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INSTITUTE

DEVELOPMENT WORKS



Laura Elizabeth Pohl/Bread for the World

Sandesh Rai (leaning forward), 5, and his mom Sapana Rai (in yellow) wait for a nutrition education seminar to start in Bandarkharka, Nepal. An increasing share of Nepali children are surviving to celebrate their fifth birthdays thanks to better nutrition and basic health care.

Development Assistance: Where Does It Lead?

Just 50 years ago, one person in three around the world was malnourished. Now, hunger is less common, affecting one in six people. Has there been enough progress if “only” one-sixth of the global population is hungry? No. But it’s a big improvement over a time—still in living memory—when twice as many people were hungry.

In just the past two decades the global community has also made impressive progress:

- The percentage of people living in extreme poverty (on less than \$1.25/day) has been cut in half.
- Low-income countries as well as wealthier nations are making rapid progress against child mortality. For example, Liberia, Rwanda, and Bangladesh have each reduced their child death rate by more than two-thirds.

Bread for the World Institute provides policy analysis on hunger and strategies to end it. The Institute educates opinion leaders, policy makers and the public about hunger in the United States and abroad.

Snapshot

- Today, one in six people around the world is malnourished—far too many, but only half as many as 50 years ago. In just the past 20 years, the percentage of people living in extreme poverty has been cut in half.
- Such dramatic progress shows that it is now well within human capabilities to end mass hunger and extreme poverty within a generation.
- The idea of “building resilience” is simply that poor communities can better fight hunger by identifying potential threats to their livelihoods and developing workable alternatives before they are desperately needed.
- Safety net programs are a key part of building resilience. Emergency feeding programs, too, can distribute food in exchange for work that contributes to the community’s future food security.
- Country-led plans to reduce hunger help build the resilience of the country itself. U.S. assistance helps support these plans. Countries with effective governments and strong civil societies are also more resilient.

- In 1990, an estimated 12 million children younger than 5 died of preventable causes, while by 2011, this number was less than 7 million. Measuring child mortality in the millions means there is a long way to go. Still, each year 5 million young lives are being saved, children who would have died in 1990.
- About 80 percent of the global population now has access to safe drinking water close to their homes.
- Polio is near eradication: this deadly and disabling disease is vying with guinea worm disease to become the second disease, after smallpox, eradicated through human effort. The number of polio cases has fallen by more than 99 percent since 1988.
- The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) began in 2003. In 2012, the United States supported life-saving antiretroviral treatment for more than 5 million people. The cost of a year's worth of antiretroviral medication has dropped to \$100. 2012 was also the year that, for the first time, health officials said that an AIDS-free generation was possible.
- Africa will have the world's highest rate of economic growth for at least the next five years, propelled by seven of the 10 fastest-growing economies. Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Congo, Ghana, Zambia, and

Nigeria are all expected to expand their economies by more than 6 percent a year until 2015.

The dramatic reductions in global hunger and extreme poverty over the past two generations prove that—now, if not in the past—it is well within human capabilities to end mass hunger and extreme poverty within a generation. The deaths from malnutrition of hundreds of thousands of young children year after year can become not just “preventable,” but prevented.

In Search of Options

In essay 5, we mentioned the importance of enabling people to become more resilient to outside shocks. People in poor countries often need exceptional flexibility and creativity just to secure the very basics. To be truly resilient in the difficult conditions they face, the poorest people may need not only a “plan B,” but a “plan C,” a “plan D,” and the ability to combine plans as necessary.

With no possibility of putting money aside for emergencies, families are extremely vulnerable. A minor injury or illness, an increase in food prices, the death of a sheep or goat—any of these may force a family to cut back on food, take children out of school, and sell anything of value. Some possible ways of earning more money—perhaps by buying a sewing machine or taking a training course—are now out of the question. For these families, even a “minor” drought or flood is beyond catastrophic. Life may become literally impossible.

The 2011 Horn of Africa hunger crisis made headlines here. It was immediately followed by a drought that received far less Western media coverage—even though it led to serious food shortages for 18 million people in the Sahel, the region that borders Africa's Sahara Desert. It was the Sahel's third drought in four years.

How can the cycles of one emergency after another be interrupted? The 2012 U.N. High-Level Meeting on the Sahel Crisis concluded that the first order of business is to establish social safety nets, particularly for women and children. A way to get help before children become severely malnourished would save lives, suffering, and money.

People need to have their present-day needs met before they can put energy into a future goal such as preventing next year's crisis. Safety net programs are thus a key part of



Laura Elizabeth Pohl/Bread for the World

Friends who are part of the *jjajja* (grandmother) group at St. Francis Healthcare Services in Jinja, Uganda, laugh over their lunch. The group provides health care, education and income-generating opportunities for grandmothers, many of whom take care of grandchildren orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

\$1

Recent U.N. estimate of cost of keeping a child from slipping into malnutrition

\$80

Recent U.N. estimate of cost of treating a child for malnutrition

building resilience since they enable people to keep assets such as livestock and to pause long enough to consider how they can diversify the ways they earn a living.

Even during an acute hunger crisis, some emergency programs can simultaneously help make the next crisis less severe. A program called “food for work” is just what it sounds like: everyone in need receives food, and in exchange, those who are able to work do so. The work contributes to the community’s future food security—for example, improving a road used to reach a market town or clearing a pond that can then be stocked with fish.

Communities should also seek to use their human resources as effectively as possible. Young adults often have new ideas and the energy and enthusiasm to try different ways of doing things. Women are another group with unique strengths: “Despite the fact that women ... often bear the heaviest burden of shock and stresses,” USAID notes, “they also possess enormous individual and collective capacity to help themselves, their families, and their communities.” A recent study in Sudan found that women were more likely than men to effectively use available local resources in diversification strategies.

The thinking behind “resilience” programs is simply that poor communities can better fight hunger and malnutrition by identifying potential threats to their main ways of earning a living and developing workable alternatives—*before* they are desperately needed.

David Gressly, U.N. Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel, lists some actions that, along with safety net programs, help communities build resilience: reducing chronic child malnutrition, improving irrigation and drainage systems, diversifying food sources, finding better ways to preserve food stocks, and constructing dams to store water that will later irrigate crops.

For four Sahel farmers in Burkina Faso, West Africa, the key to resilience was a viable alternative to rain-fed crops. In early 2012, drought destroyed most of their maize crop. But thanks to an earlier U.S.-funded program to expand the options of rain-fed crop farmers, the farmers had plots of land where they had planted more resilient crops. The development program had helped secure the farmers’ access to land and also provided training for new crops and



Jean-Philippe Debus/Catholic Relief Services

Women carrying home water in Miel, Abala district, Niger, where CRS is helping improve the village wells which now must serve local people and Malian refugees.

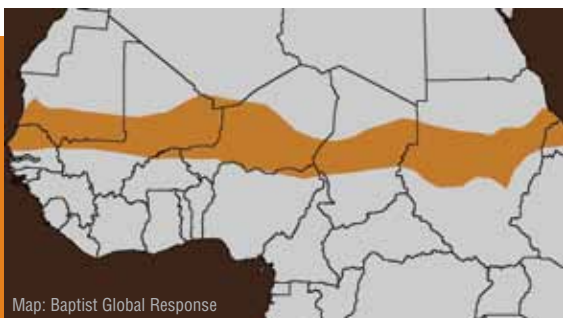
funding for small-scale irrigation efforts. USAID reports that the women continue to support their families with the profits from their dry season gardens. One member of the group, Safieta, explains: “We chose onions because if the water pump fails for a few days, they’re strong enough to survive.” She adds: “I am resilient now. Just like the onions.”

Al Hassan Cisse, the Sahel regional food security advocacy coordinator for the development organization Oxfam, added that another key to resilience is better grain storage. “Building the resilience of poor people means investing in food reserves because one of the [aggravating] factors of food crisis over the past year is the high food prices,” he said.

Another agricultural priority, as identified by the High-Level Meeting on the Sahel, is promoting drought resistant production, which will require preserving ecosystems and eliminating pests and locusts.

It’s also important to plan for resilient development program—for example, when donor funding ends. Nepal’s Action Against Malnutrition through Agriculture (AAMA), whose nutrition and poultry programs were mentioned earlier in *Development Works*, is preparing for sustainability using strategies such as training trainers, seeking modest resources from village councils, and encouraging successful participants to give chicks women just getting started.

USAID’s Resilience Policy focuses on the root causes of vulnerability and on coordination with local partners (for example, as a member of the Global Alliance for Action for



Map: Baptist Global Response

3 Years out of the past four that the Sahel region has suffered a severe drought

18 Million People at risk in nine African Sahel countries in early 2012

Drought Resilience and Growth in the Horn of Africa and of the Global Alliance for Resilience in the Sahel, both formed in 2012). Its five-year goal in the Horn of Africa is to benefit 10 million people directly and reduce the need for emergency relief by 1 million people. One example of work toward this goal is extending the impact of the Arid Lands Recovery Program in Kenya by strengthening drought adaptation efforts.

In the Sahel as well, USAID will concentrate on the most vulnerable ecological zones. One project will help build on local communities' work against desertification: together, water harvesting and a technique for regenerating native vegetation from the mature root systems of cleared trees and shrubs have already “re-greened” more than 5 million hectares (12.5 million acres) of semi-desert land.

Country-Led Development: Building Resilient Nations

The concept of resilience also applies, more broadly, to nations. It's a little more abstract than family efforts to build resilience—which might be learning which plants can grow alongside maize yet prosper with less rain, or organizing a group of neighbors to start a beekeeping business—but it's the same idea. How do countries become more resilient?

The Great Recession and very slow economic recovery showed that our country's own capacity to “bounce back” is not always quick or complete. High poverty rates also show that the country's resilience does not extend to all who live here. Still, previous experience gives Americans reason for optimism that the country can manage to rise to its challenges. Although we have far too many hungry people for such a wealthy country, there is also a social safety net. Starvation deaths are very rare here.

Many factors contribute to the United States' relatively strong ability to cope with shocks—including a diversified economy, good governance, financial and human resources, and the rule of law. From the framers of the Constitution onward, building and maintaining resilience has been a process led by Americans—people who live here and understand local conditions.

Today, the need for such “country-led” development is recognized as a necessity for effective foreign assistance. Many low-income countries have developed their own detailed plans to reduce hunger and extreme poverty but lack the resources to carry them out fully. U.S. assistance helps support such country-led development plans.

In 2003, the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), was established. It gives additional development assistance based on countries' commitment to “root out corruption, respect human rights, and adhere to the rule of law.” Ap-

plicants receive help in identifying their key weaknesses in qualifying for MCA funding. The MCA requires countries to consult with their civil societies to ensure that funding is responding to problems that are top priorities of local people.

Many critical factors in development are beyond the control of low-income countries themselves—whether it's restrictive trade policies, climate change, volatility in global food prices, an economic downturn in industrialized economies that means less money sent home by immigrants, or something else.

But government leadership in seeking and implementing solutions for hungry and poor people can mean even more. Countries with effective governments are more resilient. The United States provides some technical support to national and local governments in matters such as regulation, purchasing policies, improving services, and engaging more closely with citizens. This type of capacity-building program could be expanded in the future to build further government capacity to be effective.

In turn, a strong civil society is important to help ensure effective governance and hold governments accountable. U.S. government engagement with civil society overseas supports, for example, efforts to establish an independent media and strengthen local nongovernmental organizations so they can better advocate for their communities.

Building resilience in families and communities and building resilience in countries reinforce each other. It becomes easier to establish a resilient national government when there are fewer poor and desperate people, and it is easier for families and communities to become more resilient when government is there to support their efforts and protect the most vulnerable.



Myths & Realities

Myth: There is little that very poor people can do to reduce their vulnerability. The only thing we can do is keep sending humanitarian assistance to ease their suffering when disaster strikes.



USAID

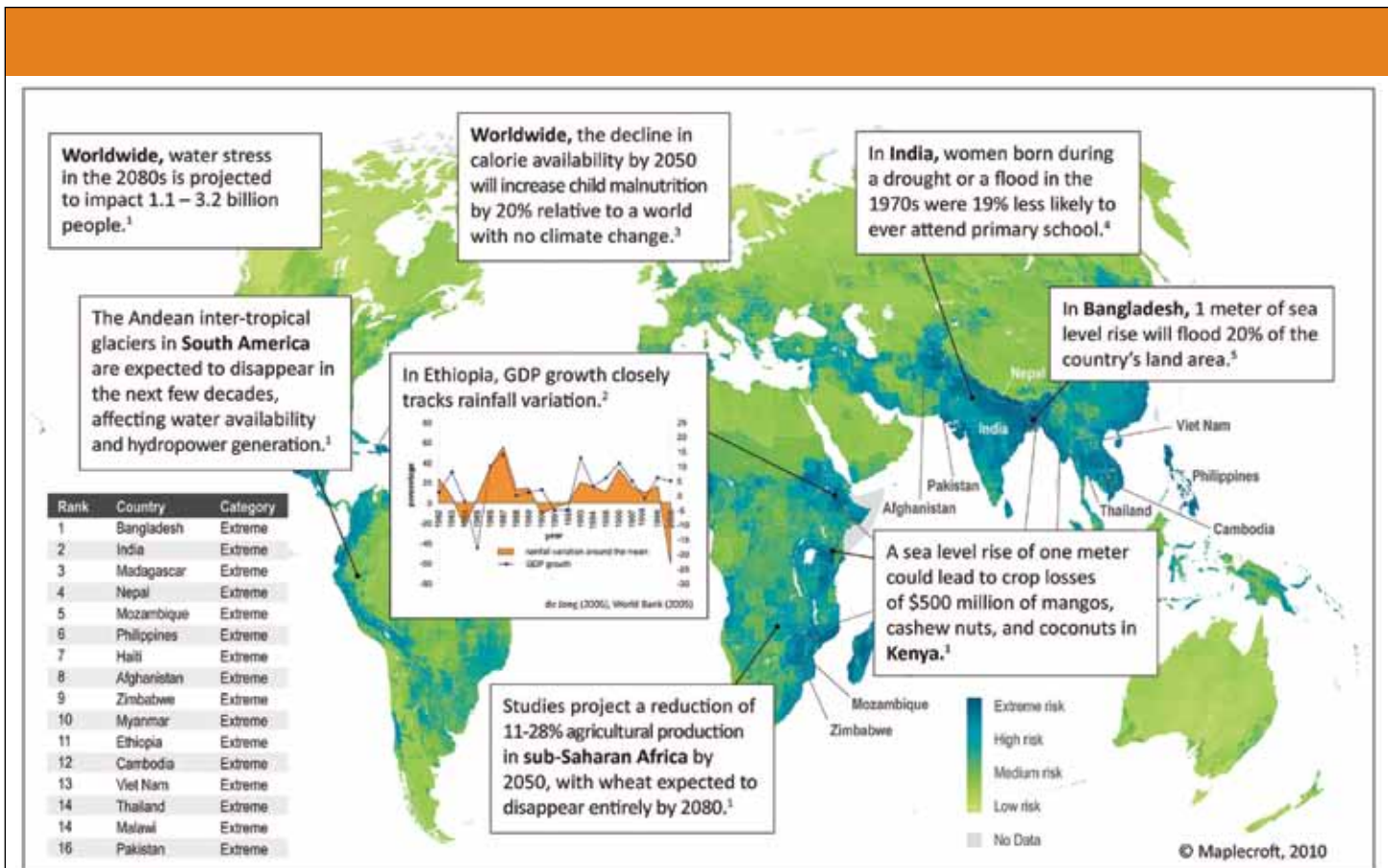
Assistance from USAID micro-loan programs and agricultural programs have improved crop production, including income growth for these farmers and vendors in Sudan.

Reality: Low-income people are as eager as others to improve their lives when they have an opportunity. Just one example is the popularity of “microlending,” the practice of making modest loans, as little as \$50, to individuals or groups to start small businesses. The original program was in Bangladesh; microlending later spread to many other countries. Overall, there has been an excellent track record of repayment on the microloans, and many borrowers have been able to expand their businesses and later qualify for larger loans.

Experience shows that committed leadership can bring about rapid reductions in hunger and extreme poverty. Notably, Brazil reduced the percentage of its people living in extreme poverty from 10 percent to 2 percent in just five years, 2004-2009. Also in 2009, the country’s income inequality hit a 50-year low. In November 2012, Luiz Lula da Silva, former president of Brazil and 2011 World Food Prize laureate, agreed to work with the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the African Union to pursue their “shared vision” of a hunger-free Africa through a coordinated campaign against malnutrition and food insecurity.

Myth: Development assistance is a big part of the U.S. budget and is fueling our record budget deficits.

Reality: Development assistance is less than 1 percent of the U.S. budget, so cutting it would not fix the budget deficit. It does, however, save millions of lives every year.



Map reference: Maplecroft, 2011: Climate change vulnerability map. Vulnerability index combines risk of exposure, degree of sensitivity, and ability of a country to adjust to stresses. ¹Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Working Group II: *Climate Change 2007 – Impact, Adaptation and Vulnerability*. ²World Bank, 2006: *Ethiopia: Managing Water Resources to Maximize Sustainable Growth*. ³International Flood Policy Research Institute, 2009: *Climate Change: Impact on Agriculture and Costs of Adaptation*. ⁴United Nations Development Program: *Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting Climate Change: Human solidarity in a divided world*. ⁵World Bank, 2000: *Bangladesh: Climate Change and Sustainable Development*. Report no. 21104 BD, Dhaka.

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