

# Hunger News & Hope

*...a Seeds of Hope publication*



## Hunger and Armed Conflict

by Helen Humphrey

Although it may not be intuitively obvious, there is a strong link between hunger and armed conflict. For instance, rough estimates by the Brown University World Hunger Program showed Sub-Saharan African countries produced an average of 12.3 percent less food during war years between 1970 and 1993. In many instances, efforts to alleviate the former problem only exacerbate the latter problem.

The World Hunger Organization (WHO) predicts that the number of hungry people will increase in the next 20 years: Cereal crops yields are expected to increase marginally, while the population worldwide is supposed to increase by 2 billion people. In addition, the WHO says, environmental degradation and natural resource depletion will increase conflict and competition for food.

Prolonged "food wars" destroy land, water sources, and political and communication struc-

tures, increasing political and economic instability. Some experts warn that in such conditions, hunger and war are inevitable. Others, according to the WHO, say social inequalities and human-rights abuses must exist for war to break out.

Others say such dire conditions can be prevented through political and economic policies, restructured social systems, and technological advances. Though an effective end to the hunger-conflict cycle has not been realized, evidence points to political and cultural factors as a major component of the hunger-conflict cycle: The WHO reports that the Israel-Palestine conflict is rooted in ethnic, religious, and political differences, as is the Mauritania-Senegal conflict.

According to the WHO, Sri Lanka's civil war is rooted in ethnic-religious conflict, as is Indonesia's conflict in East Timor. While the quest for land is a factor in some of these wars, socioeconomic factors play a larger role. Therefore, it would seem that scarce natural resources are not totally to blame for the hunger-war cycle.

The Local Capacities for Peace Project (LCPP), based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, reports the theft of food aid as the most common reason that hunger aid leads to conflict. Because aid symbolizes economic and political power, people want to control it, the LCPP says. Aid is valuable and armed conflict is expensive; therefore, warring parties steal aid resources like food and blankets either to use themselves or to sell for a profit.

Thievery is only one factor in the relationship between hunger aid and armed conflict. Aid distribution is another factor. Because hunger

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# Food Security Around the World:

## *A Guide to Who's Hungry and Why*

*from World Food Day*

### Asia

A period of rapid economic growth has resulted in major gains in food security across most of Asia and the Pacific. Cambodia led the way while China, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Vietnam also showed strong reductions. Undernourishment increased only in Mongolia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

#### *Cambodia: Reaping the Dividends of Peace*

More land is being farmed, more food is being produced, and far fewer people are going hungry in Cambodia as the country rebounds from decades of conflict. There is more pork, beef, and poultry production and more rice yields. Cambodians' average food intake in 1996 is still scarcely enough to meet the minimum daily requirement and more than one-third of all households fall below the poverty line. Programs to remove landmines and rehabilitate irrigation systems are continuing after decades of war have left them in ruins, as well as a program being created to reduce poverty by creating jobs for vulnerable groups.

#### *DPR Korea: A Bitter Harvest*

The floods, drought, and collapse of its trading relationships have devastated food production in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Total cereal production plummeted to less than half its 1980 level, while the proportion

of undernourished people soared to almost half the population. Rapid economic deterioration left the country without the means to finance needed food imports. As crops failed and imports dwindled, rations were cut drastically by the national public distribution system. Gains in food production were achieved through high-input agriculture. But two years of heavy storms and flooding followed by a severe drought devastated large tracts of agricultural land. The country is now trying to revive agricultural production with improved seed varieties, double-cropping methods, rehabilitating irrigation systems and improving soil fertility.

### Latin America and the Caribbean

In most South American countries, levels are low or rapidly declining, but in Central America, levels are increasing in several countries with Honduras registering the strongest gains. In the Caribbean, Cuba, like its island neighbors, has experienced increases in undernourishment since 1980.

#### *Honduras: Economic Growth Helps to Reduce Hunger*

Steady economic growth and an effective aid program has helped Honduras to reduce the number of undernourished by almost one-third. Increases in food production, imports, and use of stock have all contributed to this decrease. Maize

production nearly doubled, and vegetable oils, sugar, meat, and beans accounted for most of the increase in food intake.

Safe water now reaches 87 percent of the people, and the literacy rate is at 70 percent. The Honduran Social Investment Fund provides direct aid, and a ration program supplies coupons to help schoolchildren, mothers, and elderly people buy food and other necessities. Still, half of the Honduran population lives in rural areas, with 40 percent in extreme poverty, and many working as agricultural laborers on large estates. Commercial agriculture offers good possibilities for growth, but the benefits must be distributed more equally.

#### *Cuba: Loss of Trading Partner Erodes Food Security*

The end of Cuba's trading relationship with the former Soviet Union has dropped the daily food intake by more than 500 calories per person because of a steep decline in food imports. This decline has increased the number of people relying on subsidies while reducing productivity and food intake for many workers and their families. Continued restrictions on trade with the United States add to the country's economic difficulties. Despite its recent problems, Cuba has succeeded in reducing undernourishment to very low levels while relying on trade for more than half of its food. More than half the country's roads are paved and 95 percent of the population have access to safe water. The Cuban Government

has given priority to increasing food production and restructuring industry, but the transition process is far from complete.

## Near East and North Africa

This region accounts for ten of the 14 developing countries where undernourishment affects less than five percent of the population. Morocco's decline represented the best progress among this group of good performers. Significant increases occurred only in Afghanistan and Iraq.

### Morocco: Thriving Economy Boosts Food Security

Mineral wealth and an established position as a trade and commerce center has allowed Morocco to enjoy a reduction from ten percent to five percent of those undernourished. Between 1980 and 1996, daily food intake increased from 2,723 to 3,186 calories, from increases in food production and trade, reaching levels comparable with industrialized countries. Production of cereals and potatoes has more than doubled.

Improvements in transportation, sanitation, and education have occurred in the cities, but half of the population remains in rural areas where poverty and vulnerability persist. Barely half of the population has access to safe water, 56 percent remains illiterate, and 61 percent of the land is severely degraded. More sustainable agricultural practices need to be introduced, and urban jobs and income must be generated.

### Afghanistan: War Leaves Little Ground for Crops

As a result of returning refugees, the population of Afghanistan swelled by 25 percent, and average daily food intake fell from 2,186 to 1,710 calories, significantly below minimum requirements. Two-thirds of the country's provinces are now food-deficit areas, and more than 40 percent of the country's

arable land is riddled with landmines. Only 15 percent of the population has access to safe water and 70 percent is illiterate. Every day, mine blasts kill or maim 10 people—a third of whom are women and children—leaving survivors dependent on family members.

Large volumes of food aid remain far from sufficient to satisfy the minimum needs of such a large number of undernourished people. Until peace is restored, there can be little hope of any lasting solutions.

## West Africa

With Ghana leading the way, eight countries in West Africa reduced hunger significantly between 1980 and 1996, along with the five countries worldwide that scored the greatest gains. But in Central, East and Southern Africa, 13 countries showed large increases with Burundi suffering the largest increase rising 38 to 63 percent in the same time period.

### Ghana: Economic Growth Fuels Rapid Gains

A strong economy and increases in food crops caused Ghana's average food intake to soar from 1,790 calories per day to more than 2,600 calories. The gains came entirely from the betterments in the yields of cassava, yams, maize and rice. The economy grew at an annual rate of 2.3 percent, leading to improvements in sanitation, health, and education. The population with access to safe water increased to 65 percent and illit-

eracy was reduced to 36 percent. Almost one-third of Ghana's population still remains poor, and ten percent live in extreme poverty, in rural areas where food insecurity and vulnerability persist. Continued economic growth and increased opportunities for off-farm employment will be crucial to maintain progress.

### Burundi: Population Growth and Conflict

Undernourishment has increased sharply and food production has fallen as Burundi struggles to cope with rapid population growth, severe land degradation and civil conflict. Average daily food intake tumbled from 2,020 to 1,669 calories, far below minimum requirements. Production of cassava, sweet potatoes and beans have declined. Burundi's weak economy and geographic isolation have left more than 90 percent of the people living in rural areas almost completely dependent on domestic food production. Poorly developed transport and marketing facilities and civil conflict has disrupted production and further restricted trade opportunities. The spiral of population growth, environmental degradation, and falling agricultural productivity, shows that solutions to Burundi's food security problems must be found outside agriculture.

—compiled from "Feeding Minds," an educational project of the U.S. Committee for World Food Day, by Seeds of Hope intern Kimmy Scott. For more information, see [www.worldfoodday.com](http://www.worldfoodday.com).

**The impossible is never out of reach...simply out of focus.  
It is, you might say, a figment of our unimagination.**

—Ken Bryan,  
from *Life is a Weekend—Death is a Monday*

# *What Is Environmental Justice and Where Did It Come From?*

by Chrissie Angeletti

In recent decades, countries around the globe have begun a transition not only into developing nations but disposable ones as well. Today's modern societies run on a system that is supposed to help our economy by increasing product consumption and making our quality of life a little easier. Is this society as good as our television commercials tell us, or is there a higher cost to pay?

Today our disposables industry produces millions of tons of plastic bottles, disposable diapers, and toxic waste. Although you might find this hard to believe, it is true that today the average U.S. citizen is responsible for over one ton of the hazardous waste annually produced. Where does all of our waste go? Well, most of it is probably in transit as individuals bounce it back and forth, using the response "NIMBY"—otherwise known as "Not In My Backyard!" Eventually, however, this waste does have to end up somewhere. The importance of this location is exactly what people involved in the environmental justice movements are trying to tell us.

Environmental justice earned its title in the early 1990s. However, there was an environmental justice movement long before it had a name. For decades hazardous waste has been dumped on the people who did not have the voice to shout out "NIMBY!" These individuals you may already know; they are the poor, the minorities, the marginalized. In the late 1980s, protests arose in Warren County, North Carolina, over the dumping of PCB in landfills.

These protests led to the arrest of 500 people, and thus brought the issues of environmental justice into the national limelight. They also spawned a study by the U.S. General Accounting Office with the auspicious name "Siting of Hazardous Waste Landfills and Their Correlation with Racial and Economic Status of Surrounding Communities." The study revealed that, while African-Americans made up 20 percent of the population of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee (Region IV), 75 percent of the commercial hazardous waste produced by industries there was being dumped in the backyards of African-Americans.

Another national study, conducted at that same time by the Commission for Racial Justice, called

"Waste and Race," found racial identity to be the most significant variable in predicting the location of hazardous facilities in the U.S. The study found that racial identity was a more powerful factor than poverty, land values, or home ownership. After the studies were released and the general public became more educated, the movement's momentum grew. *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*, which was written in 1990, examined the two fields of social justice and environmental studies and how they converged to form the new movement of environmental justice.

Since its debut in the national headlines, the environmental justice movement has prompted controversy around the world. The issues raised in the civil rights movement have reemerged. There should be no doubt in any of our minds that it is a fundamental human right to be safe from environmental hazards—yet, in our country and in countries around the

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world, this right is being abused based on prejudice.

Placing all of our faith in the government to make fair decisions regarding public safety has failed. In the political arena, science can only go so far in influencing opinion. In the end, decisions must be made based on human values. In 1992 staff writers from the National Law Journal conducted another study which found inequities in the way the federal EPA enforced its laws:

*White communities see faster action, better results and stiffer penalties than communities where, blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities live. This unequal protection often occurs whether the community is wealthy or poor.*

The problems faced by the environmental justice movement have been around for a long time. In reality all that this movement has to offer is a group

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# *Genetically Modified Organisms: Can We Afford the Risk?*

by John Christopher Garland

A few months ago I was sitting with a farmer in front of his small house; we had finished our beans and rice and were talking as the sun settled behind a Central American rice field. I was listening to complaints about mills, bank debts, and pesticides, fantasies about markets, and stories and hopes for children and food on the table.

His explanations, frustrated and anxious, hummed like the mosquitoes swarming around my feet. I had heard some bits and pieces in the back of a pickup truck earlier that day, a few of my friends talking about economic, environmental, and social injustices. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) came up too. GMOs are not the specific problem this rice farmer was talking about, but a symbol, perhaps, of a much deeper issue.

Looking for the root of the uproar surrounding protests of genetically modified crops these days, we won't just come across a specific ethical argument over scientific practice. At the root of the protests is a much larger struggle that centers around the odd relationship that industrial capitalism is developing with environmental issues. It is a struggle toward the adoption of acceptable and accountable responses to the environ-

mental and economic crises that are striking at our heels as we stomp through modern history.

Genetic modification has been heralded as the answer to feeding the world's hungry. Struggling fields will fill with bountiful harvests of unimaginable qualities, we are told. Hungry, pitiful stomachs will be satisfied, we are assured. We must remember, though, that hunger is not just caused by the lack of food; hunger is caused by poverty. Parents who cannot feed their children are unable to produce the right kinds of food, and they do not have the money to bring it home from the store.

Hunger is caused by the absence of democracy. The shadow of colonial imperialism and totalitarian exploitation still lingers in the monoculture fields of cash crops planted for consumption in distant places.

The important question, then, is whether or not genetically modified crops, pregnant with scientific potential, can effectively break down the walls that keep families in poverty. Can they really do that? Or will their introduction just add to the levels of class stratification, benefiting only the already privileged?

The rice my friend and I had eaten that evening was white and processed—not from his fields, but from a plastic bag with a foreign label. He doesn't have the means to husk the rice, so he takes it to the mill and uses the money he earns to buy rice at the store. But the mill operator is not able to pay a reasonable price because everyone in the country is buying rice from the United States. It is rice with a price that has been halved by expensive technological innovation and subsidy. But it is still a price, paid by a family that has cut its losses this year to wait for a next year that will probably be no better.

Shifting to GMOs will increase the poor farmer's dependence on the innovations of distant corporations—when, instead, development needs to be sprouting from local

sources, minds, and desires. The farmer will likely need to purchase new seed yearly while the fields, stripped of genetic diversity, become increasingly vulnerable. Modified crops, designed to survive and produce in unfavorable conditions, can promote and extend the systems of monoculture cash crops.

This system is considered "efficient" in the profit margins of large corporations, but it can have severe effects on soil and family health. A farmer whose land is falling apart is enticed to continue planting a single crop that can do nothing for soil quality, income

***Devotion to the preservation of environmental integrity and health, however, are essential to loving our brothers and sisters close at hand, in distant places, and not yet born.***

diversification, or the variety of the family's diet. A market that fluctuates violently awards the only compensation for the losses, and the only fix for the technology's original failure is more technology.

A week or so after I left the rice parcels, I was eating rice and beans with a woman tending to a newborn baby. Her father was dying of stomach cancer from one of the technological fixes the banana companies had discovered years before. His illness does not denounce all scientific inquiry into agricultural improvement, nor does it directly condemn genetic modification. Some GMOs, in fact, are intended to reduce the amount of chemicals needed for successful production. His illness is, however, a harsh manifestation of a sickness that can infect the human worldview with the temptation of relying on technological power to answer all present and future environmental disasters.

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*photo by Matthew Lester*

# Golden Rice: A Case for Transgenic Crops

compiled by Holly Vargo  
from a paper by Jonathan T. Swanson

**G**olden rice is a genetically engineered, golden-hued, vitamin A-enriched rice that scientists developed in 2000. It was created to help enrich the low-nutrient, rice-based diets of the majority of the world's malnourished populations. Vitamin A and iron deficiencies cause significant health problems in areas such as India and rural China, which contain over half the world's population. Vitamin A deficiency weakens the immune system, impairs motor development, and magnifies the effects of diarrhea, respiratory diseases, and measles.

Millions of children go blind and/or die each year as a result of insufficient vitamin A. Supplementation of the vitamin would certainly lower a malnourished child's risk of dying; however, the lack of passable roads and functioning airports makes any efforts to deliver supplements extremely difficult, and therefore impractical. A viable solution to this problem, scientists decided, would be to place the necessary vitamin A in the rice that people are already able to grow for themselves.

The development of golden rice began on the outskirts of Zurich at the Swiss Institute for Plant Scientists, where Dr. Ingo Potrykus researched genetic engineering on rice. In nearby Germany, Dr. Peter Beyer of the University of Freiburg had recently discovered how beta carotene was produced in

daffodils. When the doctors collaborated their findings, the results led to the development in 2000 of a yellow-hued rice containing vitamin A—thus the name “golden rice.”

The global organizations involved with and in charge of the development and testing of golden rice have claimed that they want to make the crop available as soon as possible to the world's poor for no charge. The plan is to eventually

distribute golden rice at no cost to government-run rice-breeding centers in developing nations. The centers will then distribute the rice to local farmers.

While the prospects for golden rice's ability to combat malnutrition sound promising, public opinion concerning the rice as a genetically altered food varies drastically from supportive acceptance to alarmed concern. While Europeans typically display a marked fear of genetically enhanced foods such as golden rice, or “frankenfoods” as they are often pejoratively called, transgenic foods in the U.S. seem to be consumed with little question or concern.

Millions of hectares of transgenic crops are grown every year in the U.S. and at least *some* form of genetically modified material (including modified plants) goes into about

are different from their naturally-occurring counterparts in either nutrition or safety.

Genetically modified crops like golden rice not only stand to improve world nutri-

***While Europeans typically display a marked fear of genetically enhanced foods such as golden rice...transgenic foods in the U.S. seem to be consumed with little question or concern.***

tion, but the environment as well. Through the development of specific types of transgenic crops, it is possible to create new breeds of plants that reduce the need to use various environmentally dangerous pesticides. For example, Monsanto (who are often strongly maligned by GMO opponents) introduced a genetically altered breed of cotton into China that was capable of chemically repelling the cotton-eating bollworm.

Because of this enhanced crop, cotton yields in China have risen by 50 percent per acre, and the need for dangerous organophosphate pesticides has reduced dramatically. As with the case of this special cotton, scientists are also working on adapting golden rice to the conditions of the land in developing countries where the rice will be most needed.

Supporting the development of golden rice and other transgenic crops are influential organizations such as the National Academy of Science and the World Bank. Even the U.S. Congress allocated \$30 million in 2001 in support of work on plant genomics and plant biotechnology. The U.S. Agency for International Development is using this money towards the development of such transgenic crops as golden rice, maize, cassava, wheat, bananas, canola, and other crops preferred in developing countries.

*—This story was compiled by Seeds of Hope intern Holly Vargo from a paper written by Jonathan T. Swanson. Swanson, a minister and economist from Vienna, Virginia, is a doctoral student in Christian ethics at Baylor University. Vargo is a senior professional writing student from Houston, Texas.*



photo by  
Matthew Lester

# The History of Genetically Modified Foods

Despite what some may think, people have actually been genetically altering their crops for centuries. The first agrarians quickly learned to select the best seeds for planting, which led to the evolution of healthier, more robust plants that had fewer aberrations in their genetic makeup. Centuries later, in the 1800s, Gregor Mendel's genetic experiments eventually led to the widespread practice of selective breeding—which produced high-yield seeds and which later resulted in dramatically increased crop yields.

The time period during which crop yields exploded is commonly referred to as the Green Revolution. The Green Revolution allowed agriculture to keep up with growing populations through the introduction of crops that were faster-growing, richer in nutrients, less water-dependent, more pest-resistant, and less vulnerable to pesticide damage.

Although there were significant developments in genetic alteration from the beginning of the Agricultural Revolution to the middle of the Green Revolution, they had occurred through relatively natural means in comparison to today's levels of genetic manipulation. The artificial modifications that today's society relates with scientific genetic experimentation didn't actually get seriously underway until the early 1970s.

A scientific breakthrough in 1972 made it possible for scientists to perform the first manipulations of bacterial DNA, which led to further developments in artificial genetic makeup experimentation. Only a year later the first gene was cloned. Fierce debates over the ethical implications of these scientific developments ensued as questions, brought about by societal fears, arose. People were afraid that genetic experimentations would result in science creating an uncontrollable superbug, or worse. Fears were so numerous and widespread that the National Institute of Health restricted

all genetic experimentation. The regulations were not changed until the 1980s.

Early in that decade, scientists began performing laboratory experiments on plants which resulted in a breed of genetically engineered tobacco. Ethical debates raged on as people speculated over the possible creation of superweeds and the development of diseases in both crops and humans. Due to the former restrictions placed on genetic experimentation and the fact that knowledge was limited concerning the specific results scientific tests would produce, there were few developments in genetic engineering until the early 1990s.

In 1992, then U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle reduced the safety regulations placed on genetically engineered crops. Shortly after this the first two genetically modified crops entered the market: a delayed-ripening tomato and a virus-resistant squash. With transgenic crops now a reality and available to the public, the debate over the issue of the new technology escalated into an ethical war of words that has yet to be resolved.

Some defenders of genetically modified foods, like giant food companies such as Monsanto, claim that biotechnology is not only safe, but also beneficial to the environment and instrumental in helping to solve global hunger problems.

Many people disagree with this stance. Opponents of the defenders' view—such as environmental groups like Greenpeace and food security analysts like FoodFirst—disseminate educational literature on genetically altered foods and stage protests against genetic engineering that even include the destruction of crops. However, regardless of what side of the issue one takes, the fact remains that genetic modification is a current reality of the modern world.

*This summary was adapted by Holly Vargo from a 2001 paper by Jonathan T. Swanson, a Baylor University student in Christian ethics.*



art courtesy of World Hunger Relief, Inc

## What is Environmental Justice?

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of concerned individuals who have decided that, if enough educated citizens ban together, they can muster up a voice loud enough to protect their children from the damaging effects of hazardous substances—not only on the human immune system, but on economic justice and community esteem as well. The problems caused by such pollution are more complicated than one can readily conceive.

—Chrissie Angeletti is a recent graduate of Baylor University in the fields of environmental studies and studio art.

—Listed below are several sources containing more in-depth information on the environmental justice movement, testimonies of individuals affected, and what the government and grass roots organizations are promoting as solutions.

- *Environmental Science: Action for a Sustainable Future, Third Edition*, by Daniel D. Chiras: Redwood City, CA: The Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Co., 1991.

- Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University, 223 James P. Brawley Drive; Atlanta, GA 30314; Phone 404/880-6911; Fax: 404/880-6909; Email: ejrc@cau.edu; web site: www.ejrc.cau.edu.

- Carolina Health and Environment Community Center, the Environmental Resource Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, email: erp@sph.unc.edu; web site: checc.sph.unc.edu.



## Can We Afford the Risk?

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We cannot deny that GMOs will work. But we also cannot deny that guns quiet opposition or slavery increases profits. Our practice must not damage the integrity of our objectives. In a struggle against hunger we must ask if we are breaking apart systems of economic injustice or strengthening them. We must ask if we can return agriculture to the close and healthy relationship with the

environment it depends on—or choose to force, control, and enslave complex and beautiful natural structures. Rather than further distancing ourselves from the natural world, perhaps we can recognize and celebrate our dependent relationship.

As Christians in the developed world, it often seems difficult in the strong cultural currents we live in to remain faithful to our call to love our fellows on the other side of great, faceless economic systems. Devotion to the preservation of environmental integrity and health, however, are essential to loving our brothers and sisters close at hand, in distant places, and not yet born.

We can choose not to support the giants that pressure the poor away from self-directed development and into oppressive systems. We can choose not to invest our money

into their coffers. We can choose instead to cooperate in the purchase of organic, locally produced food; and to reduce and diversify our consumption patterns away from abusive norms.

As communities of faith we need to take part in and strengthen the return to a humble and grateful relationship with creation, speaking out on behalf of healthy diversity, praising the beauty of nature, and even getting our hands dirty as we plant some of the food that ends up on our plates. We in the church have lived under the notion of dominion and control for so long that we will have to retrain ourselves to think and live by the notion of stewardship.

—John Garland, a junior environmental studies major at Baylor University, recently completed a four-month project in sustainable agriculture in Costa Rica.

## Hunger and Armed Conflict,

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most commonly occurs in times of war, aid reinforces the war economy and legitimizes the agendas of the warring parties and the war itself. Aid also increases friction between socioeconomic classes and frees up resources used for the continuation of war.

Sometimes, as in the 1970s and 1980s during the Cold War, hunger is exploited for political purposes, according to the WHO. Food and livestock may be seized or diverted from their intended recipients, farmers may be threatened and forced into submission to the warring party, and food supplies may be poisoned or destroyed, the WHO reports. These problems often continue long after the war has officially ended.

Because war may devastate a country and destroy its health care system, children often still experience problems from under-nourishment and starvation long after the war has ended, the WHO says. If the conflicts go on long enough, as in West Africa and Central America—regions that have been at war for 20 years—the younger generation may grow up not knowing how to do anything but fight and be at war.

Hunger can be a cause of conflict, but conflict exacerbates the depth of food insecurity. As refugees of war pour into neighboring countries, water, land, and food become even more scarce.

In the short-term, aid organizations have helped combat the crisis by distributing aid

to refugees as well as native citizens, but over time, this tactic only disrupts the political and economic structure when refugees go home.

Refugee children who have been displaced grow up with a whole set of psychological, physical, and health problems that further strain a war-torn country's resources. In the 1980s, the number of refugee children reached 5 million.

There are, however, ways to prevent aid from being stolen. The LCPP notes that to be successful, thieves need to know when and where humanitarian aid will be distributed, enough of a motive to make thievery worth their while, and reasonable assurance that they won't get caught. Aid agencies have worked to frustrate these areas.

For example, agencies may deliver aid in random episodes to different locations each time, involve civilians in monitoring their communities for thievery, lower goods' resale value, and make it inconvenient to obtain aid.

In Somalia, for example, the Red Cross gave out blankets that were torn in half. While families could easily sew two pieces back together, thieves probably wouldn't bother.

Another aid agency in Africa distributed radios painted bright pink to women in the community. Any man seen with a bright pink radio was immediately questioned about how he obtained his radio. Other aid agencies have gone to more drastic lengths, such

as threatening to withdraw aid from countries that have stolen goods, worsening the conditions in the country, the LCPP reports. Agencies that have hired merchants to deliver goods, or armed guards to protect goods, have also been counterproductive, reinforcing violence or perpetuating economic dependence on aid and the war that necessitated it.

One promising alternative for breaking the hunger-armed conflict cycle is training people to rebuild their own food resources. Such training programs decrease reliance on humanitarian aid organizations, but they are often under-funded, disorganized, and understaffed. Also, they are not feasible in a society whose population is predominately women or children, according to the WHO.

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Ultimately, some experts argue, entitlement programs and social justice for the underprivileged and disadvantaged are a more long-lasting remedy to the hunger-conflict problem.

—Helen Humphrey is a senior journalism major at Baylor University from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

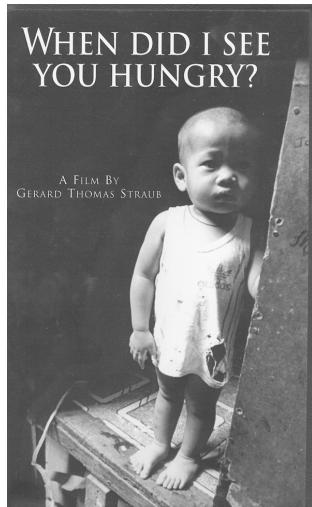
## Resources

### **When Did I See You Hungry?**

**A Short Film by Gerard Thomas Straub**

*reviewed by Katie Cook*

*There are thousands upon thousands of unseen victims far from the rubble of the World Trade Center. The barbaric event of September 11 will have a devastating impact on the poor. On that date there were 1.2 billion people who subsisted on less than a dollar a day. Within a year, that number will increase by 10 million as developing nations see their already fragile economies undermined by the global economic downturn. The increased vulnerability of the already vulnerable is alarming and dramatically increases our need to stand with the poor.*



*I See You Hungry?* which was released late last year. Aptly described as a photographic meditation, the 29-minute video is skillfully crafted and guaranteed to catch your attention. More than 250 black and white still photos are interwoven with occasional colorful video, and with narration that quietly and starkly reminds followers of Christ what God expects of us regarding the poor.

In order to produce the film, Straub spent several months living among poor people in impoverished sections of 28 cities (eight countries) and photographed them in what is described as "intensely personal" images. He describes this experience in part of the narration:

*The dreadful images I captured during my time in Manila's oldest and largest open-pit dump site still haunt me. I pray I do not forget the people of the payatas, nor to forget that I am a part of the reason they are forced to live on a mountain of garbage.*

When I first watched the video, I expected to experience one of two things: either a documentary that was so negative I couldn't recommend it for use in church groups, or something that wasn't particularly new to those of us who have been in the anti-hunger world for a while. What I did experience was a powerful reminder of the humanity of those people for whom we educate and advocate—and why we do it.

The images are stark and compelling, but not desolate. Even stronger than the images, though, is the gentle compassion of the photographer that somehow comes through these portraits. Each person whose image we see is introduced to the viewer—not as a person whose plight is exploited or even thrown at us to induce

repentance, but as a brother or sister whose dignity has somehow survived all the deprivation and suffering.

—for more information, contact Gerard Thomas Straub at PO Box 1794, Burbank, CA 91507.

### **Special Journal Issue on Children's Nutrition**

The Food Research and Action Center and ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers ,and Families have developed a special issue of the journal *Zero to Three* on the nutrition of very young children and its links to development and health.

The articles in this issue respond to the importance of adequate nutrition for the optimum growth and overall development of young children and their future health as adults. A special concern is addressed concerning the impact of poverty on the nutrition, food security, health, and development of infants and toddlers.

Contributions highlight model programs that deal not only with ensuring that young children get enough food, but also with the importance of the emotional environment in which children are fed and how to achieve optimum feeding situations at home and in child care.

To order: Call Shoni Carver at 800/899-4301 or e-mail s.carver@zerotothree.org. Ask for the September 2000 issue.

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## **Single Mothers Moving Off Welfare Still Face Poverty**

WASHINGTON, DC—A new study from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has revealed a blemish on the common assumption that as families move from welfare to work, their increased earnings automatically translate into reduced poverty. The study shows that in the late 1990s, families headed by working single mothers experienced rising earnings due to the strong economy, work supports like the Earned Income Tax Credit and child care, and a reformed welfare system.

But these earnings were offset by the fact that these mothers were no longer receiving the benefits these government programs provided. These families are at best no better off than they were, and at worst, being pushed deeper into poverty.

"Since families headed by single mothers made up the vast majority of welfare recipients prior to the 1996 welfare reform law, and since one of the core beliefs behind that law was that moving single mothers from welfare to work was the best way to improve their economic status, it is critical that we understand how those mothers who went to work are faring," says Wendell Primus, the Center's Director of Income Security.

While the poverty rate for those in single-mother families was essentially the same in 1999 as in 1995, those working single-mother families that were poor grew poorer during this period. This trend is found in census data on the "poverty gap," which measures the depth and severity of poverty.

The poverty gap is the total amount of money by which the incomes of all families that are poor fall below the poverty line. In 1995, working single-mother families that were poor fell a total of \$5 billion below the poverty line, after government benefits were counted. In 1999, this number increased to \$6.3 billion. Also in 1999, the incomes of working single-mother families fell below the poverty line by an average of \$1,505 for each person per family.

*—from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities: see [www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org), or call 202/408-1080.*



## **Pfizer to Offer Drug Discount to Low-Income Elderly**

WASHINGTON, DC—Pfizer, the world's largest drug company, said it would offer its drugs to low-income elderly people for a flat fee of \$15 a month for each prescription. This is "approximately 75 percent less than the retail price of an average Pfizer prescription," the company said.

Drug prices and proposals for Medicare drug benefits are sure to be an issue in many Congressional elections this year as they were in 2000. President Bush and lawmakers of both parties say they want to add drug benefits to Medicare. But proposals for such coverage, which could easily cost more than \$250 billion over 10 years, have stalled in Congress with the evaporation of the federal budget surplus.

Harry A. McKinnell, the Pfizer chairperson, said the company's program was intended to bridge the gap in drug coverage until broader Medicare reform is adopted.

Medicare generally does not cover the cost of prescription drugs outside hospitals. Many Medicare recipients receive coverage through former employers, group health plans, or private insurance policies that supplement Medicare. But the government says that at least 27 percent of Medicare patients, about 11 million people, have no prescription drug coverage.

Pfizer estimated that seven million people could qualify for its program, which will be available to individuals with gross incomes under \$18,000 a year and couples

with incomes below \$24,000. Medicare beneficiaries will have to submit copies of the first page of their tax returns or other proof of income with their applications.

Critics of the program, such as Ronald F. Pollack, executive director of Families USA, a consumer advocacy group, said the program was "a weak public relations substitute for providing true relief" through Medicare. He predicted that "very few people, fewer than a million, will participate" because they will not know about the benefit, will not apply, will not qualify, or do not use Pfizer drugs.

Last July, President Bush announced a plan to offer drug discount cards to the elderly temporarily, while Congress considered changes in Medicare. But the General Accounting Office, an investigative arm of Congress, said that such cards had not significantly cut costs for elderly customers buying brand-name medicines in metropolitan areas.

People can get applications and information about the program, known as the Pfizer Share Card program, by calling 800/717-6005. Patients cannot qualify if they have other drug coverage, through private insurance, Medicaid, or state programs.

*—from the New York Times*

## **Legal Immigrants and Hunger**

In 1996, Congress passed a welfare law which made most legal immigrants ineligible for the food stamp program. While some states began their own state-funded programs to replace food stamps, most legal immigrants remain barred from the program. A considerable amount of research has been done on the impact of these restrictions on legal immigrants' ability to receive aid.

The two main findings are that legal immigrants experience very high rates of hunger compared to the general population, and when available, food stamp benefits do alleviate hunger for legal immigrants.

- Nationwide, 37 percent of all children of immigrants lived in families that worried about or encountered difficulties affording food. (Urban Institute, March 21, 2001, based on 1999 National Survey of America's Families)

- In California, Illinois, and Texas, legal immigrants' food insecurity rates were nearly seven times worse than those of the general U.S. population. (Physicians for Human Rights Survey, May 7, 1998)
- More inclusive state food stamp replacement programs for immigrants generally corresponded with less hardship affording food. (Urban Institute, March 21, 2001, based on 1999 National Survey of America's Families)

—from the *Food Research and Action Center*: contact Robyn Lingo at [rplingo@frac.org](mailto:rplingo@frac.org) or 202/986-2200 x3017

## **Foreign Donors Throw Lifeline to Struggling Congo**

KINSHASA, CONGO—"Instead of [selling] a can of milk powder, I have to open it and sell them five or six spoonfuls," says Justin Olondo, a shopkeeper that once held steady business from civil servants and casual laborers. He has to sell rice and sugar by the glass instead of by the sakombi (about two pounds), and he even has to cut the tiny tins of tomato paste in half.

Olondo's shop parallels the Congolese economy as it stumbles from bad to worse. In 1990, when it was known as Zaire, Congo had an annual gross domestic product (GDP) of \$250 per capita, now it is down to \$78, one of the lowest in the world. This despite its wealth of resources, population of 55 million, and being bordered by nine other nations.

Now, some of the world's big donors such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the European Union, are resuming the flow of development assistance cut off since the era of Mobutu Sese Seko. "A lot of water has gone under the bridge since Mobutu's behavior and corruption caused us to suspend our activities there in 1990," a World Bank official said.

Congo has never held a democratic election and, although President Joseph Kabila has vowed to hold them, no plans have been announced. It is for these reasons that donors should be putting money into Congo—and making aid conditional on progress toward peace and democracy, said J. Brian Atwood, a former administrator of the U.S. Agency

for International Development (USAID). "They're never going to move in that direction unless they're given some sort of encouragement," Atwood said. "There are serious problems, but this is probably the best Congolese government that has come around in decades."

The EU plans to commit to \$108 million in government aid, previously frozen because of what it considered to be a lack of democratic progress, and the World Bank plans to convene a "resource mobilization meeting" in March.

Those in favor of resuming assistance attribute this to the progress under major-general Kabila, who took over a year ago after the assassination of his father, Laurent Kabila. He has begun discussions with opposing parties, rebel groups, and civil society about sharing power and moving toward democracy, a process called "the inter-Congolese dialogue."

Even Kabila's critics acknowledge that he has taken positive steps during his first year in power, but they also wonder if Western powers are turning a blind eye to the government's flaws because of the profit companies will see from Congo's immense natural resources.

Meanwhile, the government is struggling just to pay its civil servants' and soldiers' salaries. Past governments have simply printed money to do so, causing mass inflation. But if the government waits too long, soldiers and police have previously responded by rampaging and looting through Kinshasa. The government and donors are hoping for a different course of events this time around.

—from the Christian Science Monitor

## **Anti-Terror Banking Move Worsens Somalia Food Crisis**

A move by President George Bush to freeze the assets of a Somali-owned money transfer company has had "catastrophic" effects, according to Judith Malby of Christian Aid. An official with a leading British charity said that the "precarious humanitarian situation" in southern Somalia has been worsened by the U.S. clamp-down on Islamic money-lending institutions.

The money transfer company, al-Barakaat, was accused by Washington of diverting costs to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network. According to al-Barakaat, the freeze was based on "malicious lies," Malby said. Tens of thousands of Somalis working abroad used the company to send money home.

The World Food Programme (WFP), which is trying to raise awareness of the situation in Somalia's southern province of Gedo, voiced similar concerns, stating that some 500,000 people are suffering "serious food shortages." The WFP says nearly 40 percent of children in Gedo are malnourished, with almost 10 percent severely so.

The agency says only 5,000 tons of the requested 20,000 was provided by donor governments. The total failure of the August harvest combined with the continuing drought means there is no prospect for improvement unless donors provide 15,000 tons of food immediately.

Also contributing to the deteriorating situation are reports that Washington is preparing to take military action in Somalia as part of Bush's "war against terrorism," says both the WFP and independent relief officials in the East African nation.

"Far from spreading fear, the U.S. and other governments should help us fight poverty and the injustices that cause it," said Ahmed Aden, the Somalia director for Britain's ActionAid.

Although speculation about imminent military action against the Somali government—which has strongly denied connections with al-Qaeda—has diminished over the past 10 days, officials in Washington remain concerned about the activities of a number of individuals living in Somalia.

"The current drought, the very low level of humanitarian assistance, the prevailing climate of insecurity, and the fears of further disruption could push an already very precarious situation over the edge," said Kevin Farrell, WFP's Somalia country director.

While few observers think that large-scale military action against the Somali administration is likely, covert operations targeting specific individuals remain a distinct possibility, according to reports.

—from One World

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### **Statement of Purpose**

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group intends to seek out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable, and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

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## *et cetera*

“We are fools for Christ’s sake,”

Paul says, faith says—the faith that ultimately the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men, the lunacy of Jesus saner than the grim sanity of the world. Through the eyes of faith, too, the Last Supper, though on one level a tragic farewell and failure...is also, at its deeper level, the foreshadowing of great hope and the bodying forth of deep mystery. Frail, fallible, foolish as he knows his disciples to be, Jesus feeds them with himself. The bread is his flesh, the wine is his blood, and they are all of them including Judas to drink him down. They are to take his life into themselves and come alive with it, to be his hands and feet in a world where he no longer has hands and feet, to feed his lambs.

—Frederick Buechner, *The Faces of Jesus*



If we would follow Jesus, we must take certain definite steps. The first step, which follows the call, cuts the disciple off from his previous existence. The call to follow at once produces a new situation. To stay in the old situation makes discipleship impossible. Levi must leave the receipt of custom and Peter his nets in order to follow Jesus. One would have thought that nothing so drastic was necessary at such an early stage. Could not Jesus have initiated the publicans into some new religious experience, and leave them as they were before? He could have done so, had he not been the incarnate Son of God. But since he is the Christ, he must make it clear from the start that his word is not an abstract doctrine, but the re-creation of the whole life of man. The only right and proper way is quite literally to go with Jesus.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

It is unacceptable to God if our worship is not followed by actions—actions that are showing mercy, that are showing justice, that are showing love and kindness.

—Barbara Baldridge, a missions coordinator in Atlanta

Evangelization is not just about bringing people into the faith and professing a belief in Jesus, but if we really are talking about following Jesus, we have to follow him where he went—which is to the margins of the world.

—Elizabeth McMeekin, director of the Festival Center in Washington, DC

Worship is dangerous. It is not a retreat from reality, but a direct engagement with ultimate reality: God. Genuine worship is a response to God and what God has done; in it we make ourselves vulnerable to the story of Israel and Jesus. Sham worship attempts to manipulate and transform God, but true worship praises God as God is and calls Christians to risk the transformation of themselves and the world.

—Robert Webber and Rodney Clapp, *People of the Truth*

Seeds of Hope Publishers also produce quarterly packets of worship materials for the liturgical year—with an economic justice attitude. These include litanies, sermons, children's and youth activities, bulletin art, and drama.

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