

Conclusion



REUTERS / Rick Wilking

the frontline and you

In 2005, the plight of poor people in the United States was in the news again with a kind of urgency we have not seen for some time. It started on August 29th as Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast. All around the country—and much of the world, too—eyes were trained on the region to see how it would fare.

As expected, the hurricane tore a deadly path. At one point, it was predicted that the death toll could rise as high as 40,000. In the end, the number of those who perished in the storm was much lower than feared in the first days, but it was still one of the worst natural disasters in the nation's history.

Right away, media reports focused on the vast numbers of poor people who were left stranded. The images were heart wrenching—families huddled on rooftops with waters lapping around their feet, elderly and ill people slumped over in wheelchairs waiting for buses to shuttle them to higher ground.

In New Orleans, the entire population of nearly a million people was instructed to evacuate. Many did not make it out because they could not. Poverty had them trapped there. A total of 134,000 people could not get out of the city because they did not have access to transportation.¹

“It was a disaster that had been forecast with the greatest of precision,” wrote the German publication *Der Spiegel*, “and yet far too little was done to protect the people in its path.”²

In a stunning admission of its own failures, *The New York Times* acknowledged that “given the dimensions of poverty in New Orleans...the *Times* coverage of these problems over the past decade falls far short of what its readers have a right to expect of a national newspaper.”³

One of those who managed to escape in time was Sister Jane Remson, a Carmelite nun and Bread for the World member since 1981. The convent where she lives is five blocks from the levees. Its roof was blown off during the hurricane; during the subsequent flooding, the convent was covered by 15 feet of water. Sister Jane returned soon after the storm ended to be involved in the relief effort, setting up an emergency feeding program.

In 1997, Sister Jane worked with Bread for the World Institute on a study of hunger and poverty in New Orleans. The findings of that study nearly ten years ago were not much different than what the world now knows about conditions in New Orleans in the months before Katrina hit. Seventy-five percent of the 465 people surveyed in three New Orleans parishes depended on food kitchens or food banks on a weekly basis. Sixty percent of people suffering hunger were employed, with 38 percent working full-time. Well over half of those who received Food Stamps reported that they lasted only two weeks of the month.⁴

The day after Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, the U.S. Census Bureau released data showing that before the disaster, 38 percent of children in



“There are millions of people across the country who are poor. One of the big things we can do is to educate people about the disparity between the haves and the have notes.”

– Sr. Jane Remson

New Orleans were living in poverty, and 13 percent of all Louisiana children lived in extreme poverty—the second highest rate of extreme child poverty in the United States.⁵ Indeed, very little had changed since 1997.

“Bread for the World members need to use [Katrina] as an eye-opener,” said Sister Jane, speaking with David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World and Bread for the World Institute, in the aftermath of the hurricane. “Much of our city is have-nots, but there is also great disparity in many other parts of the country. There are millions of people across the country who are poor. One of the big things we can do is to educate people about the disparity between the haves and the have-nots.”

Making Hunger History

In reading this report, you have gained valuable knowledge about the role of nutrition assistance programs in reducing hunger. We hope you will use what you learned here and share it with others.

Sharing knowledge and educating others is our focus at Bread for the World Institute. We have published annual reports on the state of world hunger since 1990. *Frontline Issues in Nutrition Assistance* is Number 16 in the series.

Whom do we hope to reach with these reports? Anybody who is interested in learning about hunger

and/or wants to make a difference. For those who want to take the next step and be part of a national anti-hunger movement, we point you to our partner organization, Bread for the World, with 55,000 members committed to ending hunger wherever it exists.

Since 1974, Bread for the World has focused on winning public policy changes that bring justice for hungry and poor people in the United States and around the world. In 2004, for instance, Bread for the World helped persuade Congress to approve an increase of more than \$600 million for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), thus ensuring that the program would be able to serve more eligible families. And in 2005, Bread for the World’s international work helped win more than \$1 billion of additional funding for poverty-focused development assistance, in the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill, bringing the total to approximately \$10.1 billion. Bread for the World also helped shape the policies of the new Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) grant program, ensuring that it remains focused on poverty reduction.

Bread for the World works by engaging its members in writing letters or calling their members of Congress about key legislation affecting hungry and poor people. As

part of its 2005 Offering of Letters campaign, *Make Hunger History*, Bread for the World activists built significant bipartisan support for the Hunger-Free Communities Act of 2005. In addition to expressing congressional support for the nation's longstanding goal of cutting U.S. hunger in half by 2010, the legislation called for strengthening national nutrition programs so that they can serve all eligible people.

Bread for the World is committed to working toward a United States free of hunger, where elderly people do not have to choose between food and medicine and all children receive nourishing meals in school and during summer when school is out.

The goal of cutting domestic food insecurity in half by 2010 is well within U.S. capabilities. The United States is the only industrialized country that tolerates widespread hunger and poverty among its people. The latest government data show that more than 38 million people, including more than 13 million children, live in households that are food insecure or hungry. But this richly blessed nation has the resources to end hunger. We know that progress against hunger is possible because the United States has succeeded before, sharply reducing hunger in the 1960s and early 1970s. Experience shows that strong nutrition programs with effective outreach can make substantial progress against hunger.

Bread for the World has been urging Congress to increase assistance to developing countries to help them achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The ONE Campaign is calling on the President and Congress to step up efforts to end extreme poverty and global AIDS by allocating an additional one percent of the U.S.



Jim Stipe

Bread for the World members and supporters write letters to their members of Congress urging them to approve anti-hunger legislation.

budget for development. Bread for the World, along with DATA and nine aid organizations, is a founding member of the ONE Campaign. So far, the ONE Campaign has attracted more than 1.5 million supporters around the country.

A critical mass of people is creating the political will to end hunger—constituents who persuade members of Congress to make hunger a priority. Low-income people need members of Congress who will support legislation to help them work their way out of poverty. Every voice exhorting Congress to do the right thing counts, and this is why your involvement is so important.

In a time of tight budgets, legislators find it tempting to cut programs that serve poor people. The 2005 debate over cuts to the Food Stamp Program is only the most recent example. Before Hurricane Katrina, Congress was proposing that Food Stamps be cut anywhere from \$600 million to \$1.8 billion. Bread for

the World and other citizen groups opposed these cuts, lobbying Congress even harder after the hurricane.

The best way to counter such harmful proposals is through strong and effective activism by people of faith and conscience who are also voters. Bread for the World is a Christian organization whose members are motivated by their faith to seek justice. Members called or wrote their representatives urging them not to cut safety-net programs and pointing out that Hurricane Katrina had demonstrated how vulnerable many low-income people really are.

In June 2005, Bread for the World worked with Call to Renewal to host *One Table, Many Voices*, a four-day conference that attracted hundreds of anti-hunger activists seeking further knowledge of the issues and renewed inspiration. More than 780 people from 45 states, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico took part. They came from 35 reli-

Keep the Faith Cupboard

Karen Wilson

Housed in the former lunchroom of a stone church in East Frankford, Pennsylvania, just across from the Whitehall Public Housing Project, Keep the Faith Cupboard feeds well over 200 neighbors each month.

Sheila remembers the first person to show up at her feeding program: “That man I fed told me he was eating out of the neighborhood trash cans. Now he has a place to enjoy a wholesome meal, served with dignity.”

cupboards and soup kitchens who meet over a simple lunch to share information and exchange ideas. There, she heard about the Coalition’s Food Stamp Enrollment Campaign and knew that this was one more tool she had to master.

After completing the Food Stamp Outreach Training, she immediately started screening cupboard users, helping those who were eligible to complete the eight-page Food Stamp Application. She even walked those applications to the local welfare office, getting a receipt, and checked back with applicants after a few weeks to see if they kept their appointments and received their benefits.

In the spring of 2004, Keep the Faith Cupboard participant Dianne Sweeney-Weber filed a Food Stamp application, which somehow got lost in the welfare office. Dianne is a disabled, single mom raising two daughters.

After freeing herself and her children from an abusive spouse, she moved in with her parents, a retired police officer and a homemaker who had raised nine children. As a part-time student, she earned an associate degree from Community College of Philadelphia and thereafter was offered admission to the University of Pennsylvania. A bachelor’s degree proved elusive when a custody battle and her mother’s struggle with cancer shifted her priorities.

Dianne’s disability, her responsibilities as a parent, and the attention she provided to her mother over a five-year period made it impossible to find a job, but she was far from



Pictured here at Keep the Faith Cupboard, (l) Dianne Sweeney-Weber and (r) Sheila Garbett.

Sheila Garbett, coordinator of Keep the Faith Ministry Church Food Cupboard, knows first hand just how difficult it can be to steer one’s life back on course. Now, with food, faith, and more, she helps others start that same journey.

Sister Sheila, as she is called by all, serves a hot meal every Saturday, and on Tuesdays she distributes bags of groceries and fresh bread. Sister

Sister Sheila is always looking ahead, wondering how Keep the Faith can help people cope with emergencies while moving them toward self-sufficiency, and she is constantly adding new tools that can help rebuild lives.

In 2003, she went to a gathering of the Philadelphia Hunger Coalition’s First Tuesday group, volunteers like herself from a few dozen food

idle. While sitting by her mother's bedside, she returned to a craft she had learned at the age of four. With a crochet hook and some yarn, Dianne began churning out afghans, doilies, and hand towels. When family members said, "No more, thank you," she shifted her focus to the Infant Intensive Care Unit at Temple University Hospital. Since 1995 she has crocheted 1,500 blankets for premature babies, each one delivered with wishes for good health and prosperity.

With Sister Sheila's assistance, Dianne submitted a new Food Stamp application through a church computer linked to the Internet. This time the system worked as it's supposed to. Not only that, but the caseworker reported that the original application had been located and retroactive benefits were available for a three-month period.

Two women—one African American, one Caucasian of Irish descent—have crossed paths and are creating an everlasting bond. Each turned to the public benefits safety net when other options failed, and each is using her talents to help others.

Karen Wilson is head of the Greater Philadelphia Hunger Coalition (www.hungercoalition.org), which fights hunger through education, outreach and advocacy. The Coalition brings together policy makers, community-based emergency food providers, public health and social service professionals, faith-based volunteers, students, and other concerned individuals to address hunger and food insecurity in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

gious bodies and included more than 160 people under 30 years old.

Also in June, the Interfaith Convocation on hunger, *Hunger No More*, was held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. Top leaders from 43 religious bodies took part, and 1,600 people filled the Cathedral. The service was unprecedented in U.S. religious history. Leaders were united across theological lines with one message for policymakers: "Join us in the fight against hunger."

"When citizens become involved in the budget process, they can make a real difference in the lives of people who struggle to put food on the table," said Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD), who serves on the Senate Budget Committee.

Bread for the World activists hear the message time and time again from members of Congress and their senior staff: "Yes, we've received a lot of letters about this bill already." "Yes, I will cosponsor the legislation you're supporting." "Yes, we know of Bread for the World—you're doing very good work."

Knowledge is a Tool for Action

Poor people in the United States and around the world share a common difficulty: neglected by their governments, they are frequently unable to get the focused attention and commitment their problems require. In New Orleans, a catastrophic hurricane exposed the savage inequalities that mar the city. As a result, these problems became impossible to ignore. Similar "wake-up moments" come when famine strikes a desperately poor African country like Niger or Malawi, or when civil war uproots hundreds of thousands of people and it is clear they have nothing left to sustain themselves.

The challenge is to keep the attention of U.S. decision-makers and the public on these problems after the media crews have packed up and gone looking for other stories. Life in New Orleans before the hurricane was symptomatic of a much larger crisis that affects poor people everywhere. "The plight of the poor" means being ignored, shunted aside, or forgotten entirely.



Bread for the World members paid visits to their members of Congress on June 7, 2005, National Hunger Awareness Day, expressing their support for Hunger-Free Communities legislation.

Rick Reinhard

Ending Childhood Hunger in the Nation's Capital

Everyone is in favor of ending child hunger, but what does it take to get the job done? The District of Columbia may have the answer.

To begin, it requires partners, and lots of them: organizers in the District pulled together 150 leaders from all walks of life and vocations. They include elected officials, businesses,



non-profit organizations, faith-based communities, media, educators, parents, students and many others. All share a common vision: ending child hunger.

“We believe childhood hunger is a solvable problem,” said Stephen Brady of the Sodexo Foundation. “As a member of the Washington, D.C. community, we [Sodexo] believe it is our obligation to help those among us who are at risk for hunger.”

Heading up the campaign are D.C. Hunger Solutions, the Food Research

and Action Center, and Share Our Strength. As part of a planning grant funded by the Case Foundation and the Sodexo Foundation, the partners have undertaken a process to convene a diverse leadership group to develop recommendations and design a plan to end childhood hunger and ensure nutritious and affordable food for every child.

There's no better place to begin such a campaign than the District of Columbia. More than 68,000 residents are food insecure and the District has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the nation, leaving too many children experiencing hunger.

Children who face these conditions have poorer health than their well-fed peers. Hungry children get sick more often, stay sick longer, and are more frequently absent from school. Consequences may include long-term emotional and health problems and impaired physical and mental development.

Even short or infrequent periods of hunger affect a child's performance in school. A child who comes to school hungry has reduced concentration and attention span. Without breakfast, a child can have difficulty learning the morning lessons. For some children, the only meals they get are provided through the school breakfast and lunch programs.

The nutrition programs are key to fighting hunger. They also play an important role in reducing the risk of obesity; and they bring more than \$133 million in federal dollars into the District's economy.

The recommendations for the

plan include four major components for the city to implement in the next ten years: expanding and improving federal nutrition programs, improving family economic stability, enhancing community food access, and designing an infrastructure for educating families about good nutrition and health.

The partners believe this plan will end childhood hunger in the District of Columbia and achieve food security for every family—so that every single child living in the nation's capital has reliable access to the nutritious food he or she needs every day to live, grow and thrive, and no parent ever has to worry about being able to provide it.

Kimberly Perry, Director of D.C. Hunger Solutions said, “The benefits of achieving this goal will spread beyond improvements in the well-being of the District's children, as food-insecure adults will also be positively impacted. Parents need good nutrition themselves to properly raise their children and to be productive workers and good citizens.”

The plan emphasizes that in this ambitious yet achievable goal, all stakeholders in the District of Columbia must do their part — federal and local government, businesses, non-profit organizations, media, academics, the faith-based community and others. Collaboration, leadership and funding across all of these sectors is absolutely essential.

Additional information can be obtained by contacting Kimberly Perry, Director, D.C. Hunger Solutions at 202-986-2200 ext. 3023.

The United States is fortunate to have millions of volunteers in churches and community centers around the country ready to come to the aid of hungry and poor people. But as we have seen throughout this report, hunger and poverty are too big for charities to handle alone. It is the government's job to protect the most vulnerable people by providing strong safety nets that stretch wide enough to catch everyone who needs assistance. The vast majority of U.S. voters support efficient public programs that help hungry people feed their families.

Citizens must hold governments accountable. In the fight against hunger, every action matters. Political change depends on individuals and organizations committing themselves to help create change. We can multiply our impact by working together with like-minded people across the nation and the world.

Having read this report, you have a better understanding of how poverty is a contributing factor to malnutrition and vice versa. You also understand that effective nutrition assistance is a vital part of providing people with the support they need as they struggle to climb out of poverty. Share this knowledge with others.

Here are some ways you can become more involved:

- Become a member of Bread for the World by visiting the Web site (www.bread.org) or calling 1-800-82-BREAD. As a member, you will receive up-to-date information on how you can communicate with your government representatives and help shape hunger-related legislation. Financial contributions also help to win policy changes that benefit hungry people worldwide.

- Involve your church. Each year, more than a thousand churches hold an "Offering of Letters." Just as churches take up offerings of money to help people in need, these churches invite their members to write to Congress on a Bread for the World issue.

- Become an activist. You can join or form a Bread for the World group in your church or community. Some groups meet just a few times a year to take specific action, such as visiting their members of Congress or planning a workshop for local congregations. In most congressional districts, volunteers have organized telephone and e-mail networks to mobilize action at key points in the legislative process.

Other Ways to Make A Difference

Many other groups work to help reduce poverty and hunger both internationally and in the United States. The following is a list of just a few such organizations where you can volunteer your time and/or financial support:

America's Second Harvest is the nation's largest domestic hunger relief organization. Through a network of more than 200 food banks and food-rescue programs, America's Second Harvest provide emergency food assistance to more than 23 million hungry Americans each year, 8 million of whom are children. Last year, America's Second Harvest distributed 1.7 billion pounds of food to needy Americans, serving all 50 states and Puerto Rico. Second Harvest has developed an important program of public-policy advocacy.

35 East Wacker Drive, Suite 2000
Chicago, IL 60601
Phone: (312) 263-2303
Fax: (312) 263-5626
Web site: www.secondharvest.org

Community Food Security

Coalition (CFSC): CFSC is "dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times." CFSC helps develop self-reliance among all communities in obtaining their food by creating a system of growing, manufacturing, processing, marketing and selling food that is regionally based and grounded in the principles of justice, democracy and sustainability. CFSC actively promotes local farmers' markets and local buying programs to help farmers sell their produce and low-income areas obtain fresh fruits and vegetables. They have more than 250 active member organizations in the United States.

P.O. Box 209
Venice, CA 90294
Phone: (310) 822-5410
Web site: www.foodsecurity.org

DATA (Debt, Aid, Trade for

Africa): DATA is a new organization spearheaded by rock star Bono of the Irish group U2. DATA seeks to help Africa by pressuring developed country governments to cancel unpayable debt, fight HIV/AIDS, and reduce trade barriers. Bono is using his status as a public figure to bring attention specifically to Africa and some of the major problems troubling the continent. In addition to working with developed countries, DATA also is encouraging African governments to practice democracy and be accountable to the poor in their countries. DATA

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hopes to help by “working to bring people and organizations from all around the United States and the world together to stop the spread of AIDS and extreme poverty in Africa.”

1400 Eye St., NW Suite 1125
Washington, DC 20005
E-mail: data@data.org
Web site: www.data.org

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) is a national organization working to improve public policies to eradicate hunger and undernutrition in the United States. Founded in 1970 as a public interest law firm, FRAC is a nonprofit and non-partisan research and public policy center and hub of an anti-hunger network of thousands of individuals and agencies across the country.

1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, Ste. 540
Washington, DC 20009
Phone: (202) 986-2200
Fax: (202) 986-2525
Web site: www.frac.org

Heifer Project: Begun in Spain in the 1930s, Heifer International is based on the idea that to become self-reliant, people need not a cup of milk but a whole cow. Since then, it has grown into a worldwide organization that seeks to help poor farmers by providing them with animals to raise in environmentally friendly ways. In return for the animals, families pass on some of the offspring to other farmers nearby, thus making it a gift that keeps on giving. Selected by Worth magazine as one of the 100 best charities in the United States, this organization gives tangible help to those in need all around the globe by connecting sponsors with farmers and their families.

Heifer International
P.O. Box 8058
Little Rock, AR 72203
Phone: (800) 422-0474
Web site: www.heifer.org

InterAction is the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian NGOs. With more than 160 members operating in every developing country, it works to overcome poverty, exclusion and suffering by advancing social justice and basic dignity for all.

1717 Massachusetts Ave. NW,
Suite 701
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 667-8227
Fax: (202) 667-8236
Web site: www.interaction.org

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger has granted more than \$28 million since 1986 to nonprofit organizations confronting hunger in the United States and abroad. MAZON (the Hebrew word for “food”) awards grants principally to programs working to prevent and alleviate hunger in the United States. Grantees include emergency and direct food assistance programs, food banks, multiservice organizations, anti-hunger advocacy/education and research projects, and international hunger relief and agricultural development programs in Israel and impoverished countries.

1990 South Bundy Drive, Ste. 260
Los Angeles, CA 90025
Phone: (310) 442-0020
Fax: (310) 442-0030
Web site: www.mazon.org

Micronutrient Initiative (MI): MI is a not-for-profit organization specializing in addressing vitamin and mineral deficiency. Governed by an international Board of Directors,

MI supports and promotes food fortification and supplementation programs in Asia, Africa and Latin America and provides technical and operational support in countries where vitamin and mineral deficiency is most prevalent. MI carries out its work in partnership with other international agencies, governments and industry. Based in Ottawa, Canada, MI maintains regional offices in New Delhi, India, and Johannesburg, South Africa.

P.O. Box 56127
250 Albert St.
Ottawa, Canada
K1R 7Z1
Phone: (613) 782-6800
Fax: (613) 782-6838
Web site: www.micronutrient.org

NETWORK: A Catholic social justice organization, NETWORK has been a persistent voice for economic justice on Capitol Hill for 30 years. Through lobbying and grassroots work, NETWORK encourages both Congress and the president to bring about a more fair and equitable world. Its issues range from domestic concerns, such as welfare, housing and health care, to international concerns, such as sustained peace and international trade and investment. NETWORK draws from Catholic social teachings to influence the U.S. government to make just decisions.

801 Pennsylvania Ave. SE,
Suite 460
Washington, DC 20003-2167
Phone: (202) 547-5556

ONE Campaign. A diverse coalition of anti-poverty groups, including Bread for the World and World Vision, celebrity spokespeople and hundreds of thousands of individuals across the United States have come

together as ONE to fight global AIDS, extreme poverty and hunger through the ONE Campaign. This is a new effort to rally people in the United States—ONE by ONE. Sign the ONE Campaign Declaration at www.bread.org/one

UNICEF (U.N. Children's Fund):

Begun in the aftermath of World War II, UNICEF is committed to helping children in developing and impoverished regions. By working with governments and nongovernmental organizations, UNICEF strives to reduce hunger and malnutrition, promote education of girls and boys, decrease illness and child mortality, and protect children from the hardships of war and natural disaster. The U.S. Fund for UNICEF is one of 37 regional offices set up to support UNICEF through financial contributions, advocating for the world's children and raising awareness among the public.

U.S. Fund for UNICEF
333 East 38th St.
New York, NY 10016
Phone: (800) FOR-KIDS (367-5437)
Web site: www.unicefusa.org

The U.S. Coalition for Child

Survival: A collaboration of organizations and individuals united to strengthen U.S. and global commitment to improving the health and survival of children in developing countries. The Coalition represents a broad cross-section of organizations—corporations, universities, private voluntary organizations, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and foundations. The coalition works by increasing understanding and awareness of unmet health needs and the additional resources needed to

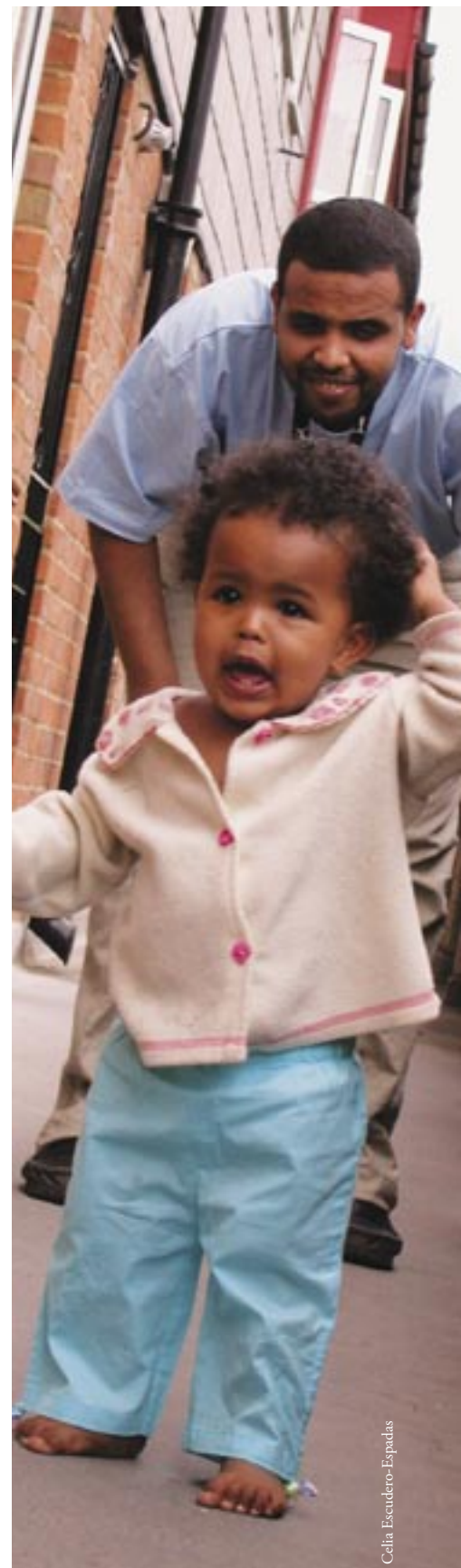
improve child health and survival; by advocating and mobilizing commitment and action to achieve the child survival goals, as set forth in the Millennium Development Goals; and by increasing the level of U.S. public, private, and multilateral funding for child and maternal health and survival.

1111 19th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 833-5900
Web site: www.child-survival.org

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Department of Social Development and World Peace

is the national public policy agency of the U.S. Catholic Bishops. The department of Social Development and World Peace works on behalf of the Catholic bishops to advocate effectively for poor and vulnerable people, bring genuine justice and peace to the public policy arena, and build the capacity of the Church to act effectively in defense of human life, human dignity, human rights and the pursuit of justice and peace.

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