

November 20, 2006

NGO BRIEFING ON THE
2006 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT BEYOND SCARCITY:
POWER, POVERTY AND THE GLOBAL CRISES
Thursday, November 16, 2006, 10:00AM – 12:00 NOON

Moderator:

Juan Carlos Brandt, Chief, NGO Section,
Department of Public Information

Speakers:

Mr. Arunabile Ghosh, Policy Specialist
Human Development Office, UNDP

Kazuo Sunaga, Minister, Permanent Mission of Japan
To the United Nations

Patricia Dandonoli, President and Chief Executive Officer
Of Water Aid America

1. A film was shown at the beginning of the session entitled “Human Development Report, 2006”. The film talked about women their lack of water and how these women have to walk to get water for their families. The film showed the filth and excrement that effects needed water supplies in slum areas.

The film indicated that over two million people in the world do not have adequate fresh water supplies. It also showed the filth that exist in villages and their effect on children. The film indicated that to solve this problem needs an international partnership of the worlds’ countries.

2. The Moderator, Mr. Brandt, welcomed everyone and introduced the speaker and outlined his background. This briefing presented this years’ Human Development report entitled “Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crises”. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) launched the report in Cape Town, South Africa on November 9. 2006.

The report debunks the myth that the deepening global water crises is the result of water scarcity and argues that poverty, power and in equality are at the heart of the problem. The report furthermore investigates the underlying causes and consequences of a crises that leaves 1.2 billion people without access to safe water and 2.6 billion people without access to sanitation. The report argues for a concerted drive to achieve water and sanitation for all people through national strategies.

The report also calls for a global plan of action. The report examines the social and economic forces that are driving the water shortages and marginalizing the world's poor in agriculture. It also looks at the scope for international cooperation to resolve cross-border tensions in water management.

3. Mr. Arunabha Ghosh, the first speaker and co-author of the Human Development Report stated that the world's water crises, has more to do with world politics. He indicated that there are two themes – Undermining Human Development and Water for life.

He asks what is the scale of the problem? He answers that the lack of access to water and hygiene affects these people and their growth. These problems mean that they fail to work for 1.2 billion people and relates to 2 million deaths of children. Girls used to fetch water miss their school education. Poor people and their children account for most of the deficit.

He showed examples of how water and sanitation reform in England in the 19th Century was a great leap there and improved the lives of their people. Mr. Ghosh stated that equality and access to water and productivity are closely related. Globally, cooperation over water exceeds the record on conflict. The cooperation over water can take many different forms.

Economic growth will not be enough. The water inequalities exist across the world. The poorer you are the more you pay (rich country compared to a poorer country). Tariff structures determine the access to water. This results in a significant barrier for the poor.

Clean water and clean toilets can result in a reduction of 30 to 60 percent in the reduction of infant deaths. In poorer countries, water gets a low priority in their budgets. Climbing the ladder is expensive but has a big potential to help the poor of those countries.

Mr. Ghosh asked what is driving the problem?

- Lack of required water for livelihood.
- Lack of global water already stressing.
- The future challenge of climate change will further challenge agriculture in the Sub-Sahara region of Africa.

He stated that equity, access to water and productivity are related. Globally, cooperation over water exceeds the record on conflict. Cooperation over water can take many different forms.

Mr. Ghosh concluded by outlining the following Solutions;

- Make water a human right.
- Draw up national strategies.
- Create a global action plan.
- Increase international aid for water. At present it is stagnating.
- Increase the access to water in urban areas to address these problems.
- Water stress can then be managed.

4. Minister Sunaga, the second speaker, stated that the importance of water frequently overlooked. The report makes clear what the water crises is and must be addressed. He stated that the crises of water is the issue and must be addressed. It is the issue affecting all developing countries. Human security is critical and there is a growing recognition by the United Nations of this.

Human security brings water and sanitation into its proper perspective. Minister Sunaga stated that Japan supports the need for the approach recommended by the report. Japan as a leading donor supports this issue. Japan agrees that Community Based Management can play a role. He stated that Japan is a critical Donor country.

5. The third speaker, Patricia Dandonoli, was formerly of Jordan and now lives in America. She stated her organization, Water Aid, is a leading NGO to deliver water to the needy. It now works in seventeen countries where the problem is acute. They deliver needed water at low cost to these communities.

Water Aid set up these projects so that local communities can manage them. Water Aid helps to extend this effort to more people needing the water. She indicated that we need a Global Action Plan with the recipient countries involved to create one division, one system and one group. There must be universal access to water.

Ms. Dandonoli also believes that local utilities should be independent and provide the water and sanitation requirements.

6. Questions/ Answers:

6.1 Mr. Ghosh, in answer to a question, indicated that privatization was not a yes or no issue. Privatizing is not a yes or no issue. Private companies can be both good and bad. It is an issue of regulation. It needs community involvement to be successful.

6. Questions/Answers (Cont'd);

6.2 Mr. Sunago, in answer to a question, stated that desalicylize being done by a Japanese company is not being supported by Japan. It is a private Plan

6.3 Mr. Ghosh indicated, that in regard to recycling, you must look to Israel and the success they have had using recycled water for their farm lands. There is a vast potential by using recycled water for other activities.

Mr. Ghosh also indicated that there must be a re-education and focus on making the middle class aware of the water and sanitation problem in order to minimize waste. We must explain to them what this means for their health and create the will to improve their lives.

6.4 In answer to a question, Mr. Ghosh stated that we should not look at the impact of conflict on water resources and sanitation facilities. He indicated that the report did not go into this problem, but recognizes the severity of the problem. Countries are now starting to recognize this and are working together in spite of conflicts.

6.5 In answer to another question, Mr. Ghosh stated that water sanitation now accounts for only five percent of national budgets. These are examples of why it is an important issue. It is not getting the priority it deserves.

6.6 In answer to a question, Patricia Dandonoli stated that monetary evaluation starts at the beginning of a project and then continues throughout the project. For the long term there is a need to determine the impact on a country.

6.7 In answer to a question, Mr. Ghosh responded that nuclear power plants are being looked at to clean up and control water resources. He further stated, that we need to recognize that there are four issues of water but we forget the fourth – the over use of water. We forget that water is a resource that will never end. The decision to let manufacturers in and use water is dependent on the impact on water resources.

6.8 Patricia Dandonoli ended the question/answer session by stating that treatment and careful planning must take place on water allocation and their protection.

ON RIGHTS, PARTICIPATION AND POVERTY ERADICATION
Thursday, November 16, 2006, 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

This afternoon session was co-sponsored by the NGO Committee for Social Development and the sub-committee for the Eradication of Poverty and is part of the International Forum on the Eradication of Poverty. This session is a continuation of this mornings session.

Moderator:

Sharon Altendorf, PBVM, International Presentation Association
of the Sisters of the Presentation

Speakers:

Mr. Jacques Petidor, Informal Education Specialist,
Ministry of Education, Haiti and a member of the Advisory Committee,
International Movement ATD Fourth World

Mr. Quentin Wodon, Lead Poverty Specialist for Africa,
World Bank

Dr. Julia Motoc, Member, United Nations Sub-Commission on
Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

Moderator, Ms. Altendorf, welcomed everyone and introduced each of the speakers with their backgrounds. This session was co-sponsored by the NGO Committee for Social Development and the sub-committee for the Eradication of Poverty.

1. The moderator indicated that almost half of the population of least developed countries lives in extreme poverty. Extreme poverty, structural weaknesses of their economies, limited human, institutional, technical, trade and productivity capacity, inadequate infrastructure, limited capacity to mobilize domestic and attract external resources, unsustainable external debt, high vulnerability to external shocks, natural disasters and the prevalence of communicable and non-communicable diseases, including HIV/AIDS , malaria and tuberculosis are the major constraints in their development.

High population growth, rapid urbanization and environmental degradation further aggravate the extreme poverty. Climate change is also emerging as a new challenge for their sustainable development. This is particularly true for those in Africa and for the small island least developed countries. Post-conflict least developed countries face even greater challenges as they emerge from the ashes of war and try to begin reconstruction.

The moderator stated that a common starting point must be with the people themselves.

2. Ms. Attendorf introduced the first speaker Mr. Jacques Petidor who spoke in his native tongue. He indicated that Haiti after fighting for their freedom was now looking for equality. The creation of Haiti two hundred years ago was as a result of their fight for freedom for her people that were slaves.

He indicated that the people locally have to determine their needs. The poorest families there seek to survive under extreme poverty. How can we say, that living in poverty, we live by hand to hand. Families there make many efforts to educate their children by seeking help from neighbors.

People there invest in themselves. An experienced Haitian, who is fifty, uses her house to serve as a school free of charge for local students. Mr. Petidor gave examples of how students are determined to learn and share their experiences with each other.

Since September 2005, the school has not been operating due to local violence. They are looking to reopen the school. In Haiti, October 17th is their national day of their release from poverty. This started in 1987 as a vast movement. October 17th now serves as a day to show the world of their fight for survival.

Their main objective is to listen to people who are not normally listened to. Very poor families say that this is a fiat that allows them to grow. These poor families feel that what they have to say to the world is very important. This makes them stronger even if their situation has not changed yet. It is not possible for other people to understand the daily life or thinking of people living in poverty.

Mr. Petidor, stated that as we approach the twentieth century of October 17th, there must be a call to action. Any extreme poverty must result in a road to peace for these people. He concluded by saying that these people must have both their dignity and human rights.

3. The next speaker, Dr. Quentin Woden, studied both Engineering and economy. For the last seven to eight years he has worked at the World Trade Bank. He has written detailed reports on this problem and outlined ten risks when analyzing or attacking poverty. They are;

- Under or over estimating the number of the extreme poor and changes of in the number of the extreme poor.
- Not recognizing the multi-dimensions of extreme poverty.
- Not understanding the chain of events that lead to extreme poverty.
- Setting targets without enough concern for the extreme poor.
- Assuming that the distribution and natural growth is good enough.
- Not recognizing the risk consequences that exist for the extreme poor.
- Imposing conditions that may hurt the extreme poor.
- Not targeting enough or targeting too much.
- What is the definition of extreme poor – how long has someone been in extreme poverty.
- Improving our basic understanding of what is extreme poverty.

The question he asked in conclusion, is what kind of knowledge do we need and how do we go about getting it?

4. The last speaker, Dr. Iulia Motoc, is a professor of Human Law. She stated that the question of extreme poverty began to be understood as a question of human rights. At the beginning of the year 2000, the United Nation's Commission on Human Rights were established to work on the problem of extreme poverty. It Consisted of twenty-six members.

With this, Dr. Motoc indicated, that the United Nations had a chance to visit the areas of extreme poverty for understanding the problem before preparing the necessary paperwork on this critical issue. They formed a committee of five from the United Nation's Human Rights Commission to hear the voices of the people there of extreme poverty

After five years, they managed to draft guidelines (i.e. for states, etc) for money that can be handled through international cooperation. The committee members felt that they only had to address private participants in the world to solve this problem. They defined extreme poverty as violating the right to life of all so affected people.

The committee wanted that at the end of their effort to eradicate extreme poverty. They defined poverty as a lack of human rights. Dr. Motoc believes that there is an interplay of civil rights and human rights.

Their first task was to include the active participation of the poor. They felt That it was important for everyone to listen to and speak to them. The problem of stigma is another problem encountered by the poor. They have a right to be recognized. They also have the right to form a family and support their family. And they also have the right to get food.

Dr. Motoc indicated that there was a lot of corruption on this issue in some Countries. She concluded by stating that culture was very important for poor People.

5. Questions/Answers:

5.1 In answer to a question, Dr. Motoc indicated that she had input from NGOs on this issue in the 1990s asking her committee and the United Nations to address this problem. Her committee's report started to address the rights of the extreme poor. She indicated that we have to avoid people in extreme poverty being exploited.

5.2 Mr. Woden indicated that they have reports that measures global poverty in each country. The issue is how do we implement solutions? Another issue is how do we implement social rights? The implementation of these rights is the critical issue.

5.3 In a last comment and statement, Mr. Petidor stated that women have an important responsibility Haiti. Women are carrying the economic growth on their backs. So women have the greatest responsibilities for their children's lives on them going to school. This is because husbands have left to fight. This leaves women with the major responsibility to fight poverty and help their children.

Society does not realize the burden women in Haiti carry. In the last election, women in Haiti were given more seats in their legislature. He concluded by stating that above all there is hope for women and mothers in Haiti.

PDC George Weinstein
National UN Chairman

