



‘Horizon of Hope’

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Let me describe for you a typical boy from Kibera, East Africa’s largest slum. It is a story which is far too common. He is HIV positive. His parents have died from AIDS. He hasn’t eaten in days. He is too hungry and poor to go to school regularly. He is at risk of abuse. He feels lonely and unloved. Who among us wouldn’t want to reach out and help him?

I have lost count of the boys and girls who dream of flying far away from the pain and suffering that characterise their daily lives. The good news is that they can go on to reach their dreams – become pilots, doctors, teachers, sporting heroes – with just a little help from you and me.

Like you, my organization, the World Food Programme, is convinced that millions of children around the world can go on to do amazing things, as long as they get enough to eat and a basic education. Without those two elements, however, they are all but destined to remain poor, hungry and unable to make the most of what the world has to offer them. Some of

them will undoubtedly grow up hurt, angry and violent. Can we blame them for that? Indeed, President Obasanjo of Nigeria when he spoke with our Executive Board last year said “A hungry man is an angry man.” And we can, of course, do something about hunger.

We estimate that there are 300 million children who struggle to get enough to eat. That is more than the population of the entire United States. With relentless cruelty, 18,000 of them die every day; their bodies too weak from malnutrition to fight off even the most rudimentary infections and diseases.

On December 26 2004 the Tsunami struck the Indian Ocean killing as many as 250 to 300,000 people and wreaking enormous damage. There was enormous outpouring of support – financial, moral and otherwise. Yet each 10 to 12 days hunger claims the same number of lives. Nine out of 10 hunger-related deaths do not occur in high-profile disasters such as the Tsunami or Sudan. They occur in some dusty village in Africa or in the rural areas of South Asia. They die because they did not have enough to eat yesterday; do not have enough to eat today; and will not have enough to eat tomorrow. There is no social safety net and there are no television cameras. They just die. Every one of them is a preventable death.

Roughly 100 million children who should be in school don't get to class. In many cases, it's because their labour is needed just to put enough food on the family dinner table. Enormous sacrifices are needed to pay school fees, books, uniforms and bus fares. At a recent meeting in Washington, a World Bank colleague said that recent research had confirmed what so many of us here had already understood: the biggest disincentive to a

child's education is school fees; and the greatest incentive is a meal in school.

For as little as 19 cents a day, we can help boys and girls go to school, giving them a fighting chance at making their dreams come true. For 19 cents, we can provide a meal that encourages parents to send their children to school, and ensures that the children can focus on their lessons – not their empty stomachs. With just \$34 we can offer children a year's worth of knowledge and healthy meals – a gift that no one will ever be able to take away from them.

This tiny investment can change lives – even generations. When children are well-nourished and educated, their prospects are infinitely better. This is especially true for girls. When girls go to school and learn to read and write their health, wealth and ability to make choices improve dramatically. They tend to get married later. They tend to wait longer between each pregnancy. Their babies are born healthier. They're more aware of the importance of breastfeeding, immunization and health checks for themselves and their babies. They're more likely to send their daughters to school too – turning a vicious cycle into a virtuous one.

Believe me, the vicious cycle is cruel. Hunger and related diseases cause close to 10 million deaths per year – more than the total deaths from AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined. The damage caused by malnutrition is not just death – it affects just about every stage and aspect of life.

From conception on, how well we are nourished can influence our IQ, our height, weight, health and income. Even before they're born, millions of

children start life with a handicap – not only do they not get enough to eat, but they don't get enough essential vitamins and minerals for healthy growth.

Iodine deficiency is the most common cause of mental retardation and brain damage in children. Lack of iodine can reduce a child's IQ by up to 10 points. Like most of the other micronutrient deficiencies, it is easily preventable. But iodized salt is not routinely available in all places.

Iron deficiency affects more than 3.5 billion people around the world – which means that roughly half of the world's population isn't operating at full strength. More than half of all pregnant women and school age children in the developing world suffer from iron deficiency. It increases the risk that mothers and infants bleed to death during childbirth. It weakens the body, saps energy and dulls alertness, making it hard for people to work, earn wages and feed their families. If you or I were diagnosed with anaemia, we'd eat a big steak or take an iron supplement. That's just not possible for most of the people WFP works with, even though most of them have nothing other than their own labour with which to make a living. And hunger begets poverty every bit as much as poverty begets hunger. Think about it – you need to hire some labour to work on your farm. Who do you employ? The fellow who looks physically fit and strong or the scrawny and listless? So the stronger get the work and the hungry get hungrier.

Vitamin A deficiency is the single greatest cause of blindness among children. It also increases the risk that they will die from diarrhoea, measles or malaria. So does lack of zinc. The quantities needed are miniscule – but getting them to some of the poorest people on earth is a mammoth challenge.

At WFP, we realise it's not enough just to ensure that children have enough calories each day – although it's still absolutely essential. We also need to make sure children get enough of the vitamins and minerals needed for them to grow into healthy, productive citizens.

That's why WFP and UNICEF are working more closely than ever with the widest possible group of partners to fight – and end – child hunger. International organizations and other agencies like World Vision have teamed up to improve the benefit package offered to poor children through the education system.

In schools where WFP has school feeding programmes, we have come up with an essential package of health and nutrition. While each package is designed to meet the needs of a particular setting, they tend to include building toilets, vitamin and mineral supplements, teacher training, safe drinking water, HIV/AIDS prevention, setting up school gardens, and mosquito nets to prevent malaria.

The optimists among us (and there are many at WFP and in the organizations with whom we work) think that the time is ripe to put an end to hunger – especially among children. We have political commitment from world leaders – in government and private enterprise – to do so. We have concrete examples of what tactics have worked in places like post-war Europe and Japan, and in developing countries like Chile, Thailand and China where hunger among children has been dramatically reduced. We know more than ever about how important good nutrition and education are to our children's future.

We currently have the highest level ever of spending on official development assistance worldwide – US\$107 billion in 2005 – though most of it still doesn't go to the hungriest people in the poorest countries.

At WFP, we are witnessing an increase in the levels of support for our work which is unprecedented. Contributions from the private sector have quadrupled in the last three years, going from less than \$30 million in 2003 to nearly \$120 million in 2005. And it's not just dollars or euro or yen that come, welcome as they are. It's know-how, access to distribution networks, planes, trains and automobiles. It's that 'can-do' approach that characterises the private sector, and which is so well-suited to the work that the World Food Programme does.

Remember the little boy I described from the Kibera slum in Nairobi? The International Paper company is helping us provide decent school meals to roughly 70,000 poor kids in Kibera – a huge ray of hope in an otherwise pretty desperate place.

Kibera slum is one of Africa's largest and worst slums. It is home to hundreds of thousands of people – no one can be sure how many. What you saw on the film was grim – but the film is a pale imitation of the reality. The stench, for example, is appalling. You stand on the railway line and look out over the slum, just as the camera did. If you turn around and look the other way, over a high cement wall you can see an 18-hole golf course. The contrast could not be more stark.

The Ministry of Education has no schools in the slum, in part because land is scarce in a slum. It has no teachers in the slum – they simply will not go there. Yet there are schools and they are run by PVOs including,

for example, Feed the Hungry. The funds provided by the employees of International Paper – not the corporation, the employees – enable WFP to provide a meal in school to 68,500 kids. If you take a moment to reflect - the only asset of value and chance for a better life that a child leaving the slum can take with them is their education. It is a wonderful programme.

A special draw of the Dutch lottery is helping us provide meals to kids in Mali – which has one of the lowest school enrolment rates in the world.

An Iowa-based firm, Kemin Industries, is helping us improve shelf life and protect the safety of food commodities distributed worldwide – something that has the potential to save not only millions of dollars but also many lives.

We're very excited about some of the new support coming from universities in the US. Auburn University in Alabama is leading the charge to bring all of the NASULGC Land-Grant colleges on board to fight hunger. Young people have exactly the kind of passion, energy and optimism we need to end hunger. We're especially proud to have Princeton student (and President Bush's niece) – Lauren Bush – as our honorary student spokesperson. She has visited our operations in Guatemala, Chad, Lesotho and even Kibera slum in Kenya.

And, of course, none of our work would be possible without the hands-on help we get from our PVO partners – CRS, Mercy Corps, World Vision, Save the Children, CARE, and way too many others to mention by name.

Last year, WFP provided food assistance to more than 96 million people in more than 80 countries. Last year, the United States was yet again our biggest supporter. All told, we raised US\$2.8 billion – and more than US

\$1.2 billion of that came from the US – from our friends at USAID, at USDA and State Department. It's a record amount. And we really appreciate it. You may wish to take a moment to reflect on the fact that almost one person in two fed through WFP is fed by the United States. At the same time as the US gave us more money than any other year in our history, it was the smallest share of our income from the US in 5 years. Other countries are picking up more of the burden. And that's a good thing.

The number of WFP's supporters is growing, and so is the amount of their giving. We now count India, Algeria and Bangladesh in our top 20 donors – they now outrank some longer standing OECD donors. Few events are more gratifying than when one of the countries that has received our help can turn around and offer help to others. But we face a dilemma: many developing countries are eager to help and offer us commodities, often for projects in their own countries. And while they may be 'commodity-rich', they're 'cash-poor'. They simply can't afford the cash needed to effectively manage and monitor the food programmes.

There has been a lot of talk in the past year about the relative merits of cash and commodity donations. I'm not certain that enough "real world" research has been done on this topic, and I'm not going to get into a discussion about that today. But knowing that all of you are practical, 'can-do' type people, let me outline an idea for you that is helping us around the dilemma we face when developing countries approach us with offers of food. We call it 'twinning' – and basically it means matching up donations of food from developing countries with cash from other places. I can't think of too many other ways that we can double or triple the amount of food we deliver and the number of people we help with the

same donation. Let me give you a practical example. With the same amount of cash we could purchase food in the donor country and provide a meal in school to a little over 7,000 children in Kenya; or we could purchase locally, or regionally and provide a meal in school to some 15,000 children; or we could twin the cash from the donor with the food from Kenya and reach more than 22,000 children. Let me be clear, twinning is about the host country being a donor through WFP alongside the US, the EC and other donors.

Twinning encourages developing countries to take responsibility for hunger problems at home and abroad. It also sends important signals to the international community about their commitment to the programme; and the prospects for its long-term sustainability

Sadly, despite all of our optimism and increasing support, we still aren't reaching all of the people who need our help. Today, we are struggling to reach more than 50 million people in Africa. Some of our most critical operations face enormous shortfalls: our operation in Sudan has in hand less than one third of the resources it needs for Darfur and southern Sudan. We started the 2006-2007 biennium with a programme of work valued at US\$6.4 billion – this is how much we needed to raise to meet the assessed needs of the beneficiaries of the programmes and operations approved by our Executive Board. In just the first 3 months of this year, that amount had increased by more than \$320 million, mainly because of the crisis in the Horn of Africa.

With a depressing regularity, we see the same communities hit by drought, or floods, or hurricanes. Every time, families in these places suffer yet another setback on the long hard road to prosperity. The people that all of

us work so hard to help could be forgiven for thinking the elements were against them. Which makes it so incredible when, despite the odds, they succeed in climbing out of poverty and into the spotlight.

Paul Tergat, WFP's Ambassador Against Hunger, was really disappointed not to be here today. Unfortunately, he has injured his leg, and had to pull out of the London marathon and stay put while he healed. Paul is a living example of why food aid works, and why it's worth all of our efforts to invest in hungry kids. Growing up in the Rift Valley in Kenya, Paul can't really remember having a good meal or going to school regularly until he was seven years old. That's when WFP started providing lunches for his school. That food, by the way, came from the US. Today, he holds the world record for the marathon and, just a few months ago, won the New York marathon – the latest in a long string of medals. He is an inspiration to us all.

Even if 99 percent of the kids we are helping today don't go on to become leaders in sport, science or politics, they still deserve every possible chance to be the best they can. In fact, we'll have done well if they just get to grow up into healthy, happy adults.

Isn't that what we all want for our children?

The hungry and poor of the world have no better friend than the Government and people of the United States.

Thank you.

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