



Sustenance

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The Congressional Hunger Center Newsletter

The Critical Role of U.S. International Food Aid:

Saving Lives, Strengthening Health, and Fostering Education and Economic Development

On March 21, 2006, CHC organized a special policy briefing covering international U.S. food aid programs for staff from the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate and Congressional Committees, and representatives from private voluntary organizations and the private sector. The briefing was co-sponsored by CHC board co-chairs, Representative Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO) and James P. McGovern (D-MA).

The United States is the largest provider of food aid to poor nations, via the Public Law 480 programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Agency for International Development. U.S. food aid programs have a long history of providing multiple benefits for vulnerable and hungry people worldwide. But recent debates triggered by trade negotiations have raised questions about the structure

and funding for these vital programs. The increasing number of food emergencies around the world coupled with a tight budget has also resulted in reduced funding for developmental food aid programs. Examples of these programs include maternal and child health projects, HIV/AIDS education and support programs, agricultural development, and food for education activities—all of which are critical to bolster

community resilience to natural disaster and famine. Fragile communities that are vulnerable to crises and people who do not have the means to meet their food needs on a regular basis are the recipients.

The panelists explored the following questions:

What is the current landscape of food aid needs?

Sean Callahan, Vice-President of International Operations for Catholic Relief Services, opened the panel presentations with an overview of global food aid needs facing the international community in 2006 and 2007. While the number of hungry people has increased to 852 million, United States donations of food aid have shrunk from a high of almost \$9 billion dollars per year in the 1960's to just over \$1.2 billion dollars per year in 2002. Within the Title II food aid program of Public Law 480¹ the current budget request from the administration does not provide adequate resources to fund both the emergency needs and the ongoing program needs for food for development

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(left to right) Margaret Zeigler, CHC; Sean Callahan, CRS; Ina Schonberg, Save the Children; Marc Cohen, IFPRI; and Mark Viso, World Vision answer questions from Congressional staff on U.S. food aid programs. Photo: David Snyder.



¹ Public Law 480 (P.L. 480) is the primary means by which the United States provides foreign food assistance, and was authorized under the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954. In recent years, P.L. 480 has been provided through Title I, administered by USDA, and Title II, consisting of donations of commodities and some cash to meet both emergency and development food needs for the most impoverished countries. Title II food aid is administered by USAID and is programmed primarily through the UN World Food Program and through private voluntary organizations and cooperatives in partnership with local organizations in the developing world.

Greetings from the Executive Director

By Edward M. Cooney



National Policy Report

The House of Representatives adjourned on April 6th for a two week vacation without reaching consensus on a budget. The Senate has passed a FY 07 Budget restoring many of the budget cuts on discretionary program funding. Twenty-three moderate Republicans requested the House Leadership to support the Senate version of the budget but House conservatives did not agree with this request, placing the FY 07 Budget Resolution in a "political limbo."

Anti-hunger groups are beginning to focus on the FY07 Agriculture Appropriations Bill, despite the budget situation. The Administration has proposed a 25% cap on the Nutrition Services and administration portion of the WIC appropriation. The National WIC Association predicts that this cap will make it impossible for local WIC agencies to provide the important nutrition services in the future. Congress rejected this proposal last year.

The Administration has also recommended terminating the Commodity Supplement Food Program (CSFP). This program provides commodities and services to the elderly, pregnant women, and children up to age six. Congress is likely to reject this proposal but CSFP could face serious cutbacks. The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) seeks to expand the Simplified Summer Food Program to a greater number of states. This pilot program makes it easier to administer this important child nutrition program by removing complex cost accounting paperwork requirements. Advocates also are seeking to get funding for the Farm to School Program, authorized in the 2004 Child Nutrition bill. Groups also want Congress to restore the \$7 million cut from the Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP).

The greatest threat to federal nutrition programs may be a newly revised "line item veto" bill which is expected to move in the Senate by the first week in June. A recent

Victory Against Hunger

The 2006 Victory Against Hunger Awards will focus on "school wellness policies." CHC and Victory Wholesale Grocers will award fifteen \$1,000 checks to anti-hunger organizations and health groups, nominated by a member of Congress, who "fight hunger through developing or implementing local and state school meals policies." Nominations will be accepted through May 31st.

The 2006 VAH awards nominations process was presented at the FRAC/America's Second Harvest (A2H)/ National CACFP Forum Policy Conference in February and the School Nutrition Association (SNA) meeting in March. A panel of experts from USDA and members of the nutrition, health and anti-hunger communities will select the winners. Awardees will be announced at the Society for Nutrition Education meeting in July in San Francisco.

CHC selected school wellness as the theme because we see the integration of nutrition education and physical activity in school meals programs as an ideal approach to improving a child's nutrition and health status. **For more information, please visit our website, www.hungercenter.org.**

proposal in the Senate would allow the President to cancel or scale back any provision in any passed appropriation bill if it increases cost. The "scale back" approach is new. It would allow the executive branch to rewrite the terms of any entitlement program, i.e. eligibility and benefit provisions/matching rates, etc. The president could propose a

"scale back" and this request would not be subject to amendment or any filibuster and would have to be acted upon in 30 days. This approach to a line item veto in the minds of many groups, constitutes the most significant transfer of power and responsibility from Congress to the executive branch in U.S. history. ●

National Hunger Awareness Day, Tuesday June 6th

Make plans now to celebrate the 6th annual National Hunger Awareness Day on Tuesday, June 6th. This event is led by America's Second Harvest, The Nation's Food Bank Network, and is supported by groups from the anti-hunger, agriculture, conservation food industry and faith communities. Its purpose is to raise awareness of the solvable problem of hunger in America. It will be preceded by a National Hunger Symposium at the National Press Club focused on the 2007 Farm Bill, Monday June 5th.



This April, Ed Cooney traveled to Bolivia to conduct Leland Program field site visits. Here, Ed visits with a principal and his students at a school in Bolivia which has a school feeding program operated by Project Concern International.

President Bush Nominates USDA Undersecretary Eric Bost to be the U.S. Ambassador to South Africa

Eric Bost, currently USDA Under Secretary for Food Nutrition and Consumer Services, has been the Bush Administration's chief spokesperson and leader on the \$50 billion+ federal nutrition programs. Under Secretary Bost has been at USDA since 2001. Previously, Bost served as Commissioner of the Texas Human Services Department. At the recent FRAC/A2H/National CACFP Forum National Policy Conference, Doug O'Brien, Vice President of Public Policy and Research



at A2H, said: "Under Secretary Bost has been the best Under Secretary for food and nutrition programs in history." While there are many contenders for the title, including Carol Tucker Foreman, Catherine Bertini and Shirley Watkins, there is a solid case for recognizing Under Secretary Bost's contributions on behalf of poor and hungry people in the U.S.

In 2002, it was Under Secretary Bost who championed the restoration of

Food Stamp benefits for legal immigrants despite significant opposition from conservatives on both sides of the aisle. His leadership on outreach programs for Food Stamps, School Breakfast, and Summer Food was simply outstanding.

But courage under fire is what separates such leaders as Bost, Foreman, Bertini, and Watkins. When Katrina hit, the brightest light of action and service came from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service Food Stamp Division, led by Under Secretary Bost. While government inaction left many in harm's

way, hundreds of thousands of hungry people on the Gulf Coast received vitally important food through the electronic benefit transfer system of the Food Stamp Program. Decisions had to be made which other government officials might have questioned later. Bost made those decisions and people got fed.

The career staff at FNS, anti-hunger advocates, and poor and hungry people in the United States will miss the leadership of Under Secretary Bost. We, at CHC, wish him well on his new adventures in South Africa. ●

The Critical Role of U.S. International Food Aid

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programs—the very programs that help protect vulnerable communities from eventual famine or malnutrition when natural disaster or civil conflict strike. It is expected that this lack of adequate funding for the Title II program will result in the phase out of 17 countries from the 32 countries now participating in various food for development programs. It will also be very difficult to add new participants, even in areas of high malnutrition and vulnerability, because the budget for development programs is frozen at \$335 million, compared to an approved level of \$500 million in 2002. Sean provided examples of these programs—community agriculture programs, maternal and child health and nutrition programs, and natural resource conservation and school feeding programs.

How do U.S. food aid programs operate on the ground?

Ina Schonberg, Director of the Hunger and Malnutrition Unit of Save the Children, gave examples from several field programs (Tajikistan, Bolivia, Bangladesh and Mozambique) which enabled communities to produce better crops, improve school feeding programs and school infrastructure, develop new agricultural products for market, and to reduce malnutrition, particularly for mothers and children. Significant needs assessments and planning and constant interaction with local communities are hallmarks of these programs. Many of the program examples she shared at the policy briefing are scheduled for closure by 2009 due to the lack of adequate funding expected in fiscal years 2007 onward.

These are programs that serve hungry and malnourished people, respond to emergencies, and provide a bulwark of community stability in hard to reach areas of the developing world. Prematurely ending these programs will have a long-term negative impact on the quality of life in these communities, while continuing these programs enables local and national governments to learn valuable lessons and incorporate them into their country social safety net programming.

What are the critical "value-added" benefits provided by developmental food aid programs?

Marc Cohen, Research Fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)², shared results of the Institute's empirical research on selected food aid programs. IFPRI has evaluated both emergency and food

for development programs implemented by CARE, World Vision and the UN World Food Program. This research has found that food aid plays an important role in efforts to empower communities. For example, food aid in Ethiopia helps communities to plan, manage, and carry out soil and water conservation activities in highly degraded *continued on page 11*

2 IFPRI's mission is to provide policy solutions that cut hunger and malnutrition. IFPRI is one institute of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, whose mission is "To achieve sustainable food security and reduce poverty in developing countries through scientific research and research-related activities in the fields of agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries, policy, and natural resources management." Two key premises underlie IFPRI's mission. First, sound and appropriate local, national, and international public policies are essential to achieving sustainable food security and nutritional improvement. Second, research and the dissemination of its results are critical inputs into the process of raising the quality of the debate and formulating sound and appropriate food policies. IFPRI's mission entails a strong emphasis on research priorities and qualities that facilitate change.

Emerson National Hunger Fellows Program Report

By Emerson Program Staff

Emerson Program Update

The last few months have been a busy and exciting time for the Emerson Program Fellows and Staff. The 12th Class of Emerson Fellows completed their field work and Hunger Free Community Reports, made the transition from field placements to D.C., participated in more than 10 days of policy training, and began working with policy site host organizations.

At the same time, the Emerson Program Staff began the difficult task of

selecting the 13th Class of Emerson Fellows. With the help of a selections committee composed of former and current Fellows, advisory board members, CHC staff, and field and policy site supervisors, the staff was able to review more than 200 applications, and choose the 80 semi-finalists with whom we conducted interviews. Between late February and early April the program staff traversed the country to meet these fantastic candidates. We

are in the last stages of our selections process, and will be announcing the new class of Fellows shortly!

The coming months will find us matching the 13th Class with their field site host organizations, and celebrating the July 25, 2006 Commencement of the 12th Class. We hope that many alumni, supervisors, and friends of the program can join us for this momentous event! ●



Emerson Fellow Amanda Wagner promotes locally grown produce available at farmers' markets in Tucson, Arizona.

12th Class Fellows Participate in Policy Training

In February, the Emerson National Hunger Fellows returned to Washington, D.C. from their field experiences and gathered at the William Penn House for ten days of policy training. The

training commenced with Emerson Fellows sharing their many field accomplishments, including presentations of their **Hunger Free Community Reports**. For the first time, outside

guests were invited to listen to these presentations, and we were joined by several policy site supervisors, local and national advocates and friends of the program.

The Emerson Fellows received training on national policy formation, briefings on specific aspects of hunger and poverty policy, and an orientation to Washington, D.C. They also participated in the 2006 National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference hosted by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), America's Second Harvest (A2H), and the National CACFP Forum. Leaders from a plethora of anti-hunger organizations and government agencies participated in the Fellows' training. Highlights included:

- Lunch and discussion with CHC Board Co-Chairs, **Rep. Jo Ann Emerson**

(R-MO) and **Rep. James McGovern** (D-MA).

- A "Welcome to D.C." Dinner and Discussion with Alumni. Special thanks to Hunger Fellow alumni who participated in the discussion facilitated by **Sean Coffey (10th Class)** and **Alexis Bylander (11th Class)**.

- Learning about the role that Hill Staff play in affecting policy during a panel facilitated by **Keith Stern, Office of Rep. James McGovern** (D-MA) comprised of: **Justin Rone, Office of Rep. Jo Ann Emerson** (R-MO); **Hun Quach** (9th Class Hunger Fellow Alumna, **Office of Rep. Adam Smith** (D-WA); **P.J. Andrews** (11th Class Hunger Fellow Alumnus), who works in the district office of **Rep. Chris Van Hollen** (D-MD); and **Jessica Frederick**, who works for **Sen. Herb Kohl** (D-WI) on



Emerson Fellows with Senator George McGovern at the 2006 National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference.

the **Senate Committee on Appropriations.**

● An extensive panel discussion on the **2007 Farm Bill** that included a number of advocates from the anti-hunger, community food security and conservation worlds. Participants included founding Emerson Program Director **Max Finberg, Alliance to End Hunger; Allen Hance, Northeast-Midwest Institute; Chris Schepis, National Farmers Union; and Ellen Vollinger, Food Research and Action Center.**

● Fellow educational visits with Senators and Representatives from the districts in which the Fellows served in the field.

Further training on specific policy issues related to hunger and poverty involved briefings by many experts, including:

● **Josh Bernstein, of the National Immigration Law Center,** who discussed federal immigration policies and proposals.

● **Lou Gerber, of the Communications Workers of America,** who presented on the role of CWA and labor unions in public policy.



Above: Hill Staff panelists Justin Rone, Keith Stern, Hun Quach (9th Class Hunger Fellow Alumna), P.J. Andrews (11th Class Hunger Fellow Alumnus), and Jessica Frederick.

Right: Emerson Fellows Beth McCarthy and Almas Sayeed present findings on Food Stamp Program participation rates and barriers to access for New York City immigrant communities at the 2006 National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference.



● **Alan Berube, Metropolitan Policy Program Fellow, Brookings Institution,** and 10th Class Hunger Fellow Alumna **Sarah Garrett, Senate Committee on**

Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, who provided insight into confronting poverty and affordable housing post-Hurricane Katrina.

● Two sessions on economic development concepts and policies, including a presentation on the racial wealth divide by **Thomas Shapiro, Pokross Professor of Law and Social Policy at Brandeis University,** and a panel discussion on

asset-building, tax credits, debt and homeownership featuring **Ray Boshara, New America Foundation; Derek Douglas, Center for American Progress; Rakesh Kochhar, Pew Hispanic Center; and John Wanchek, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.**

● 8th Class Hunger Fellow Alumnus **Matt Ching, Organizer for Call to Renewal/Sojourners** and **Debbie Weinstein, Executive Director of the Coalition on Human Needs,** who began to lay a foundation for policy work by providing in-depth reviews of the legislative and Federal Budget processes. ●



Alumni Dinner: Three generations of Emerson Fellows placed with the Milwaukee Hunger Task Force in the field. Left to right: Matt King (12th Class), Matt Ching (8th Class), Karen Wong (12th Class) and Alexis Bylander (11th Class).

Hunger Free Community Report Highlights

In addition to the phenomenal work that Hunger Fellows accomplished in the field for their host organizations, each Fellow also completed a *Hunger Free Community Report* during the first six months. Highlights include:

The Impact of Food Insecurity on the Development of Young, Low-Income Black and Latino Children by **Madina Agénor** presents research findings linking food insecurity, child development, and school readiness. The first publication of its kind to quantify the developmental effects of food insecurity in vulnerable children of color under the age of three, the report will be published and disseminated by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Spring 2006.

Improving Food Stamps in Alameda County and Beyond by **Kevin Anderson** presents a series of cost-effective recommendations for improving food

stamp application processing in Alameda County and across California. The report is based on in-depth analysis of the Alameda County Social Services Agency's internal processes and how they can best interface with the external Food Stamp outreach efforts of local community-based organizations.

Building Health and Wealth: Assessing Potential Benefits and Raising Awareness of the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program in Louisville Metro, Kentucky by **Natalie Halbach** is a two-part toolkit for advocates interested in the WIC FMNP. The first section assesses Louisville health data, food access issues, and changes in the Kentucky farm economy to determine need for the program as well as potential benefits to low-income families; the second section consists of an advocacy toolkit containing pilot project templates, sample press releases and newsletter articles, and other useful resources.



Emerson Fellow Karen Wong presents her Hunger Free Community Report during policy training.

Broken Promises by Brett Murphy incorporates interviews with individuals and families affected by Hurricane Katrina into an analysis of ongoing and emerging crises in the New Orleans region. The report offers a simple overview of the New Orleans area housing crisis, explores the difficulties faced by workers who have come to the city to participate in rebuilding efforts, and discusses how and why thousands of

indigent defendants in the Orleans Parish Criminal Court system have been denied their constitutional rights to representation, due process, and a speedy trial.

An Evaluation of the 2005-2006 Provision 2 Pilot in Milwaukee Public Schools by **Karen Wong** highlights key findings from the evaluation of Milwaukee's Provision 2 pilot and is being used to inform considerations regarding future universal free meal expansion in Milwaukee. The report discusses how students and families were affected by the availability of free school meals, the relationship between serving breakfast in the classroom and breakfast participation increases, and outcomes from meal application outreach efforts.

For copies of any of the above reports, please contact Kristin Anderson, Emerson Program Co-Director, at kan-derson@hungercenter.org. ●



Emerson Fellow Natalie Halbach has her face painted by a friend at the Pumpkin Festival she coordinated in Louisville, Kentucky.

12th Class Policy Site Placements

We welcome new policy site host organizations to the Emerson Program, are grateful for the continued contributions of veteran host organizations, and extend our thanks to all supervisors!

Alliance to End Hunger*
Association of Nutrition
Services Agencies*

Bread for the World Institute
Call to Renewal
Catholic Charities
Center for American Progress*
Center for Community
Change
Community Food Security
Coalition
Connect for Kids

Families USA
Food Research and Action
Center
National Coalition for the
Homeless
National Conference of State
Legislatures
National Immigration Law
Center*
Northeast-Midwest Institute

Migrant Legal Action
Program*
Presbyterian Church USA
RESULTS
School Nutrition Association
Share Our Strength
Volunteers of America
* Denotes new site

Special Thanks

C & S Wholesale Grocers

The Emerson National Hunger Fellows Program received funding from C & S Wholesale Grocers, the nation's second-largest wholesale grocer, to provide support for training and conference attendance. Since the beginning of 2006, the generous grant has impacted the professional development of all 24 Emerson Fellows. Grant funds have been used to cover registration costs for the National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference, Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice, and the North Carolina Hunger Summit, among others. The Congressional Hunger Center, program staff and Fellows would like to extend a

special thank you to C & S for its generous contribution to the development of future anti-hunger leaders!

Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America

The Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America has generously provided the Congressional Hunger Center with meeting and presentation accommodations for both the National and International Hunger Fellows Programs. With this valuable in-kind donation of space, the CHC has been able to provide Fellows with invaluable opportunities to meet with local and national part-

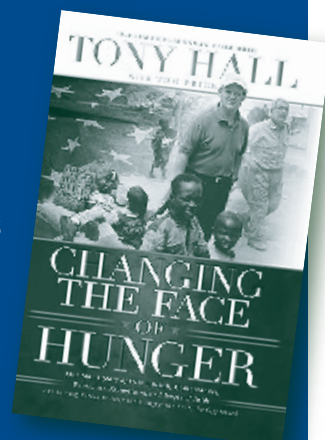
ners conveniently on Capitol Hill. The Congressional Hunger Center, Staff and Fellows would like to extend a special thank you to Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America for the use of their wonderful meeting space!

Al Franken

On April 17th, CHC board member Al Franken hosted Ambassador Tony Hall on the "Al Franken Show," live on Air America radio! Al and Tony discussed the importance of bi-partisan solutions to hunger, and shared with a wide listening audience the work and mission of CHC and the needs of the hungry in the U.S. and overseas. We are grateful to Al for his hard work as a CHC board member.

CHC's founder, Ambassador Tony P. Hall, has written a new book covering his past 25 years of public service in anti-hunger work. From rural areas of Appalachia, to the highlands of Ethiopia, Tony Hall has witnessed the hardships and extreme courage of the poor and those working to serve them. This book is an inspirational account of how Americans who work together across religious groups and political parties can make a difference.

To purchase, please visit this website: <http://www.thomasnelson.com/changingthefaceofhunger>, or visit www.hungercenter.org for more information.



Leland International Hunger Fellows Program Report

By Leland Program Staff

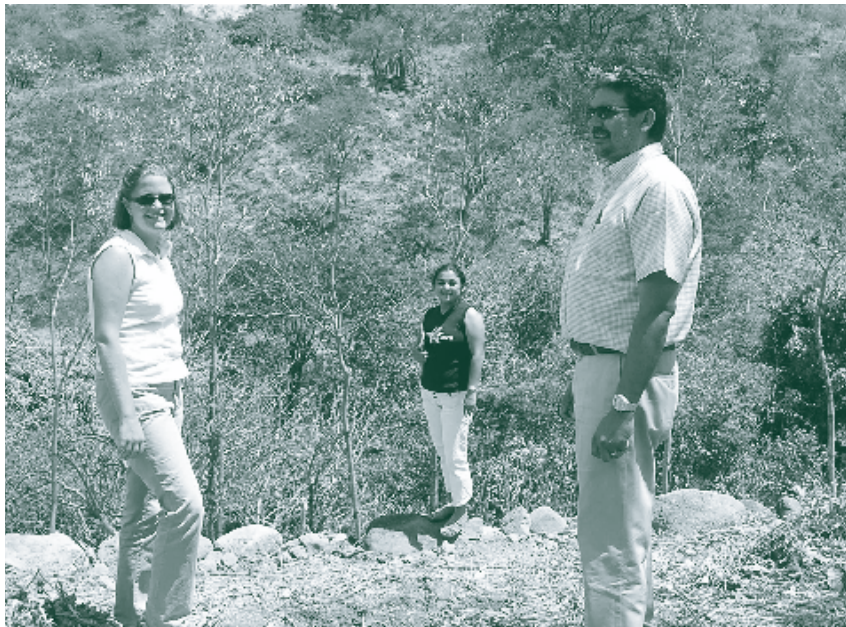
CHC Staff Conduct Site Visits to Fellows

One of the most enjoyable aspects of working for the Congressional Hunger Center is going on site visits to see the work that Mickey Leland Fellows are doing in the field. Jet lag, rough roads, lost luggage and bouts with intestinal bugs come as part of the territory.

In March, Susannah Wood traveled to Costa Rica and Honduras to visit fellows **Gloria Kessler** and **Amanda Rives**. Gloria is a fellow with the International Food Research Policy Institute. An economist by training, she is working on a study of the impact that ratification of the Central America Free Trade Agreement will have on the growing "maquila" or garment assembly sector of the economy in several Central American countries. Gloria travels regularly to countries in the region, where she meets with factory owners, government officials and economic experts. For many poor rural women, employment in these factories is the first step on the ladder to regular wage employment. The contrast of bustling downtown San Jose to rural southern Honduras, where Amanda works, could not be more extreme. In the isolated communities around Reitoca, cars were a rarity and most people get around by foot, horse or bicycle. People depend on subsistence agriculture, mostly corn and beans, grown on steep hillside slopes. There has been a prolonged drought in the area, and for many

communities, lack of potable water is an extreme problem. Amanda's project is to assist the Christian Children's Fund to develop a food security strategy for the region, which can be used as a model for similar strategies in other parts of the country.

From October to March, Jose Ravano made several trips to Africa to see the efforts of the nine fellows working in the region. The first trip was a visit to Uganda and Kenya to see the work of **Peter Giampaoli**, **Todd Flower** and **Dan Abbott**. Peter and Todd are both based in Uganda with the Ugandan Land Alliance and Save the Children, respectively. Peter works out of the capital city, Kampala, coordinating regional efforts at addressing land rights and tenure while Todd is two hours away in Nakasongola district, providing community level training to farmers in agroforestry techniques and assisting them in the marketing of their products. Dan works in



Amanda and her co-workers survey an erosion prevention terrace built by a CCF beneficiary.

Homa Bay, Kenya, where he is conducting research on HIV/AIDS programming targeted towards orphans and vulnerable children through the African Medical and Research Foundation.

Akilou Seibou, **Bapu Vaitla** and **Nate Heller** are also performing research

during their field placements. Akilou is in his native country of Benin with Catholic Relief Services studying the causes of child trafficking. Akilou travels to and studies villages where the pressures of poverty, hunger and large families compel parents to choose which children to go to school, perform farm labor or get sent to relatives in other countries. In May, Akilou will present his work at a national forum of government officials, NGOs and others working to fight child trafficking. Bapu travels extensively in Ethiopia for his research project for Action Against Hunger. Most recently, Bapu went on a research trip over the rough and rocky roads of rural Ethiopia for 18 straight



Akilou (seated at table, left) conducts a community meeting.

days to examine the implementation of the Ethiopian government's safety net program and the perceptions of those individuals that participate in the activities. Nate Heller, in Ghana, works for the UN Food and Agriculture Organization researching ways in which information communication technologies can be delivered to rural communities. Nate works closely with district level agricultural information centers to assess

how technologies such as the internet and mobile phones can bring up to date agricultural techniques and marketing information to rural farmers.

Dalia Emara, Yodit Beyene and Mike Manske round out the fellows working in Africa. Dalia is with MSI working on a project to combat child labor in Morocco. Her project focuses on gaining accreditation for non-formal education services

provided to children who work as domestic servants and are unable to attend formal schooling. Yodit works as a communication specialist on a project jointly run by the Ethiopian Government and IFPRI that develops strategy and policy for agricultural development in Ethiopia (see article below.) Mike works for Counterpart International in the Podor District of Senegal, assisting in the implementation of a food security project

and the distribution of food to populations affected by HIV/AIDS and maternal and child health centers in villages where child under-nutrition reaches 40%. In addition to this work, he'll be conducting a research study examining the stigma that may be attached to participation in food distribution programs that are known to target HIV/AIDS populations. ●

Notes from the field

Fighting Hunger by Empowering Women

By Michaela Hackner, Mickey Leland Hunger Fellow with Pact Cambodia

The Pact Cambodia WORTH Women's Empowerment Program empowers poor Cambodian women through village-based savings and non-formal literacy education. Through these self-help groups, participants learn literacy skills, generate income, and evolve as social leaders. WORTH is different than traditional micro-finance

in Nepal that has reached over 125,000 women. This program combined savings groups and non-formal literacy education to give women the tools to their own empowerment. In three years the Nepal WORTH program helped 125,000 women attain literacy, increase savings by over one million dollars, and improve their net annual income from \$1.2 million to over \$10 million. The women also participated in over 40,000 grassroots campaigns addressing issues such as human trafficking, domestic violence, property rights, and women's education.

This 2-year pilot program includes beneficiaries from

5 districts in 3 provinces that were identified as sources of human trafficking. These areas include Kampong Cham, Takeo, and Kandal. The program is funded by the United States Department of State.

In the first ten months of implementation, the WORTH Team at Pact Cambodia has also had many success stories to share. They have successfully mobilized 2,000 women



A Cambodian woman teaches others in the WORTH program. This photo, taken by Michaela Hackner, was featured on the United Nations Population Fund webpage during International Women's Day.

"The greatest obstacle to ending hunger is the severe subjugation, marginalization and disempowerment of women in many developing countries."

—Project Hunger

programs because it achieves sustainability by increasing the self-confidence and self-determination of poor Cambodian women. WORTH reveals to them their own capacity to make positive changes within their lives, instead of providing handouts or credit.

Pact's WORTH approach to women's empowerment is based upon a highly successful USAID-sponsored program

in 100 women's empowerment groups, developed three literacy/methodology books from the Women in Business series in the Khmer language, and women in all provinces have been saving regularly and providing loans to each other. Since they began saving in September, WORTH groups have saved over \$5,000. The program has taken off in Cambodia and we anticipate it to grow with leaps and bounds in the future.

Wheat Farmers in Ethiopia Struggle to Compete with Imports

By Yodit T. Beyene

Yodit is a Fellow with the International Food Policy Research Institute, Ethiopian Strategy Support Program (ESSP). This article is part of a series called "Voices" that she writes for the ESSP newsletter, focusing on how rural Ethiopians are affected by government policy decisions.

The dream of any farmer is to produce efficiently, sell

profitably and live comfortably. Yet, as the cost of living rises, small scale farmers in the Debre Zeit area of Ethiopia learn to survive on their diminishing income.

"This is the reason why farmers are the first to get hurt when there is a problem," explains Ato Ingida, a 53 year-old farmer. "Before, fertilizer was subsidized. Now it's very expensive, especially when you consider our income. And we can't raise

However, quantity as well as quality was necessary for competing with imports.

"The companies took our grains the first year to encourage us to produce durum wheat. The second year, we had 58 farmers produce this wheat, but the factory did not take it because what we produced was too little."

Safety in Numbers

With only about 2.5 hectares of land per farmer, on which several other grains are grown simultaneously, it will require the participation of many more farmers in the durum wheat producers association to truly displace imports and solidify the relationship between the farmers and the factory.

However, Ato Getachew estimates that currently, only about 2 out of 100 farmers participate in the local coop; of those only a few are durum producers. When asked why there is such a low farmer participation rate in the coop, he explains that lack of consistency and capacity in the coop are the major disincentives for joining.

With such inconsistencies, the coop presents as much risk as it does opportunity for these farmers who have so little land and so much to lose.

"This year, I only planted 1/8th of a hectare of durum wheat," explains Ato Getachew. "I know it pays more but I am not familiar with the grain and I might plant it or sow it at the wrong time. Simple farmers like me, we mess up sometimes and I can't afford to focus on grains I am not experienced with."

But, at 1/8 of a hectare of durum wheat per farmer, meeting the factories demand for wheat will surely be a challenge for the coop.

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Charlie Ehle, from the second class of fellows, has been working with Catholic Relief Services as an Emergency Response Specialist since June of 2005. Charlie reports: "In December, 2006, I went to Pakistan to assist the CRS Country Program ramp up their humanitarian activities in a newly established sub-office in Muzaffarabad, Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. Our programming was focused on safe, adequate, and durable Shelter for those at higher elevations. These shelters were a huge success and the local communities loved them. In fact, many who descended to escape the frigid weather returned back to their communities in order to participate in the program. While we had programming staff out in the field, I worked in the Muzaffarabad office to provide back up to our teams. Since our program was rapidly expanding, we needed many qualified staff to get communities the shelter materials they desperately needed. My job focused on recruiting, interviewing and training new staff to work with our

shelter program. This was a most challenging, but rewarding job. While being part of the team who works directly with the communities is often the most direct assistance, I provided the necessary back up to get the job done."

Congratulations to **Michael Johnson**, from the first class of fellows, who just received his first permanent assignment as a USAID Foreign Service officer. Michael reports: "I have been assigned to our West African Regional Program Office based in Accra, Ghana. I should be at post by mid-August after completing a brush-up French course at our Foreign Service Institute. My portfolio will cover all of French-speaking West Africa, in addition to Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Equatorial Guinea. It is a growing program with such recent additions as the Millennium Challenge Account 'threshold countries' and our efforts in 'transition' states."

Congratulations are also in order to **Jason Forauer**, from the second class, who landed a position as an emergency coordinator for drought in Ethiopia with ACIDI-VOCA. ●



Ato Getachew, an Ethiopian farmer.

the price of food to compensate; people can't afford to pay more."

However, companies that have been importing grains that could be grown locally can afford to pay a higher price if quality standards can be met. They are willing to pay above the market price to get large quantities of high quality durum wheat from local farmers.

"Every farmer in the coop wants to grow this wheat now," explains Ato Getachew, a member of the local cooperative's association of durum wheat producers.

In the first year of the coop's agreement with the factories, 18 farmers participated and proved that they were able to meet the international quality standards.



Charlie with children from the local community.

The Critical Role of U.S. International Food Aid

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areas by providing incentives for the necessary labor. In Bangladesh, food rations have helped encourage poor families to enroll both boys and girls in school. Female education, in turn, contributes to improvements in children's education, health, and nutrition, and reduces fertility rates. In Haiti, the use of micronutrient (vitamin and mineral) fortified food aid commodities as weaning foods, along with traditional local foods, has helped improve the nutrition of low-income young children, although enhancing poor households' access to meat and other animal products is essential if these children are to meet their full nutritional needs on a sustainable basis. Finally, food aid can help break the vicious cycle of

HIV/AIDS and food insecurity in Africa, by helping people avoid risky food access strategies and improving the dietary intake of people living with the disease. In order to make food aid effective in reducing risk and mitigating the impacts of HIV/AIDS, it is essential to look at food aid programs through an "HIV/AIDS lens."

How can Congress enhance the effectiveness of our international food aid programs?

The final presenter, *Mark Viso, Vice President of International Operations, World Vision USA*, outlined four steps that must be taken to improve the effectiveness of international food aid programs. First, the fund-

ing for P.L. 480 Title II must be increased to the actual amount needed each year for emergencies and development programs. The budget request for fiscal year 2007 only allots \$1.2 billion while actual expenditures, including supplementals, are closer to \$2 billion. Having the actual amount needed up front will improve program reliability and future planning, which can also achieve cost savings in the long run. Second, Congress must ensure that a larger amount of Title II funds (\$500 million per year) is reserved for the multi-year development programs, rather than diverting these funds for emergencies on an ad hoc basis. The FY 2007 budget request of only \$1.2 billion will keep development programs at the low level of \$335

million, compared to the \$500 million approved level in 2002. As a result, USAID will focus these remaining funds in 15 countries, phasing out programs in 17 other countries. This ends assistance prematurely for millions and limits the ability of the United States to start new programs in areas of great need. Third, Congress must assure flexibility in program options, including allowing monetization in appropriate situations, as well as some appropriate local purchase of commodities for emergency needs under a pilot program. Finally, he urged better linkages between the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) with Title II food aid programs. ●

U.S. International Food Aid Policy Recommendations

Support \$2 billion for PL 480 Title II. Under the Title II program, PVOs and the UN World Food Program provide food aid for emergencies and to assist other vulnerable populations. The regular appropriation is around \$1.2 billion each year, while needs have consistently been closer to \$2 billion. This results in breaks in food aid flows to participants and premature closure of programs, leaving recipients hanging. We are grateful that Congress often provides supplemental appropriations when crises peak, but predictable, adequate funding is needed early in the year to assure steady supplies and effective programs.

Provide \$500 million of Title II funds for multi-year development programs. The U.S. share of food aid for emergency operations is about \$1.5 billion/year. Title II plays an equally important role in assisting vulnerable populations through development programs, such as mother-child health care, agricultural development, food for work, food for education, and programs targeting HIV/AIDS-affected communities. Since 2002, these non-emergency programs decreased from an approved level of \$500 million to an expected \$330 million in FY 2006, and USAID plans to eliminate 17 of the 32 countries that receive assistance. This drastic action is being

taken because of insufficient resources.

Assure flexibility in program options. Flexibility is needed so programs can be tailored to meet local needs. Monetization is an important option to maintain. It is the sale of commodities in recipient countries and, in the case of PVO programs, proceeds are used to improve food security. The sales process itself can be used to improve agricultural markets and processing. For emergencies, flexibility to procure commodities closer to the area of need in a manner that enhances agricultural marketing systems and with controls to avoid price spikes and market distortions is recommended.

Create a funding mechanism that links PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) and Title II food aid programs. There are great opportunities to enhance the impact of HIV/AIDS programs funded through "PEPFAR" grants by combining them with food aid programs. The links between anti-retroviral treatment, proper nutrition, and food consumption are integral to a successful fight against HIV/AIDS. However, under current administrative procedures, it is extremely difficult to integrate food aid and PEPFAR funds into a comprehensive program in the field.

Notes from the field

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An Uncertain Future

This year, the durum producers association has invested over 60 hectares of land to producing durum wheat, but whether this increase will convince private companies to buy from the farmers is yet to be seen. Nevertheless, the farmers in this cooperative have gained more than an opportunity to produce durum wheat or to increase their income, they have realized their own potential to innovate, compete, negotiate and succeed as commercial farmers.

Postcard from Uyuni, Bolivia

by Damiana Astudillo

Damiana is a Mickey Leland Hunger Fellow with the International Plant Genetic Research Institute, based in Rome and PROINPA, a Bolivian agricultural research institute. She is based in Uyuni in southern Bolivia where she is conducting a research project on Andean crops, particularly quinoa. Her main task is to assess what effects high market prices and increased commercialization are having on household consumption, nutrition and biodiversity conservation.

I arrived in Uyuni about 3 months ago to start my year of field work. Although I have had to adjust to many things, I can say that now I feel pretty "at home" in Uyuni. One of biggest changes being forced upon me is a change in my diet. I can no longer call myself a vegetarian. Because Uyuni is extremely isolated (with the closest large town about 7 hours away) the availability of fresh vegetables and fruits is very limited. My diet, especially when I stay in outlying communities, consists of quinoa, rice, potatoes



Damiana with harvested quinoa plants.

and llama meat. It is a daily challenge to eat well, even though I have the knowledge, willingness and economic means to do it.

I can now more fully appreciate the problem of malnutrition in this area where people face so many limitations. The communities where I work are on the other side of the Salar de Uyuni (the world's largest salt flat) and are even more isolated. It was especially difficult to get to them during the rainy months of January and February. It is still difficult now even when the rain has stopped—the "roads" remain muddy and the Salt Flat is a lake—not allowing crossing. Under normal conditions, a ride to these communities in a private pick-up truck can take between 2 to 4 hours. During the rainy season on one occasion it took me literally 54 hours by different modes of transportation to return to my town from one of the communities.

It is reassuring to see that the people in the communities I have visited are interested in the subject of improving their nutrition and learning additional ways of cooking their products. Many women have asked me to conduct not only evaluations and develop some policy proposals but to stay with

them and hold talks on nutrition. Some have asked me if I can have cooking classes with them. With this in mind I have taken the task of learning more about health and nutrition in order to share my knowledge with them. I have taken particular interest in learning more about native foods and other foods available and the cooking and eating practices of the area. I have learned that some of the ways the people prepare their food leads to an almost complete loss of the nutrients. This is the case especially in the grinding of quinoa grains into flour. Formerly, the women used to grind the quinoa with a stone mill, a time consuming task. Now they use a mechanical mill. The change is welcome in terms of time and efficiency, however the mechanical mill ejects the "ring" of the grain where all the protein and amino acids are concentrated—leaving mostly starch in the flour.

The more I learn about life in these communities the more I feel a mix of hope and discouragement. I am working on keeping my mind positive and I like to think that the work I do has indeed the potential of having a positive impact on the lives of these families, even if it is small. ●



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Congressional Hunger Center

229½ Pennsylvania Avenue, SE

Washington, D.C. 20003

Tel: 202-547-7022

Fax: 202-547-7575

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