



WFP/Rein Skullerud

A Comprehensive Response to Global Hunger

As a result of the global hunger crisis and the current financial crisis, more than 1 billion people are now living with chronic hunger, up from 873 million in recent years. In 2009, the United States showed tremendous leadership, providing considerable support to emergency food assistance in response to sudden needs arising from the global hunger crisis.

A significant portion of these funds went to the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), which expanded operations from 73 million recipients to more than 100 million recipients and hopes to reach even more in 2009. Moving forward, the U.S. government will need to continue to provide bold leadership – and develop a comprehensive, global food security strat-

egy that addresses hunger in the short, intermediate and long term.

The Effects of the Global Hunger Crisis

- In 2008, global food prices skyrocketed, with some people experiencing increases as high as 75 percent. While prices have declined some in 2009, they are still in some cases double those of 2005, and the food market remains volatile.

- Many of the drivers of the global hunger crisis are still affecting food prices, such as growing demand for food in developing countries, like China and India; fluctuating energy prices that impact the entire supply chain; and poor harvests in important crop-producing regions (such as Australia and the Horn of Africa).

The Impacts of the Financial Crisis

- The global financial crisis is having

the greatest impact on vulnerable populations living in the world's poorest countries. We are witnessing a confluence of interconnected factors that increase hunger in these nations, such as lower incomes, less trade, fewer government services, reduced foreign investments, a tightening of credit and lower remittances.

What Can the U.S. Government Do to Alleviate Global Hunger?

In 2009 the U.S. government began taking steps to develop a comprehensive, global food security strategy to address hunger in the short, intermediate and long term. Friends of the World Food Program (Friends of WFP) emphasizes the importance of the following elements in that strategy.



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A Comprehensive Response to Global Hunger, *continued*

Elements of a Comprehensive Strategy

• **Faster and more flexible response**

We need to combine our vital, commodity-based emergency assistance, which involves shipping U.S. food to areas affected by humanitarian emergencies, with the more flexible, cash-based emergency assistance, which allows for the faster and more flexible local and regional purchase of food aid.

• **Safety nets for those living in chronic hunger**

We can enhance overall food security and assist vulnerable populations by increasing funding for safety net programs, such as non-emergency food assistance and voucher programs.

• **Expand nutrition programs**

We need to support and strengthen early child nutrition and school meals pro-

grams to prevent childhood undernourishment and promote education. Good nutrition is required to support cognitive development and good health, making it one of the main foundations for economic and social development worldwide.

• **Increase production and improve profitability of smallholder farmers**

In a long-term strategy to address hunger, we need to offer more support to smallholder farmers, the majority of whom are women, so they can have better access to technology, credit, education and other resources allowing them to become more productive and more profitable.

How to Coordinate a Comprehensive Strategy

• **Create a high-level Hunger Coordinator to oversee strategy**

Reports released in 2008 by the U.S.

Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) highlighted the need for greater integration among the many U.S. programs and agencies that work on hunger.

Appointing a high-level Hunger Coordinator within the administration would ensure the United States pursues a comprehensive and coordinated plan.

• **Promote better coordination in Congress**

We need better coordination among the multiple congressional committees with legislative authority over global hunger issues. Restoring the now defunct Congressional Select Committee on Hunger and establishing a Senate Select Committee on Hunger would enable better coordination.



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