

# Strengthening Rural Communities

HUNGER REPORT 2005

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State of World Hunger*

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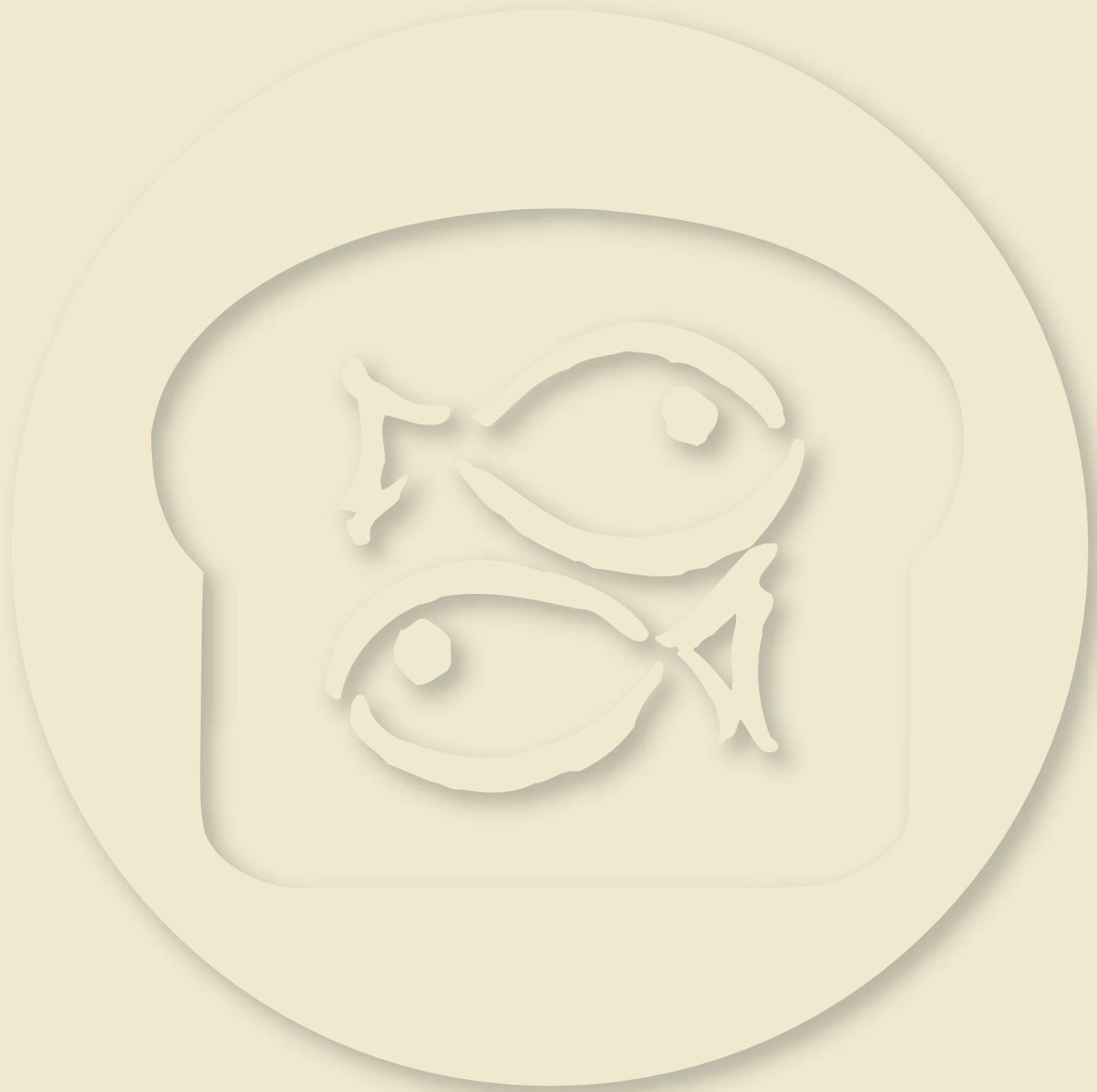
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# Foreword



Rick Reinhard

Year after year, millions of struggling families in rural communities around the world quietly persevere in spite of extraordinary obstacles. All at once then, something happens that makes it impossible to ignore their plight. The tsunamis in South Asia last year remind us how vulnerable some rural areas of the world are. In a few hours whole villages were destroyed, lives ruined. Hunger, already gripping so many of these communities, tightened its oppressive hold.

The generous response to the tsunamis was heartening. But must it come to this before the world takes notice of the many people in rural areas who struggle to survive every day?

We cannot substantially reduce hunger without paying special attention to the plight of rural communities. Three of every four persons who are undernourished in the world live in a rural area. Here in the United States, some of the most severe concentrations of hunger and poverty are in rural areas. To significantly reduce the numbers of hungry people in the world, we must strengthen rural communities.

The impetus for this year's Hunger Report grew out of our 2003 report, *Agriculture in the Global Economy*. We realized then that the complexity of the problems facing rural communities reached well beyond agriculture. Impoverished rural communities are beset with many problems. Where to start? Limited health-care, limited educational opportunities, fragile infrastructure, few well paying jobs—these and other problems mount, bringing with them hunger.

We also realized that the same farm policies that fail many rural communities here in the United States depress prices for many farmers in poor countries. Small farmers represent the largest percentage of undernourished people in the world, and giving them a chance to raise their income will also open economic opportunities for non-farmers in poor rural communities.

Changes in trade policy will benefit rural communities in poor countries, but these communities also need public investments—better rural roads, for example—that will bolster their ability to take advantage of trade opportunities. In addition to investment in agriculture, poor rural communities also need schools, health care and nutrition programs.

Public funding for poverty-reducing rural development should increase here in the United States, too. Federal and state governments and local communities, working together, can foster rural development that allows poor people and poor communities to escape from poverty. One way to find the needed money in tight fiscal times would be to cap farm subsidy payments to the largest producers and divert the savings into programs to benefit rural communities.

2005 is a year of decision about hunger and poverty. This is the first year of the second Bush administration, so decisions made in Washington this year will shape the next four years. A series of international events, including the G-8 Summit in July, will call for a deeper commitment to the Millennium Development Goals to cut hunger, poverty, and disease in half by 2015. Debate about farm policy will also get underway in Congress and in multilateral trade negotiations.

Bread for the World's *Make Hunger History* campaign aims to get President Bush and Congress to commit to cutting U.S. food insecurity in half by 2015 and to strengthen what community groups can do to overcome hunger. Bread for the World and the ONE Campaign are also pushing to get the U.S. government to step up support for what poor countries are doing to overcome hunger, poverty and disease.

This 2005 Hunger Report will help deepen the awareness and understanding of policy-makers, the media and the public about the importance of rural development to progress against hunger in our country and worldwide.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Beckmann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rev. David Beckmann  
*President, Bread for the World and  
Bread for the World Institute*