

STATEMENT OF Ken Hackett

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Before the**

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
U.S. SENATE**

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I. Introduction

Mr. Chairman: I thank you for calling this hearing on global hunger. No issue more justly cries out for U.S. leadership: we must end hunger to advance human dignity and to remove a major source of unrest in the world.

I am Ken Hackett, Executive Director of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), a private voluntary organization (PVO) with programs on five continents and in 92 countries, where we are actively addressing famines and promoting food security. The problem of hunger is age-old; the President's vision of government support for faith-based and private efforts to provide accountable solutions, though, has never been more possible. We can build a world rooted in social justice and in which no one goes to bed hungry and in which every nation enjoys the protection of food security.

II. State of Hunger in the World

Yet around the world, food insecurity continues. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the food-insecure population doubled during the same period (IFPRI, 2001). Right now, more than 30 million Africans face the risk of starvation – with about equal proportions in the Horn of Africa and southern Africa.

I will leave to others to elaborate all the complex root causes of food insecurity and hunger. However, CRS field experience points to several current trends around the world:

1. **BAD AND UNACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE:** Zimbabwe and Haiti are two prime examples where one can attribute the food insecurity and hunger of large portions of the population to government practice and policies that are neither accountable to their citizenry nor beneficial in alleviating the poverty and misery of the people.
2. **WAR AND CIVIL UNREST:** Instances today in Ivory Coast and Liberia, and most regrettably in Gaza and the Holy land, show us that fighting and civil disturbance takes its toll most immediately on the young, the old and those who are made vulnerable in the hostilities.
3. The **PANDEMIC OF HIV/AIDS** is having an increasingly negative impact on farmers' ability to expend energy in farming. The death of adult breadwinners and the debilitating

impact of the disease on those stricken with it, mean that fewer hectares are cultivated less intensively. Even more troublesome is the specter of hundreds of thousands of orphans who will not have the training or motivation to farm in the future.

Obviously there are other factors such as poverty (aggravated by drought), overstressed agricultural systems (due to drought, poor land management, and lack of proper investment), world trade practices, and others. The three causes initially mentioned are to our mind the most critical and ones that can and should be addressed in our foreign and food aid, in our diplomatic efforts and through the fullest range of American representation abroad. American PVO's are best positioned to do so.

III. Constraints to an Effective Response

Improving food security and alleviating hunger require a long-term commitment to communities and families. Inadequate resources, administrative delays, and the lack of a comprehensive, long-term development strategy have hindered our nation's response to global hunger.

CRS appreciates the Administration's commitment to provide additional funds for development through the Millennium Challenge Account. Reversing the long-term decline in foreign assistance levels is a credit to the Administration's understanding of the links between poverty and hunger and our nation's security in the post 9/11 world. These funds must not displace other regular development accounts that are meeting critical needs, though, or our commitment to do more will be hollow and our rhetoric cynical.

The MCA also must be complemented by a strong commitment to expanding developmental and emergency food aid programs. The Farm Bill created the framework for a U.S. food aid program that meets U.S. interests and also provides for the needs of hungry people. The program Congress enacted relies on needs-based programs such as an expanded Title II program, Food for Progress, and a small International Food for Education program. The approach cut supply-driven surplus food aid programs, such as 416(b), and increased demand driven food aid in order to allow for a sufficient and predictable source of food for rational programming.

While the FY 2003 budget increased Title II, it did not do so at a level commensurate with the loss of surplus food aid resources. The Administration had also proposed to prohibit PVO access to Food for Progress. Only in the final Omnibus spending bill did an amendment mandate PVO access to this valuable resource and ensure that the authorized level of 400,000 metric tons would be fully utilized. I want to thank the Chairman and other Members of the Committee for their leadership and support on these issues.

The hunger crisis in Africa has further aggravated the funding crisis. Right now, total global needs greatly exceed the resources available. CRS and other PVO's applaud the bipartisan effort in the Senate to add \$500 million in emergency food aid for Africa. We eventually got \$250 million in the FY '03 Omnibus spending bill and must immediately press to get the other \$250 million. Without further supplemental aid, a New Jersey-sized population faces starvation.

Globally, USAID is being forced to cut food aid development programs in order to provide emergency food aid. Already, critical CRS developmental food aid programs are being cut or delayed because of resource shortfalls. We have been told that programs in Haiti, Malawi, Ghana, and Central America will not be funded as planned and approved or will be significantly delayed. In Nicaragua, for example, where drought and decline in coffee prices have hurt food security, CRS was asked to integrate 5,000 coffee farmers into our program without additional resources; Title II programs were then reduced mid-year. Cutting these programs only contributes to future famine.

In FY 2004, we believe that a baseline of \$1.4 billion in regular Title II food aid appropriations is needed. We must fully fund the needs-based programs in order to compensate for the loss of surplus commodity programs, as envisioned by the Farm Bill.

I know many of you share my concern about the long-term resources for food aid and foreign aid. The prospect of massive tax cuts, war with Iraq, increases in other military spending, and homeland security requirements may drain the budget, regardless of one's views on these issues. Our staff around the world are concerned about how we as a nation are being perceived. Direct anti-terrorism efforts must be accompanied by a vigorous, expansive anti-hunger, anti-poverty campaign that expresses our best motivations.

Administrative delays have also hampered our global hunger response. In Southern Africa, CRS, World Vision, and CARE developed an innovative response called C-SAFE that took 3-4 months to be approved. Millions of people had to wait for critically needed assistance. Meanwhile, another large CRS response for the Horn of Africa was delayed, waiting for approval of the C-SAFE proposal. We understand that staffing gaps in Food for Peace have delayed their internal processes, and that investment in their information systems would improve their responsiveness. We certainly support providing adequate resources to Food for Peace to allow them to expand their capacity. Streamlining these review and approval processes is critical for PVO's.

Finally, food is not a panacea; simply feeding hungry people will not solve the problem of hunger. CRS links food aid to a wider strategy of investing in food security and local agricultural development. We applaud AID for its recent recommitment to agricultural development. But we need even more than the FY 04 budget recommends.

IV. U.S. government Support to American PVO Food Aid Programs

Long-term hunger alleviation that contributes to stronger more stable societies requires both American PVO and multi-lateral responses. Food aid programs implemented through U.S. PVO's meet community and family level needs, while increasing the capacity of local groups and structures to address a range of social service and development problems. Multi-lateral programs reflect our nation's commitment to provide resources through the World Food Program, which also has an important role in addressing food emergencies and famines.

U.S. PVO's have a uniquely American role in alleviating hunger:

- Like our food aid program in general, PVO's embody the generous spirit of the American people. They represent the diversity and creativity of our nation as well as our commitment to the poor. They serve as unofficial ambassadors of the people of the United States, contributing to a positive perception about the United States.
- U.S. PVO's are also ambassadors to the American people for our food aid and overall foreign assistance programs. My organization, Catholic Relief Services, is expanding dramatically its effort to educate Americans about their moral responsibilities to assist the poor overseas, including through support for increased food aid and foreign aid.
- U.S. PVO's also provide significant value added on the ground. We work through networks of partners that provide a level of accountability, community access, and knowledge that most governments in the developing world are unable to provide. These private networks supplement and in some cases replace government networks that due to corruption, inadequate resources or other problems are dysfunctional.

In India, for example, 2,500 local organizations partner with CRS to deliver food aid. These partners have developed strong relationships in their communities due to their food aid role and are therefore able to work with them on peacebuilding, disaster prevention, and participation in local and district-level political structures, in addition to a variety of more traditional development issues such as health education, HIV/AIDS prevention and care, water management, and social welfare. The cumulative effect of this network in parts of India with the poorest and most disenfranchised people is massive.

Even if governments in the developing world were all adequate as food delivery and development mechanisms, our nation in particular should support the capacity of private, non-profit efforts to alleviate hunger. Strong societies, such as ours, are supported by a web of local groups and organizations that hold the government accountable, provide a range of services to the community, and allow citizens to contribute to their own development. U.S. PVO's are uniquely qualified and positioned to accomplish this and food aid is a critical tool in this task.

The WTO draft agreement on agricultural trade for the Doha Round negotiations includes a proposal on food aid that would eliminate monetization and only allow non-emergency food aid through WFP. Developmental food aid programs implemented without a civil society focus and the value added of U.S. PVO's will be less effective and less popular with the U.S. population. Before and at the Doha Round negotiations, the U.S. should vigorously oppose this proposal.

V. New Approaches for Food Aid

The Farm Bill provided a food aid framework that will allow CRS and other PVO's to realize their potential in food aid programs and in increasing food security. The reforms in the Farm Bill must be given a chance to work. We have appreciated Food for Peace's efforts to streamline food aid procedures, with our advice and participation. This needs to continue.

The Farm Bill's needs-based approach to food aid ensures that surplus commodities are not dumped irrespective of local consequences. Instead, we tailor aid to meet local food needs without disrupting local markets or displacing commercial transactions. We can further integrate such aid with a wider strategy to promote food security that engages local partners and that

includes programs to promote improvements in education, health, water and agriculture, as well as in economic performance and governance.

In West Africa, for example, CRS has developed a model food security strategy that includes improving human capital, increasing income, preparing for and responding to emergencies, and integrating sectoral responses. This strategy seeks to alleviate immediate hunger, while at the same time changing the conditions under which food insecurity develops and persists. The strategy relies on an overall, long-term approach of social capital/civil society formation. U.S. food aid programs must support the full spectrum of these needs.

Social Capital Formation

The primary responsibility for development rests with developing nations themselves. Weak and authoritarian governments have impeded progress and maintained or worsened poverty levels. Local organizations and groups that are part of civil society have a vital role in assessing problems, prioritizing investments, and identifying practical approaches to service delivery. Informed and helped to organize, civil society is likely to hold government accountable more effectively than donors. Supporting partner networks and civil society development is thus a critical long-term strategy in increasing food security. Foreign assistance including food aid should therefore have an explicit focus on civil society development, with the necessary commitment of financial and technical resources.

Long-term community mobilization and participation in the political process should be an explicit objective of developmental food aid programs. U.S. PVO's are uniquely qualified and positioned to accomplish this and food aid is a critical tool in this task.

Human Capital Formation

If an "iron law" of sustainable food security exists, it is that the way to escape food insecurity in the long run is through human capital development. The importance of investing in human capital in terms of the provision of education and health care has figured predominantly in the literature. Empirical data on the impact of education and health demonstrates that improved human capital has positive effects on economic growth, productivity growth, long-term development and the quality of life.

Expanding food-assisted education would contribute greatly to human capital, and thus to food security. Illiteracy and the resulting lack of knowledge and skills impact overall availability, access, and utilization of food. A 1993 USAID study showed that for every additional year of schooling, farm output increased by 5 percent. CRS manages Food-assisted Education programs in Benin, Burkina Faso, and Ghana. Title II Food Aid provides school lunches that improve access to education for approximately 400,000 school-aged children. CRS leverages the food aid with resources from other sources to improve the quality of the education provided.

Food aid programs that address the increased nutritional needs on persons and communities affected by HIV and AIDS are also critical for preserving the human capital in society.

Particularly in Africa, where the AIDS pandemic is most severe and where hunger is endemic, food aid is necessary to save lives.

Preparing for and Responding to Emergencies

Food aid is a critical component of emergency response. The current crisis in Africa is but one example. Critical food shortages exist in Afghanistan, Central America, and Haiti. Most scenarios of a war in Iraq indicate millions of refugees and millions more requiring emergency food aid. Addressing these emergency requirements and ongoing development needs around the world requires \$1.8 billion in U.S. food assistance for FY 2003. So far Congress has provided only about \$1.2 billion in regular Title II food aid and another \$250 million in emergency assistance as part of the Omnibus Appropriations Bill. At least \$250 million more will be needed immediately for CRS and other organizations to respond to the crisis.

In addition to the immediate crisis in Africa, our experience has generated several recommendations for responding to hunger emergencies:

- Disaster mitigation and prevention needs to be a part of every development program. \$1 dollar of emergency preparedness and mitigation saves \$7 dollars on relief. CRS' development food aid programs, implemented through networks of local organizations, are frequently platforms for disaster mitigation. Development programs, especially those supported by food aid, should include risk and vulnerability assessment, community-led early warning systems, and community coordination for emergency preparedness and community-led mitigation initiatives. CRS is testing many of these community-focused emergency preparedness and mitigation methods in India, Madagascar, Niger, Latin America, and East Africa.
- Disaster response programs need to move to recovery as quickly as possible. In East and West Africa, CRS has experimented successfully with market-based programs in disaster recovery, such as seed fairs, that build productive capacity after a disaster. These restart local economies, support local entrepreneurs and avoid dependence on imported, external, sometimes locally inappropriate supplies.
- Our nation's emergency food aid program needs a permanent revolving fund to respond quickly. The Bill Emerson Trust has been a good first step. It has not been a reliable mechanism, however.
- The Famine Fund included in the FY '04 budget could be a helpful mechanism. We look forward to studying it further as specifics become available.

Conclusion

Global hunger remains and in some cases grows, eroding the conditions for a safe and secure world for all. American PVO's are positioned to take advantage of the reforms in the Farm Bill to address emergency and long-term hunger needs. In partnership with the U.S. government and consistent with the President's vision of accountable solutions managed by private and faith-based charity, we can help end hunger as we know it.