Bread for the World
Louisiana

The Twomey Center for Peace Through Justice
Loyola University New Orleans

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A Circle of Caring

"One day Jesus was teaching, and the power of the Lord made him heal. Sitting close by were Pharisees and teachers of the law who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. Some Men came along carrying a paralytic on a mat. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; but they found no way of getting him through because of the crowd, so they went up on the roof. There they let him down with his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd before Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said, 'My friend, your sins are forgiven.'" Lk 5:17-20.

This Gospel story offers a vivid image of group members working together to help their friend. God call us into such community. Genesis makes it clear from the beginning of creation that God intends for us to have helpers. God says of Adam, "It is not good that the man should be alone." Gn. 2:18.

The biblical story continues as a description of the relationship between God and the people of God. It is a community, not an individual, who is called to the Promised Land. And God blesses community. In Matthew, Jesus promises the disciples, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

In the community described in our passage from Luke, a collection of people combined their resources and skills to get the paralytic man to the place where he could receive what he needed. Consider the many gifts people in the story offered: resources such as a ladder and tools to get through the roof, creativity, strength to carry the man, and even the willingness of the homeowner to have a hole put in the roof. After the group achieved its goal, Jesus recognized their faith, not simply the faith of the paralytic.

So it can be with nations. When we in the United States and other countries combine resources, we can help people around the world who do not have enough food.

CONGRESS NEEDS TO KNOW

★ Hunger is the world's top health risk. It kills more people every year than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined.

★ One in seven people go to bed hungry every night.

★ One out of four children in developing countries, about 146 million, are underweight.

★ There are nearly 1 billion hungry people in the world, more than the populations of the U.S., Canada and the European Union combined.

TELL CONGRESS

Create a circle of protection around funding for international food aid programs that serve as the greatest and often the only line of defense between millions of families and hunger.

WHAT ARE THE PROGRAMS?

Food for Peace (commonly referred to as P.L.480) represents the majority of food aid the U.S. provides to meet emergency and humanitarian needs in response to malnutrition, famine, natural disaster, civil strife and other extraordinary circumstances.

The average annual spending on international food aid programs over the past decade is about $2.2 billion, with Food for Peace comprising the largest portion.

In fiscal year 2010, the U.S. spent about $1.5 billion on emergency food aid that reached about 46.5 million people.

The World Bank estimates that an additional 44 million people have been pushed into poverty since mid-2010 as a result of the recent rise in food prices.

The Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has warned that prices could continue to increase as the price of oil continues to rise and major food producing countries, including the U.S., face severe weather and decreasing crop production.

In the world's poorest countries, families spend between 60% and 80% of their income on food, which means that continued increases in prices hit the world's poorest people the hardest.

Without adequate funding for Food for Peace, the U.S. will be unable to respond during times of crisis, which could foster political instability and cause needless suffering.

McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program provides U.S. agricultural commodities and financial and technical assistance to carry out school feeding programs. The program also supports maternal, infant and child nutrition programs:
With funding of about $200 million in fiscal year 2010, McGovern-Dole served about 5 million children in 28 countries.

For a majority of schoolchildren, the one meal they receive through this program is often the only meal they get all day.

Where school meal programs are offered, enrollment and attendance rates increase significantly. Children stay in school longer and their academic performance improves. Children who are hungry have a difficult time concentrating in school.

In-school-feeding and take-home rations improve school enrollment for girls. Educating girls in developing countries is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty.

FAMINE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

The current crisis in the Horn of Africa is a stark reminder of why we must protect funding for international food aid. According o United Nations estimates, more than 13 million people were affected by the famine between the months of June and October 2011. Tens of thousands have died, the majority of them children. Now is not the time to cut emergency food aid and famine relief.

WHY ARE THE FIRST 1,000 DAYS OF A CHILD'S LIFE IMPORTANT?

The 1,000-day window from pregnancy to age 2 is a critical time in a child's life. Malnutrition during this period can cause irreversible damage to a child, resulting in:

- Diminished brain development.
- Impaired immune function.
- Shorter height and impaired vision.

This damage reduces a child's ability to achieve in school and be productive throughout life. Studies show that a malnourished child's earning potential is reduced by 10% over the course of his or her lifetime. But this damage is preventable.

"The world will be changed forever if every child is well-nourished during their 1,000-day window of opportunity."

Dr. David Nabarro, The Huffington Post

International food aid programs, along with comprehensive long-term food security initiatives, are critical ways the U.S. government assists countries that are trying to reduce the scourge of malnutrition. Cutting funding for these programs would undermine the progress already made in reducing maternal and child deaths and severe malnutrition.

Simple, cost-effective programs can save millions of lives and could increase a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2% to 3%. By protecting programs that prevent hunger and malnutrition in this 1,000-day window, children are given a fighting chance, a population becomes healthier, and communities can lift themselves out of poverty.

TELL CONGRESS TO CREATE A CIRCLE OF PROTECTION AROUND FUNDING FOR

INTERNATIONAL FOOD AID PROGRAMS THAT WORK. <u>DO NOT DISRUPT PROGRAMS THAT ARE WORKING.</u>

JOIN THE CIRCLE OF CARING

No person should go hungry. We can help end hunger by placing a **Circle of Caring** around programs that provide food for poor and hungry people whether they live in the United States or in developing countries.

Put your prayers for poor and hungry people into action and join the **Circle of Caring** by participating in the 31st annual Walk for the Hungry on Saturday, March 3, 2012.

The 4-mile Walk begins at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church yard, 4640 Canal St. and proceeds up Canal St. to Claiborne Ave. The Walk turns on Claiborne Ave. and continues down Canal St. returning to St. Anthony of Padua Church yard.

Walk schedule

Registration – 8:00 am

Prayer – 9:00 am

Walk – 9:30 am

Walk ends – 11:30 am

Registration fee includes your t-shirt

Adult - $15

Student - $10

Child - $7 (7 and under).

Walkers are asked to bring a non-perishable food item for the Second Harvest Food Bank.

To register or for information contact

504-458-3029

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