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pour
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Organización
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y la
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**LECTURE IN HONOUR OF FRANK L. MCDOUGALL BY DAVID BECKMANN
PRESIDENT, BREAD FOR THE WORLD AND THE U.S ALLIANCE TO END HUNGER
ON 19 NOVEMBER 2005**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I am honored by this opportunity to speak with you. You represent the foreign ministries of the world, U.N. agencies, and civil society. The world looks to you for leadership in overcoming hunger.

This lecture is named after Frank McDougall, the Australian visionary who proposed the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. We also honor the other people who have given this lecture over the years, pioneers such as Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania; John D. Rockefeller of the Rockefeller Foundation; and Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary General of the United Nations.

I want to thank Director General Jacques Diouf for inviting me to give this year's McDougall Lecture. Let me also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the leaders and staff of all three food-related U.N. agencies – the FAO, the World Food Programme, and IFAD. And I also want to pay special tribute to Ambassador Tony Hall and Assistant Director General Eva Clayton. They are among my personal mentors.

This lecture is in three parts. First, I think you will be interested to learn more about Bread for the World. We are a grassroots movement within the United States, and our members have repeatedly shown that they can get the U.S. government to do things that are important to

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hungry people around the world. Second, I want to argue more generally that building political will is the key to progress against hunger. Finally, I want to make some suggestions to this important audience about specific ways you can help to build the political will needed to end widespread hunger.

Bread for the World

Back in 1974, a pastor named Arthur Simon and some other church leaders read reports from the first World Food Conference. They learned that it was feasible to end world hunger, if only we could muster the necessary political will. So they invited individuals and churches across the United States to form a network that would lobby our nation's elected leaders to do more to overcome hunger.

Bread for the World now has 57,000 members, including 2,500 congregations. We mobilize a quarter of a million constituent contacts with members of the U.S. Congress every year. We include a wide array of Christian churches, and we work together with Jewish, Muslim and secular organizations. Bread for the World helps concerned people learn about policy issues that are important to hungry people, and then we mount nationwide campaigns to pass anti-hunger legislation. We are proud to share our name with Germany's Bread for the World, but we are completely separate organizations.

I think the best way to explain Bread for the World is to tell you about our members in Birmingham, Alabama. About ten years ago, a young mother named Pat Pelham and her friend Elaine Van Cleave started organizing on Bread for the World issues. They are people of faith, and Pat felt called by God to do something about hunger in Africa. These women are Presbyterians, but they learned about Bread for the World through a Catholic priest, Father Martin Muller. Pat and Elaine began by organizing an event at their church that engaged their representative in Congress, Spencer Bachus.

In 1998, activists in Britain launched the Jubilee campaign to cancel the debts of poor countries. U.S. church bodies and Bread for the World drafted legislation for introduction in Congress. Then in 1999, Spencer Bachus was named chair of the relevant subcommittee in Congress. So I telephoned Pat Pelham.

Pat and Elaine came to Washington. They brought a petition signed by 400 members of Father Muller's church. Spencer Bachus now says quite openly that he then knew almost nothing about international poverty or debt. But his constituents spoke from their hearts about why these things were important to them, and Spencer Bachus became a powerful advocate for reducing the debts of low-income countries.

Bread for the World people in Birmingham didn't stop with one meeting. They organized more community events – now to celebrate Bachus' leadership on this issue. They convinced the local newspaper to write about it. They recruited about 20 churches in Birmingham to get their members writing letters to Congress. They built political will.

Tens of thousands of other people across the United States were doing similar work to line up support from their members of Congress. Groups in many other countries were also active

in the Jubilee campaign. In the end, the annual debt payments of 25 of the world's poorest countries were reduced by \$1 billion annually. In those countries, there are a lot more children in school and more medicines in rural clinics.

I visited Uganda last year and got to meet girls who are graduating from primary school—because Uganda was able to shift resources from debt payments to eliminating school fees. Girls who know how to read and write will be better mothers and better farmers.

When President Clinton signed the legislation that funded the U.S. role in debt relief for poor countries, I was invited to introduce him. President Clinton gave Spencer Bachus credit for playing a crucial role in winning approval from Congress. And I gave credit to Pat Pelham, Elaine Van Cleave, and Martin Muller. I don't think the world would have written down the debts of low-income countries if these individuals had not so effectively lobbied their representative in Congress.

Bread for the World helps concerned individuals and groups have an impact. The national organization mounts campaigns, leads the work from Washington, and provides materials and support for our volunteers at the grassroots level.

Since the passage of debt-relief legislation in 2000, Bread for the World has been focused on getting the United States to increase poverty-focused development assistance. The United States has, in fact, doubled development assistance over the last five years, and Bread for the World helped to make this happen. Last year, Bread for the World joined forces with Bono, the Irish rock star, and with lots of other groups in the ONE Campaign. ONE is the U.S. incarnation of the Millennium Goals campaign, and 1.5 million people (many of them young people) are now receiving ONE Campaign emails about overcoming global poverty and AIDS. The Live 8 concerts this summer – one just across the street from here – helped us convince President Bush and his G8 colleagues to commit to deeper debt relief and further increases in development assistance to Africa and other poor parts of the world.

Within the United States itself, 38 million people live in food-insecure households. These people are not as hungry as the 850 million undernourished people in developing countries. But in many low-income U.S. homes, the family sometimes runs out of food. So Bread for the World is currently resisting proposals from President Bush and many members of Congress to cut the Food Stamp Program and other programs of assistance to low-income people in our country. We are urging that they instead pass the Hunger-Free Communities Act, which would confirm their commitment to cut U.S. food insecurity in half by 2010 and help community groups end hunger at the local level.

Bread for the World took the lead in organizing the U.S. Alliance to End Hunger. Thank you for what you and the U.N. agencies in Rome have done to launch the International Alliance Against Hunger and national alliances in many countries. The U.S. Alliance has brought together diverse religious groups, charities, foundations, corporations, unions, and individuals to build public will to end hunger in our country and worldwide. The U.S. Alliance has done surveys and other studies of how U.S. voters think about hunger. A large majority of U.S. voters want our government to pursue effective initiatives to reduce hunger in our country and around the world. Alliance members are planning to go together to likely candidates for President of the United States to urge them to come out in favor of initiatives to reduce hunger and poverty.

I have so far talked about my own experience. There are other ways to build political will, and different strategies make sense in different countries. Yet Bread for the World – and the U.S. Alliance to End Hunger – do provide examples of what needs to happen in various ways in every country of the world and on a much larger scale. The key to reducing hunger is building political will.

Building Political Will

The world has long recognized that rapid progress against hunger is feasible. The cost of ending world hunger is easily affordable. The technical and implementation challenges are surmountable. The binding constraint is political commitment. Over the last several decades, many reports and conferences on world hunger have concluded with a list of proposed actions and a call for more political will.

But no report or conference should ever conclude that way again. Instead, the analysis should continue by proposing specific actions to build the necessary political will.

Governments are the main location of political will. Government programs can reduce – or add to – hunger on a large scale. Government policies set the framework in which individuals, business and civil society can contribute to progress against hunger. Individual politicians or officials can thus make important contributions to progress against hunger.

But individuals in power are limited in what they can do. So it is important to create and strengthen governmental institutions that are dedicated to reducing hunger and poverty – an extension program for small farmers in poor parts of the country, for example, or the nutrition division of an agriculture ministry.

We also need people and organizations outside government to push for government action to reduce hunger. Political parties, civil society, organizations of poor people, the media, business corporations, and active individuals can all play roles in creating political will. And sustained political commitment depends on systematically building institutions outside government that will push for progress against hunger over a period of decades.

International organizations can help. They influence governments, and they disseminate ideas and information to people all around the world. The first World Food Conference spawned Bread for the World and many other anti-hunger groups.

Building political will is a project. Like other projects, it requires know-how. What Bread for the World knows about how to build political will comes mainly from our own activist experience. We have looked for studies on how to build political will to reduce hunger and poverty – and have been surprised by how little literature we have been able to find. We summarized what we have learned in a paper for the U.N. Millennium Hunger Task Force. It is available on the web sites of Bread for the World (www.bread.org) and the U.S. Alliance to End Hunger (www.alliancetoendhunger.org). But we need more case studies and analysis.

Building political will also costs money. People in the commitment-building business spend a lot of their time fundraising, and many commitment-building efforts fail for lack of money.

Bread for the World doesn't get any money from the U.S. government. But we find that we can leverage every \$1 in our own budget to win at least \$100 in public funds for effective programs that help hungry people. Our experience suggests that investments in commitment-building have high returns. But this rule-of-thumb ratio also suggests that substantially more investment is needed. By conservative estimates, achieving the Millennium Development Goals will require an additional \$50 billion a year in development assistance. If we want the United States to contribute \$13 billion of this extra \$50 billion, we will need tens of millions of dollars more per year for advocacy and related education in the United States. Fortunately, funding for advocacy on global health and poverty issues is, in fact, increasing. Several major foundations are helping, and public contributions are also going up.

Commitment-building should also be a planned component of many development activities around the world, and it needs to be financed. Official development assistance is not appropriate for some political work, so we need to create new sources and channels of funding.

Commitment-building work among poor people themselves is especially important. Programs that are supposed to help poor people often fail to reach them or work well at the point of delivery. Governments are usually preoccupied with other concerns and take actions that completely bypass the needs of poor people or do them damage. But small-farmer organizations, community organizations, some religious bodies, and some political parties speak up for poor people.

Two of my coworkers recently visited Senegal and were impressed by Union des Groupements Paysans in Mekhe, 120 kilometers from Dakar. This is a small NGO. Most of its 15 staff are local people who have gone to university and returned to their community. They have little outside funding, but they provide extension, literacy training, and storage facilities for farmers. They are helping farmers become more businesslike and also learn how to defend their interests. These activists in Mekhe, Senegal, remind me of Bread for the World's activists in Birmingham, Alabama.

Commitment-building among poor people starts at the grassroots, but has implications at the national level too. In Ethiopia now, nongovernmental organizations are taking great risks to speak out against manipulations that threaten to undermine the important progress Ethiopia has made in recent years.

Recommendations

Permit me now to offer four recommendations to you officials who are gathered here in Rome right now.

First, I urge you to use the power you have within your own country to provide help and opportunity to hungry people. As government officials you can provide support to policies and

programs that will help poor people in rural areas improve their livelihoods. You can increase public investment in nutrition assistance for hungry people, especially small children.

You can open the doors of power to groups in your society who represent the interests of hungry people. When agriculture officials work with associations of poor farmers or advocacy groups, you help them grow in strength. I am impressed that Brazil's Zero Hunger initiative includes major efforts to mobilize Brazilian society in reducing hunger.

A second recommendation is that you use the meetings of the next few days to push for progress on development assistance and trade.

The nations of the world have agreed to increase development assistance and to improve the use of financial resources in countries that receive assistance. You can monitor progress. Bread for the World praised President Bush when he promised at this year's G8 Summit to double U.S. development assistance to Africa by 2010 and help double development assistance generally. But I must now report that he has allowed his own party to cut by more than half the increase in development assistance he proposed for next year. The increase in poverty-focused development assistance will still be \$1 billion. But I ask President Bush to remain personally involved in this issue, and make sure that our nation keeps the promises he has made on our behalf to poor and hungry people around the world.

The Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations could give millions of the world's poorest people improved livelihood opportunities. They would benefit from reductions in trade-distorting subsidies to agriculture, access to the markets of industrialized countries, and extra assistance to poor countries to build capacity to take advantage of trade opportunities. But the Doha negotiations seem to be at a standstill, and we need a breakthrough at the meeting of trade ministers in Hong Kong next month. If there is no breakthrough soon, a new multilateral trade agreement may well be delayed for several years.

Europe tends to be more progressive than the United States on development assistance issues, but Europe's current position on agricultural trade issues is, in my judgment, less progressive. These are difficult and complicated issues, but the people gathered here are uniquely well-positioned to open doors to a successful Doha round. Can some of you loosen the current logjam in negotiations on agricultural trade? If you can, the whole world, including many families who struggle with hunger, will be better off because of your effort and creativity.

My third recommendation is that you strengthen the International Alliance Against Hunger. Here are some specific suggestions:

- Create national alliances against hunger in more countries, and give nongovernmental institutions a stronger role in national alliances.
- Approve FAO's proposal to cluster its public communication functions and increase staffing for the International Alliance.
- Support what the FAO, the World Food Programme and IFAD do to help to build political commitment – their conferences and reports; FAO's support for the International Alliance and World Food Day; the World Food Programme's "Walk the

World” and its forthcoming child hunger initiative; and IFAD’s exciting work to strengthen organizations of poor people.

- Encourage collaboration among the three food-related U.N. agencies in their public mobilization efforts. It is easier for civil society to rally around their leadership when they act together. They have joined forces in support of the International Alliance, for example.
- Finally, the International Alliance (www.iaaph.net) should expansively connect to complementary efforts. The More and Better Campaign joins NGOs from 25 countries in pushing for more and better funding for agriculture, rural development and nutrition (www.moreandbetter.org), and there are now broad Millennium Goals projects or campaigns in many countries (www.whiteband.org).

My fourth and final recommendation relates to the Special Forum in September 2006. This will be ten years after the nations of the world pledged to cut world hunger in half by 2015, and I urge you to use the September event to intensify political commitment. It is hard to judge whether big international meetings are worth what they cost. But it would be valuable to bring together diverse organizations from around the world who are working to end hunger. Many civil-society groups are unable to afford international travel. Other types of institutions, including corporations, farm associations and universities, should also be part of the mix. The International Alliance and the More and Better Campaign have already identified committed organizations in many countries. Bringing them together would make the International Alliance come alive and bring a rich array of experience to international attention. Concerned organizations from around the world would join forces in new ways to push toward ending hunger. The U.S. Alliance to End Hunger would like to help bring a diverse array of concerned U.S. organizations to Rome next September.

Plans for September 2006 should also include a sophisticated program to get coverage of hunger and poverty issues by mass media. Might we be able to arrange for Pope Benedict to meet with Bono and Bill Gates next September? Each is communicating powerfully to the world about global poverty, and together they could convince us all that the world just might be rousing itself to make historic progress against hunger, poverty and disease.

The U.N. World Summit this year dealt with many issues, including all the Millennium Goals. It might make sense in 2006 to focus on the first Goal – overcoming hunger and extreme poverty. Some governments are reluctant to commit to a summit that heads of state would attend, but summits are not just pomp and speeches. When a head of state gives a speech, the whole government thinks about the issue and sometimes takes fresh action. Is it too much to ask that heads of state gather at least once a year to assess what progress the world is making against poverty, hunger and disease? What business is more important?

As a person of faith, permit me to end with a few words about God. I believe that God is in love with humankind; that God is moving in history to liberate poor and oppressed people from misery and injustice; that God graciously uses people – people like us – to play an active role in this wonderful liberation.

The people in this room come from many different cultures and traditions. But we all know that making sure that children have enough to eat is the right thing to do. From all of our faith traditions, we know that allowing 850 million people to go hungry is wrong.

Ending hunger is sacred work. There is no more important business.

David Beckmann is president of Bread for the World, Bread for the World Institute, and the U.S. Alliance to End Hunger.

Bread for the World is a citizens' movement that lobbies the U.S. Congress and President to do their part to end hunger in the United States and around the world. Bread for the World has a 32-year record of legislative successes. Bread for the World Institute does research and education on hunger.

The Institute organized the U.S. Alliance to End Hunger. Bread for the World is a broadly interdenominational Christian organization, but the Alliance reaches out to a more diverse array of institutions – Jewish, Muslim and secular organizations, corporations, unions and farmer associations. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization participate as observers.

Beckmann is a Lutheran pastor and also an economist. He worked on poverty issues at the World Bank for 15 years before moving to Bread for the World in 1991. He has lived and worked in Ghana and Bangladesh. He holds degrees from Yale, Christ Seminary, and the London School of Economics.