executive Director, World Food Programme

James Morris talks to IFPRI Forum about the United Nations World Food Programme’s role in current and future food crises.

FORUM: There is growing concern that Iraq’s relief needs are diverting attention and resources away from unfolding crises in Sub-Saharan Africa. Does WFP share this concern, and, if so, how will it respond?

Morris: With Iraq’s entire population of 27 million having been dependent on the Oil for Food Programme, the food needs are certainly challenging. While these requirements are massive—480,000 metric tons a month—WFP is encouraged by the support we are increasingly getting from donors.

One of our main concerns, however, is that people in need of assistance in other areas of the world, notably Africa, do not suffer from a redirection of foreign aid to Iraq. WFP is encouraged that some donors plan to pass supplemental funding bills to provide sufficient support to Iraq or are using different accounts to avoid diminishing support to other regions. Unfortunately, a few other donors appear to be drawing on their regular sources of funding for humanitarian assistance, which could have negative effects on WFP’s capacity to respond to crises worldwide.

FORUM: After a conflict or natural disaster, does WFP rebuild food security to mitigate the effect of future crises, or does it leave that to others?

Morris: WFP’s experience demonstrates the important role that food aid plays before, during, and after crises caused by natural disasters, conflict, economic shocks, or disease. In the immediate postcrisis period, WFP tries to integrate mitigation and developmental approaches, while also maintaining safety nets and an emergency response capacity to address any setbacks in the recovery process. WFP targets food aid to returnees or resettled populations, and this aid helps them restore their livelihoods or learn new skills and regain food security. In addition, WFP uses food-for-work to rehabilitate infrastructure damaged by war or natural disasters. WFP has also found that the aftermath of crises—when the experience is still fresh—provides a productive time to work with governments to develop early warning, disaster preparedness, and mitigation policies and plans, contributing to their future ability to manage crises and mitigate their impact.

FORUM: What is WFP’s comparative advantage in development, and what role do partnerships with development organizations such as the World Bank, CARE International, and the United Nations Development Programme play in WFP activities?

Morris: Food assistance is particularly valuable when hunger is identified as the main constraint on the capacity of communities and families to take advantage of development opportunities. Food aid is well suited to programs that target the poorest of the poor, who spend a disproportionately high portion of their income on food needs. Food is also more likely than other forms of direct assistance to be controlled by women within the household and then to be used to feed hungry children. Child malnutrition remains a fundamental impediment to long-term development.

WFP development work is based on these comparative advantages of food aid. Partnership is, however, central to our programming strategy, so that we can combine food with nonfood inputs to achieve the maximum impact on reducing hunger and poverty. WFP sees its principal partner as the national governments in the countries where we operate and has considerable experience in

programs where the government is our main implementing partner, such as in many school feeding activities. We also work closely with our UN [United Nations] and NGO [nongovernmental organization] partners, relying on their expertise and commitment in many complementary nonfood activities such as education, health, water, sanitation, local capacity-building, and community empowerment. WFP is actively engaged in strengthening its partnership with the World Bank in the areas of education, nutrition, rural development, and social protection/safety nets.

FORUM: How does WFP measure the impact of its activities—in terms of the amount of food distributed or in terms of improvement in health and well-being? How does WFP address the skepticism about food aid in some quarters?

Morris: WFP measures its impact in terms of the number of people it helps, which totaled 72 million in 2002. We are increasingly trying to measure more effectively WFP's impact on the health and well-being of our beneficiaries, especially through nutritional monitoring of beneficiaries. For example, in North Korea, a joint government/UNICEF/WFP nutritional assessment indicated significant reductions in child malnutrition (both wasting and stunting) between 1998 and 2002, a period in which WFP food aid played the key role in addressing food needs. Our school-feeding program has developed tools for measuring baseline conditions and program impact that demonstrate that school feeding increases school enrollment, particularly of girls, and increases attendance and improves the capacity of pupils to concentrate and learn.

WFP recognizes the skepticism in some quarters of the value of food aid, particularly in nonemergency situations. We are working with research institutions, including IFPRI, to better document the ways in which food aid can make a real difference in the lives of the hungry poor. If people take the time to look at the facts on the impact of food in effectively targeted and well-designed programs—such as school feeding, mother-child health and feeding programs, food for training for women—they will recognize that food aid has an important role to play in helping us achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

FORUM: How did the controversy over genetically modified (GM) food affect WFP operations last year in southern Africa? In your opinion, how will the GM issue affect food aid in the future?

Morris: There was definitely a cost for hungry beneficiaries in southern Africa associated with the GM controversy. Five of the six affected countries eventually accepted GM commodities, both bulk and processed. Only Zambia held to an outright ban. But we had to pay \$35–\$80 a ton for milling the maize, and this cut the number of beneficiaries we could feed and caused delays.

Fortunately, corn-soy blend, which is often GM and a crucial commodity for supplementary feeding, has not been a source of too much controversy since it is a processed food product. We simply could not do supplementary and therapeutic feeding economically without using soy, and the bulk of soybeans in international trade today are GM. My feeling is that the

controversy will not go away until we get some clear agreement in the Codex Alimentarius and a ruling from the WTO [World Trade Organization]. WFP is completely satisfied that the GM foods it has distributed are totally safe, and a recent report by the Royal Academy in the United Kingdom, plus numerous other scientific studies, support us in that view.

FORUM: How has AIDS affected how and who WFP targets for relief? What does the pandemic mean for the number and magnitude of relief efforts, the type and duration of responses, and the competition for scarce food resources?

Morris: HIV/AIDS is both a cause and a consequence of food insecurity and shortages: households that have lost breadwinners and caregivers to AIDS are poorer and more vulnerable to food insecurity and starvation. At the same time, those who are hungry are more vulnerable to HIV infection and to the rapid progression of the virus into full-blown AIDS. Reaching those affected by the disease is complex because of the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS and because many people simply do not know, or choose not to know, their status. WFP is working with other UN agencies and implementing partners—including research groups such as IFPRI—to understand the dynamics of HIV/AIDS, food security, and nutrition.

In this light, WFP has adapted the way it normally responds to emergency or recovery interventions in the context of the southern Africa crisis. While our agency does not target food assistance based on HIV status, special measures are being taken in high-prevalence and food-insecure areas. WFP is doing its best to ensure that food baskets not only are nutritionally balanced, but also provide sufficient protein, fat, and micronutrients. In the current southern Africa operation, maize is being fortified with vitamins and minerals as part of local milling activities. As with any of its relief interventions, WFP places special emphasis on reaching women and children, particularly orphans. While food assistance has helped to save lives and avert famine in the short run, vulnerability remains in the southern Africa region and the crisis is far from over. A long-term view toward HIV/AIDS must be adopted, and governments must work, together with aid agencies, on this issue.

FORUM: Given food aid's effects on developing- and developed-country trade and markets, how are WFP's relief operations being affected by World Trade Organization negotiations?

Morris: WFP has been closely involved in the WTO discussions on food aid during this round of trade negotiations. We are very concerned that any disciplines adopted for food aid consider the effect it could have on the availability of targeted food assistance. To ensure that the level of food available for populations who have been identified as vulnerable is not inadvertently decreased in the negotiations, WFP is assisting WTO members in understanding the different food aid modalities, how targeted food aid differs from program food aid, and why targeted food aid to those who are in need is non-

"My aim is that the world can honestly say in 10 years that major progress has been made in reducing child hunger and that WFP has played some small part in that achievement."

trade-distorting. As the negotiations are not concluded, they have had no direct impact on our operations so far.

FORUM: As you look ahead to the next 5 to 10 years, what do you see emerging on the horizon that will influence WFP's operations and capacity? What are the hot spots WFP is keeping an eye on?

Morris: The rising trend in natural disasters, particularly drought and other weather-related emergencies, is likely to have a significant impact on food security and WFP's work over the next decade. Not only will WFP need to be prepared to continue to expand our emergency feeding programs to meet the new requirements, but the international community must also do a better job of taking action before emergencies to preserve livelihoods and reduce the vulnerability of populations to future shocks.

We are also concerned about the continued persistence of high levels of hunger in Sub-Saharan Africa. Promising gains have been recorded in reducing hunger in East Asia over the last decade, and there are some hopeful signs of progress in reducing hunger in South Asia over the next decade. If, however, we cannot reverse the negative trends in hunger in Africa, we cannot achieve the Millennium Development and World Food Summit goals of halving the number of hungry people by 2015.

Let me conclude by saying that, for me, the hunger "hot spot" of greatest concern is the 300 million hungry children in the world. To me, this is unacceptable in a world that has enough food for all of them. My aim is that the world can honestly say in 10 years that major progress has been made in reducing child hunger and that WFP has played some small part in that achievement. ■

Biofortification

More than two-thirds of people in the developing world suffer from "hidden hunger," or inadequate levels of micronutrients in their diets. Insufficient iron, zinc, iodine, and vitamin A render people weak and vulnerable to disease and infection. Nutrient-deficient babies are not developing to their physical or cognitive potential. Children suffering from "hidden hunger" are often sick, and for millions of malnourished mothers birth is needlessly hazardous and childcare exhausting.

Nutritionists have been working to stem the tide of micronutrient malnutrition using supplements, fortificants, nutrition education programs, and community-based public health efforts. Agriculture may now be in a position to help. Using the latest advances in agricultural research, micronutrients can be bred into the staple foods that malnourished populations eat every day.

IFPRI and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) have joined forces to implement this approach to improving nutrition. They are coordinating the CGIAR's Biofortification Challenge Program, an alliance of institutions working together to breed micronutrient-dense rice, maize, wheat, beans, cassava, and sweet potatoes with iron, zinc, and vitamin A. It is no small task.

"Breeding staple foods to reduce malnutrition is not a challenge any single discipline or institution can address on its own," says Howarth Bouis, program director. "Shifting the paradigm from more food to better food requires partnerships and an uncommon commitment to respecting the perspectives and contributions of partners with different skills and responsibilities."

To help forge this collaborative critical mass, 75 challenge program partners and stakeholders gathered in early June at CIAT's headquarters in Cali, Colombia. For five days, they worked to deepen the program's management framework, refine methodologies and strategies, and reach a common understanding on program agreements, principles, and expectations. In September and October, experts will reconvene as individual crop teams to work out detailed work plans for 2004 and beyond—plans that will add nutrient-dense food to the tools of public health. ■

Transforming Ideas (continued from page 1)

nutrition security in Africa. Participants will assess the forces influencing the continent's prospects, evaluate experiences from all of Africa, prioritize and explore ways to implement solutions, and identify ways to strengthen key actors and facilitate strategic partnerships.

This conference will be: all-Africa, multidisciplinary, multisectoral, and multi-actor. It is being designed in close consultation with key partners and actors in Africa. An Advisory Committee of distinguished Africans and representatives of partner institutions has been assembled under the chairmanship of J.J. Otim, special adviser to President Museveni of Uganda and president of the Uganda Agricultural Council. "We believe this conference will be useful to Africa's highest political leadership and, through them, to organizations and individuals at the grassroots level," says Otim.

The conference is meant to help bring about this collaborative success. "To achieve food security in Africa," says IFPRI director general Joachim von Braun, "it takes a broad-based alliance of investors, civil society, and policymakers, guided by best research. Food security by 2020? It should and must be made possible."

For more information on the conference, go to www.ifpri.org/2020africaconference or contact Ms. Rajul Pandya-Lorch, head, 2020 Vision Initiative, IFPRI, at r.pandya-lorch@cgiar.org. ■

First Lady of Mali Visits IFPRI



On June 24, IFPRI and the Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa cohosted a round-table discussion with the first lady of Mali, Madame Toure Lobo Traore. The discussion focused on the well-being of women and children in Mali and West Africa. Madame Toure is the chairperson of the Childhood Foundation, a Malian nongovernmental organization founded by President Toure. The foundation works to improve childhood health

and nutrition and prevent or mitigate conflict as part of the effort to better children's lives. Representatives from the Academy for Educational Development, the Centre for Development and Population Activities, the International Center for Research on Women, Michigan State University, Save the Children, and USAID shared information about the research and programs they conduct to fight hunger, illiteracy, and sickness, issues which the first lady described as close to her heart. The roundtable discussion took place at IFPRI. ■

Out of the Economic Doldrums

These days nearly everyone agrees that something must be done to fill the sails of the African economy. There is accord, as well, that in a region where the majority of the population engages in farming, the winds of change will come from rapid agricultural growth linked to increased market opportunities.

Where to start? Should African nations ratchet up production of their traditional exports, such as coffee, tea, cocoa, and cotton? Or would it be better for the region to concentrate on expanding production of niche exports: cut flowers, fish, fruits, and vegetables? Then again, perhaps intraregional trade in staple foods holds the key.

Opportunities reside in each of these sectors, as IFPRI researchers have learned through sophisticated modeling techniques. An ebbing market for traditional exports could be partially recovered by focusing on product differentiation, quality, and standards. Commerce in niche products is even more elastic. And since Africa currently imports 25 percent of its grains, domestic and regional trade hold significant potential for growth. Here linkages loom large. When productivity of grain and livestock is stepped up in tandem, a more promising growth scenario emerges than if productivity is increased in each sector at a different time. These

effects are further magnified by productivity increases in transportation and other services. One such scenario shows a 3 percent rise in per capita agricultural production and 2 percent rise in annual per capita food consumption.

"Still more momentum is required, though, to propel the African economy out of its doldrums. Reducing transaction costs and trade barriers and improving market efficiency are critical for Sub-Saharan agricultural growth," says IFPRI's Xinshen Diao, coauthor of a recent report on African market opportunities and constraints. The report's recommendations for improvement? African governments need to strengthen institutions responsible for agricultural product standards and quality control, and to reform policies that limit trade opportunities. Also required: better roads, adequate storage and refrigeration facilities, and improved financial support to farmers. External factors are important too: global trade liberalization would benefit Africa by at least US\$5 billion each year. These and a series of other market improvements could set African economies on a forward course toward clear sailing. ■

agencies have moved in to help rebuild devastated economies and restore food security to hungry and malnourished people.

These agencies confront a task of mammoth proportions, for conflict is one of the main causes of hunger worldwide. Food security, according to experts, stands on three legs: it depends not only on the availability of food in the marketplace, but also people's ability to access this food and their body's ability to absorb the food through good health. Conflict attacks food security at all three points.

According to Ellen Messer, a visiting professor at Brandeis University and Tufts University, and Marc Cohen, an IFPRI researcher, who have studied the links between conflict and hunger, war can ruin the land and infrastructure necessary for growing food, as well as killing, wounding, or driving away many of the people required to grow it. It shatters markets, strips victims of their livelihoods, and breaks up communities in ways that prevent people from gaining access to food. And it destroys health facilities and clean water, threatening people's health. Moreover, combatants and political leaders who contribute to violence often use hunger as a weapon: they feed only their supporters. Conflicts contributed to famines in the 1980s and 1990s in Africa and to chronic malnutrition in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. One study by Messer and Cohen estimated that conflict rendered more than 23 million people in need of food aid and humanitarian assistance in the year 2000.

In principle, the goal of national governments and international actors should be prevention of conflict, says Joachim von Braun, director general of IFPRI, but the reality is that the end of the Cold War has given rise to a wave of ethno-nationalist conflicts that are not yet over. The economies emerging from these conflicts require assistance with rapid rebuilding in the wake of crisis, an issue that IFPRI has identified as an important theme of its future research and capacity-building efforts.

"A large share of hunger and malnutrition today results from governments' lack of capacity to accomplish this task of preventing conflicts and rebuilding economies after conflict, especially in rural areas," says von Braun. "It is a matter of tough priority setting, with typically very limited resources, little information, and extreme time pressure. The poor, who are most vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition, have even less voice under these circumstances."



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Jordan Dey, a WFP spokesman, "Our biggest obstacle is an insecure environment. We have opened five corridors for supplies into Iraq, for example, but if warehouses are getting looted at night, it complicates getting food to the people who need it most."

Moving Ahead within a Fragile Peace

The requirements of people emerging from conflict can be staggering. They need access to food, clean water, and health care. They need supplies for farming, such as seeds and tools. They need transportation and communications infrastructure to support their economies, as well as banking services, an acceptable currency, and law and order. All this must be supplied in a setting that, while perhaps not actually in a state of war, is often far from secure.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) feeds millions of people in post-conflict situations each year. According to

(continued on page 10)

The G8 and Rural Poor People: Time for Better Global Governance

Joachim von Braun

In 1975, leaders from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, faced with skyrocketing oil prices, inflation, and stagnant economies, created the “Group of 7” (G7) as a forum to discuss international political and economic issues. The group has met annually every year since then and, with the addition of Russia in 1998, has become the G8.

The member countries of the G8 club are home to a mere 9 percent of the world’s population. Nevertheless, they own about two-thirds of the world’s wealth and wield strong influence over the fate of the rest of humanity. In theory, accelerating globalization should have rendered the G8 obsolete, as technology, trade, and communications have connected more markets, made borders more porous, and brought the world’s people closer together. In fact, the G8 nations retain a preponderance of economic, political, and military power.

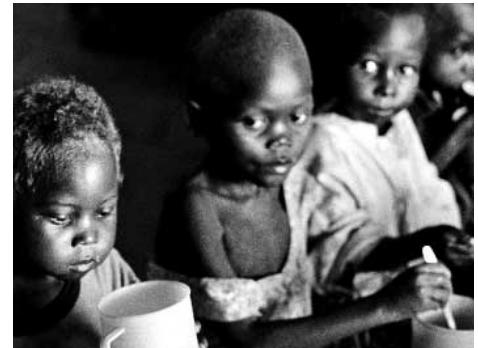
The media portray G8 summits as discussions of global matters. And indeed the concerns of the developing countries, which are home to 84 percent of the world’s population, have increasingly found their way onto the G8 agenda. Those concerns include poverty, hunger, disease, and declining investment in agriculture, which provides livelihoods to the world’s 900 million rural poor people.

In recent years, the G8 has moved slowly to put poverty on its agenda. Notable instances include a focus on strategies for debt reduction at the 1999 session in Germany, concerns raised at the 2000 summit in Japan about the growing communications technology gap between developed and developing

countries (with an innovative G8 task force that includes 9 developing countries to facilitate follow-up), and discussions on Africa at the 2002 meetings in Canada. The most recent meeting, held in France in early June 2003, included participation from leaders of more than a dozen developing countries. This is welcome progress, certainly.

But casting developing-country leaders in “walk-on” roles on the G8 stage is hardly equivalent to a dialog among equals. And the views of the 1.2 billion people who barely subsist on the equivalent of less than a U.S. dollar a day are seldom heard at the summits. Not surprisingly, little long-term action to reduce poverty sustainably has come out of the summits.

The G8 needs to do more than just invite a few heads of state from developing countries to listen and speak at the meetings. Global news coverage following the most recent set of meetings ranged from laments over wasted opportunities to musings on how much was spent to produce so little. Such negative images do little to advance the interests of the G8 countries, let alone the world’s poor people. The gap between rich countries and developing countries—and their rural areas in particular—grows ever greater, posing a threat to global peace and stability. If the G8 really wants to contribute to lasting solutions to global problems, it must take seven key steps toward eradicating rural poverty in developing-countries: support efforts to improve human capabilities by making health care, education, clean water, and sanitation available for all; invest in agricultural and rural development that is broad-based; ensure that



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poor people have access to well-functioning and well-integrated markets; harness scientific and technological developments to address the problems of poor farmers and consumers; focus on sustainable management of the natural resource base upon which agriculture depends; make sure that global agricultural trade negotiations produce fair rules for poor people; and promote good governance, including appropriate decentralization, competent and accountable public administration, and respect for human rights.

Above all, poor people must have a say over the policies that affect them. Policymakers in rich and poor countries alike must treat poor people as active participants in achieving sustainable development, not passive victims in need of pity and handouts.

The G8 must place public goods issues such as these high on its agenda. Moreover, elected leaders from developing countries who answer to their citizens need permanent, visible seats at the table. The G8 countries must come to the meetings dedicated to planning and executing real steps towards resolving problems of poverty and unsustainable development. This requires accountability and mechanisms for follow-up. It is time for better global governance by the G8. ■

Land mines impede the rebuilding process and prevent humanitarian operations in dozens of countries, many of which are now technically at peace. These mines can prevent refugees from returning to their homes, block access to markets and health clinics, and damage the environment. According to a 2002 report from Landmine Action, a London-based nongovernmental organization (NGO), dozens of countries are affected by land mines. In Afghanistan, for example, 737 million square meters of land still need to be cleared of land mines, including 162 million square meters of high-priority agricultural land. Bosnia and Herzegovina have 18,228 recorded minefields remaining. Mozambique has 1,374 suspected mined areas. Although the ceasefire in Angola has given WFP access to areas it was not able to reach during the decades of civil war, land mines still limit access to many areas and kill and maim hundreds of innocent people each year.

Douglas Steinberg, country director in Angola for CARE, reports that the widespread availability of small arms also contributes to insecurity. "Although the demobilization process sought to disarm ex-UNITA soldiers, there are still a lot of arms held by these and other people. While most people believe that the war is definitely over, it is easy to imagine that some will pick up arms to pursue careers as bandits or gangsters in both rural and urban areas."

Conflict also leaves a legacy of other problems that complicate reconstruction and development. The functioning of WFP operations in postwar environments depends on the answers to a host of questions, says Dey: "Can you drive on the roads? Do the silos work? Can you fly in commercially? Are there port facilities? Is there fuel? Is there simple living and office space?"

The Plight of Refugees

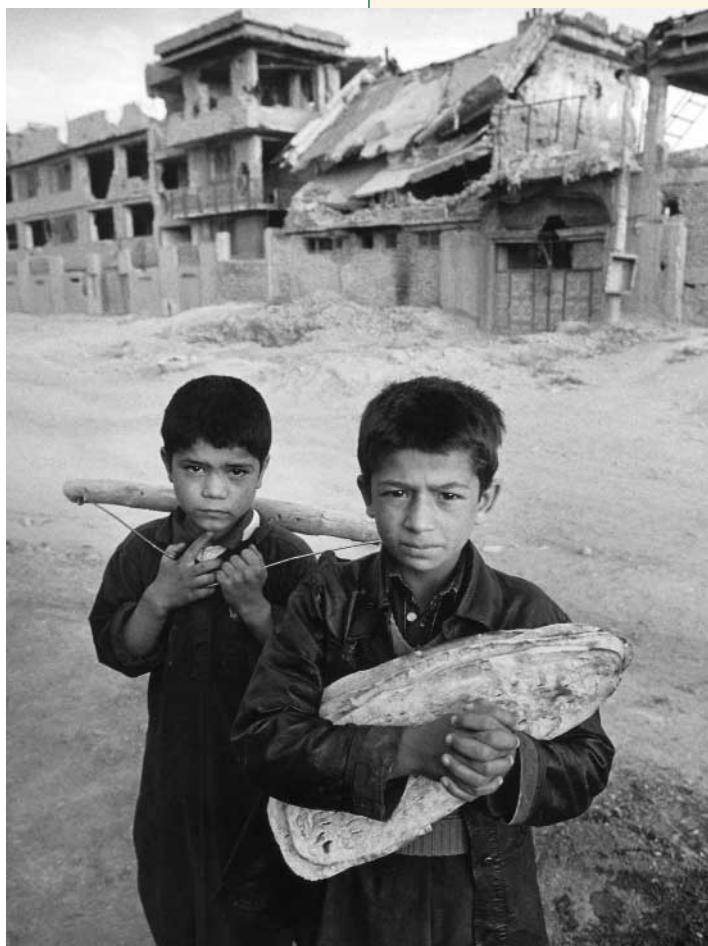
Conflict often pushes hundreds of thousands of noncombatants out of their homes and on to the road in search of safety. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is currently providing protection and assistance, including food, water, and shelter to nearly 20 million refugees—defined specifically as those people who cross international borders because of fear of persecution, often stemming from conflict. (The UNHCR also assists several million internally displaced people who have not crossed international borders, but these people are not automatically protected under international law, as refugees are, even though they may face similar problems.)

While they live in refugee camps, refugees receive food provided by WFP and delivered by the UNHCR. The rations provided are very basic, often consisting of little more than maize, beans, cooking oil, and water. More vulnerable groups like children and pregnant women may receive supplemental rations. But the diet is hardly optimal, and disorders related to vitamin and mineral deficiencies, like scurvy and rickets, are rampant.

When peace is restored, the UNHCR helps to repatriate the refugees, but Tina Ghelli, a UNHCR spokeswoman, points out that there is a gap in the services offered by relief and development agencies. "We can't just take the refugees to the border of their home country and say, 'Good luck.' So each family receives a two- to three-

month food ration to tide them over until they can replant," she says. But to get back on their feet, returning refugees may need food assistance through one or two harvests, and two or three months' worth of food is not likely to last that long.

The international community needs to do more to help refugees as they return home, says Hussein Halane, senior food aid adviser at Save the Children. "If a conflict is over quickly, then repatriation is



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easier," he says. "But if refugees stay in camps for a very long time, they lose their attachment to their home country, and they often lose whatever assets they had." Refugees from Afghanistan, Angola, Eritrea, and many other countries have lived in camps for years, and even decades. Repatriation or resettlement efforts tend to focus on putting people back into farming situations, but people who have lived in camps over a generation or two may have neither the capacity nor the desire to go into farming.

Getting Agriculture Underway

Because agriculture is key to the economies of so many developing countries, rebuilding agriculture is a vital first task when conflict ends.

Before agriculture can get started, however, farmers need to be confident that the conflict is over. Growing crops takes time, so farmers are unlikely to plant unless they expect peace to last and conditions to improve. "If farmers are confident of the future," says Phil Steffen of the Famine Early Warning System Networks, "they can start planning. They know they can grow a crop and still be around to harvest it. If farmers fear that fighting will resume, they won't feel safe to plant crops, or they'll only farm a smaller area close to their homes." A similar situation holds for herders. "The fear of renewed conflict and livestock raiding might prevent them from following normal seasonal migration patterns, depriving their animals of access to the best water and grazing resources. In both cases, productivity suffers."

Land mines place many fields and roads off limits. "Any agricultural rehabilitation program must be accompanied by mine awareness activities," says Steinberg. "It is quite possible to work with a community to identify and survey minefields and at least mark them to avoid accidents. This information can be passed on to government and other agencies for future de-mining operations." Unfortunately, he says, aid donors are less inclined to fund mine awareness work than other kinds of relief or development activities.

Once they reach their fields, farmers require seed, farming tools, fertilizer, and other inputs, but the markets and other systems of exchange that may have supplied these inputs in the past are often shattered. Rehabilitating these systems for farmers is key, says Patricia Bonnard, agriculture and food security adviser at the Academy for Educational Development, but this effort must take into account alternative mechanisms that farmers may have created for dealing with conflict and its aftermath.

"You need to be very sensitive to what's on the ground because you want to build upon it and you don't want to make it more difficult for people who have developed new ways of coping," Bonnard says. "In Angola people were saying, 'there's no Angolan seed left,' but in fact there was. Local seed doesn't completely evaporate."

In Afghanistan farmers lost the majority of the nation's seed supply in 2001 when conflict followed years of drought, and looters

destroyed hundreds of seed samples that had been hidden in private homes during the Taliban era. A consortium of agricultural research institutions, humanitarian agencies, and aid donors has joined to supply the country with seed stock, especially for wheat. "Restoring the nation's seed supply is crucial because it forms the foundation for all farming activities," says Adel El-Beltagy, director general of the International Center for Research in the Dry Areas, which is the lead organization in the Future Harvest Consortium to Rebuild Agriculture in Afghanistan. The consortium's goal is to make available to Afghan farmers and plant breeders not only modern wheat varieties, but also seeds for many of the country's traditional crops, such as barley, chickpeas, and lentils.

New Roles for Women

Women are often left to pick up the pieces of a country shattered by war. When peace comes, in many cases the men are gone. Some have been killed, and some have fled to cities to avoid conscription or to find jobs. The whereabouts of others are unknown. Women, or even children, find themselves in charge of the household.

In Angola, says Steinberg, "many of the farming chores that were divided between men and women have now shifted to women, or they have been dropped. For example, instead of plowing, women simply till the land by hoe in the absence of men—and livestock and plows." A household may lack food because the sheer amount of work required to produce it is simply more than the women and their children can do. Development activities need to target these women, Steinberg argues, giving them quick returns without imposing large burdens.

Zainab Salbi, director of Women for Women International, a Washington, D.C., NGO that offers training and microcredit to women in post-conflict countries, says that women facing these challenges need economic independence in order to support their own food security and that of their families. In many cases they use the microcredit her organization provides to invest in food production. "In Bosnia the number one microcredit project is buying a cow and milking it. The women can use it to feed their families and also sell the milk and cheese to make money," she says.

Lasting Food Security, Lasting Peace

Quick fixes will not long alleviate the poverty, hunger, and malnutrition that accompany conflict. Rebuilding agriculture and other economic sectors requires more than just a one-time investment of inputs, and it can be difficult to get aid donors to engage in long-term planning and financial commitments. The slow pace and low visibility of long-term projects can reduce donors' interest. "Tossing

(continued on page 12)

food out of a plane is good television," says Cohen, "but building a road so farmers can get to markets is not."

Postwar countries also face the need to rebuild civil society when the good faith and trust that lubricate social interactions have broken down. "Lack of trust can be a significant problem," says Bonnard. "In Peru, after the incarceration of the Shining Path, a big problem was getting people to work together in groups and trust the extension agents."

Moreover, there is often a real risk that violence will erupt again. Conflicts are rarely linear events advancing from one stage to another, points out Benedikt Korf of the University of Bonn's Center for Development Research. "Rather, conflict is circular, with periods of relative calm and sudden eruptions of violence." To promote long-term development and minimize the chance of renewed violence, he says, aid agencies should incorporate local beneficiaries in the planning and implementation process of projects, making them partners rather than recipients. This participation can help post-conflict communities build their own civic institutions and problem-solving capacity. "In addition, agencies should search for local partners, support the reestablishment of rule of law, and strengthen the institutional capacities of local state and nonstate agencies," he says. "Many relief agencies, however, do not have expertise in such endeavors."

The risk of tension can rise when refugees and internally displaced people receive aid while local people in communities surrounding the refugee camps are just as hungry and malnourished but receive nothing. "If the local population

is also vulnerable, you need to serve their needs too," says Ina Schonberg, director of food security at Save the Children.

Despite all the life-saving work performed by humanitarian agencies, in the long term establishing postwar food security requires assets and public services that only a legitimate system of central and local government can rebuild. Including the poor is essential, especially for rebuilding the public goods that can increase the productivity of agriculture. "During conflicts agriculture typically drifts into subsistence farming. Market institutions have to be rebuilt, and the trust in markets reestablished," says von Braun. "The transition from short-term assistance to development investment remains a challenge. Only with sound governance and an understanding of the institutional capacities in the specific situation can that be achieved. Rebuilding agriculture and the food systems after conflict is not just a technical, but a political, matter, and therefore for us at IFPRI a food policy research issue."

And it is a matter that will confront the international community for years to come, for while the fighting has ceased in several countries, it continues in Liberia, Colombia, Chechnya ... ■

Reported by Heidi Fritschel

Results of March Quick Poll

In our March issue, which featured an article on trade distortions in developed countries that harm poor farmers in developing countries, we asked: "Do you think an agreement that emerges from the WTO negotiations will yield a fair, rule-based agricultural trading system?" Readers responded with overwhelming pessimism. Only 4 of the 260 responses recorded on our website were in the affirmative.

Quick Poll

Do you believe international agencies and humanitarian organizations are becoming any more effective at restoring food security after conflict?

Yes No

(Please go to <http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/newsletters/ifpriforum/forumpoll.htm> to respond to this poll. We will announce the results on our website and in the next issue of this newsletter.)

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