



**James T. Morris**  
**Executive Director**  
**World Food Programme**

**STATEMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
TO THE ECOSOC SPECIAL EVENT ON THE FOOD CRISIS IN AFRICA  
NEW YORK, 27 OCTOBER 2005**

Today our loss reached 2.1 million -- that is the number of young children who have died this year of hunger and related diseases in Africa. Few people realize that hunger still takes this incredible toll -- globally it claims more lives than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. One African in three lives in its shadow.

WFP is struggling to feed 43 million hungry people in sub-Saharan Africa -- double the number from 1995. Yet when 170 Heads of State gathered here for the Summit in September only 18 mentioned hunger as a serious challenge -- barely one in 10. Cutting hunger in half is the one Millennium Development Goal where we are actually losing ground. In 2002, WHO confirmed that undernutrition remains the single greatest threat to health worldwide, and micronutrient deficiencies ranked eighth.

In the United Nations we often deal in sad statistics. It can be numbing. So let me share the story of a young child with an unusual name who did not become a UN statistic. His adoptive Sudanese parents call him Salwah or "One O'Clock" because that was the time they found him abandoned and crying in the tall grass in Darfur -- a tiny ten month old victim of the violence that so often spells hunger in Africa. With the help of the United States, the European Union and other donors, WFP is now feeding One O'Clock and his family. You have to see this little boy -- big chubby cheeks and a great smile. Last week, UNICEF and WFP announced the results of a nutritional survey in Darfur -- we have cut severe malnutrition among young children like him almost in half from 22 percent to 12 percent. Mr. President, if we can succeed in Darfur, we can succeed anywhere.

**Hunger and Conflict**

In much of Africa, conflict and hunger go hand in hand. Over the last decade, we have seen food used as a weapon in war -- in Darfur, southern Sudan, Somalia, Angola, northern Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and West Africa. The tactic, by the way, is by no means unique to Africa -- it was employed in Europe as recently as 1992 by the Bosnian Serbs in the siege of Sarajevo. When hatred strips us of our civility, we are all capable of incredible brutality.

The most egregious example of the use of food as a weapon today is in Darfur where we are feeding 2.5 million each month. A UN review of over two decades showed armed conflict in Africa reduced agricultural output on average by 20 percent. In Central Africa where war in the DR Congo has disrupted the region, the percentage of undernourished people rose from 53 percent in 1995 to more than 70 percent today. Where conflict has been less of a factor, nutrition improves -- Ghana, Nigeria and Madagascar.

The continuing presence of large numbers of African IDPs and refugees also threatens stability. It is difficult to persuade a family in Angola, for example, to return to their home village if they do not have food to tide them over until the next harvest. In the last five years alone, WFP has helped 800,000 combatants and their families in Liberia, Burundi, Somalia, DR Congo, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Angola to resettle.

Africans at war get far more attention than Africans at peace. Yet more than 9 out of 10 deaths from hunger and malnutrition occur among the chronically hungry -- not in a conflict zone. Occasionally I have thought the worst place for a hungry child to live in Africa today is a country at peace and stable, but just plain poor.

Nowhere has that been made more evident than in Niger these past few months. Back in June, I warned the Security Council that Niger had only received 11 percent of its flash appeal. It was one of a number of warnings. None of them really registered until the BBC, prompted by WFP footage from Niger, broadcast harrowing images of children dying in nutrition centers. We had more donations in the 20 days following the BBC's news story than in the previous 6 months. As the spotlight shifted, donations slowed.

Long-term solutions to chronic hunger in countries like Niger are complex. WFP and our sister agencies FAO and IFAD have a twin track approach. WFP addresses immediate food needs and improves peoples' nutrition so they can help themselves, while FAO and IFAD promote agricultural production and rural development.

Lack of irrigation, pests and postharvest losses are among the huge challenges facing Africa. Production technology runs from sophisticated in South Africa, where biotech has firmly taken hold, to subsistence agriculture on the tiniest of family plots. Sadly, in many areas farming yields are no better than those of the Roman Empire. Poor infrastructure takes its toll -- and that toll may soon be enormous if avian flu follows the normal bird migratory routes. North and East Africa -- not Europe -- will be next and African agriculture and health ministries are ill equipped to cope, though FAO and WHO are moving to help.

## **Hunger and AIDS**

The greatest humanitarian crisis today is not in Pakistan, the tsunami region, or Darfur -- though they are all severe -- it is the gradual disintegration of social structures in southern Africa. Hunger is playing a critical part. A lethal mix of AIDS, recurring drought and weakened capacity for governance is eroding social and political stability. Last year alone, 1 million lives were lost to AIDS there and only now are we in the peak impact period for the pandemic, 2005-2007. On average, life expectancy in much of southern Africa is barely more than it was in Europe during the Middle Ages.

Earlier this year we estimated 3.5 million people would need emergency food aid in southern Africa. Returning drought has almost tripled that figure to more than 10 million people.

The impact of AIDS on food production is enormous. The disease has claimed the lives of nearly 8 million African farmers - more farmers than there are in North America and the European Union combined. Outside many rural villages the land lies fallow with no one to till it. Much of a generation has gone missing, and there is no one to teach the next generation to farm. Even the very welcome arrival of ARVs is a muted blessing. Without proper nutrition, the pills cannot perform well and most donors and African Governments have failed to build nutrition into the equation in assisting families.

I wish I could stir up more media interest for those suffering now in southern Africa. I recall vividly a 70 year-old grandmother I met on my first trip to Swaziland. She and her blind 80 year-old husband were heading a

household with a dozen small children. Some were her grandchildren; others not. In much of Africa, villages act as extended families -- it is their form of social security. That system is now stretched to the breaking point.

### **Chronic Hunger Destabilizes Africa**

Chronic hunger in the African countryside is destabilizing. It spurs the continuing migration of rural people into cities, where basic social services -- including subsidized or free food -- often act as a lure. There is a chance that as ARVs become more widely available -- undoubtedly first in cities -- they too will act as a magnet in rural-urban migration.

In countries like Uganda and Kenya, for example, over 80 percent of the poorest people are rural. Yet African Governments and international donors have neglected investment in agriculture. If you look at ODA statistics, the percentage of funding devoted to agriculture has dropped from 12 percent in the early 1980s to a mere 4 percent today. The current terms of trade for the continent's agricultural products are also poor. This, by the way, makes progress in the Doha Round on dismantling subsidies and other trade distorting practices critical for rural Africans.

Competition for limited food resources in fragile environments can cause instability. The fact that African agriculture still depends on rainfall and there are large pastoral groups spurs population movements. The violence in Darfur, for example, has reduced the movements of nomads and led to overgrazing of areas with insufficient water, and the result has been drought-like conditions. We have seen this problem for decades not just in Sudan, but in Mauritania, Senegal and other countries as well. It was one of the early warning signs in Niger, when unrest broke out between nomadic grazers and villagers. When families can neither plant nor market livestock products, they begin to move.

### **Does Africa Get its Share of Aid?**

As ODA rises, are we targeting enough on Africa?

Some time ago WFP compared its work with the broader patterns of ODA with striking results. In 2003, only about a third of all ODA went to LDCs and a third to Africa. WFP's portfolio, on the other hand, is heavily emergency and African in focus. Three quarters of it went to LDCs and African countries. Neither Africa nor the least developed countries has been the priority in ODA to date. Let's hope that with the very sizable increases announced since Monterrey, donors will finally devote more to Africa.

Food aid, so critically important in Africa, is in sharp decline. Globally, it dropped by more than 1.8 million metric tons last year, excluding Iraq, to 7.5 million metric tons. This is happening despite the fact that FAO tells us the number of hungry people worldwide -- now 852 million -- has actually been rising by about 6 million a year since 2000.

Only one of the current UN Consolidated Appeals for Africa has received at least 75 percent funding. Central African Republic, Malawi and Djibouti have less than one third of the money they need. Cote d'Ivoire is at 41 percent, Somalia has 44 percent, Sudan and the Republic of the Congo are at 50 percent, DRC 55 percent.

## Encouraging Signs for Africa

Yet there are encouraging signs for Africa too -- the popular support for the G8 debt initiative, the Bush-Blair announcement of \$674 million in emergency food aid this summer, and, most importantly, the work of NEPAD and other home grown development initiatives.

Before coming here I asked my Country Directors for their thoughts on what might help most. There was a consistency in their messages -- more comprehensive and better early warning systems, stronger vulnerability assessments and contingency planning, and greater attention to maintaining stocks both at the national and community level. Above all, there was the call for more concerted political action to ensure peace.

WFP itself is trying to be more creative in its approach and is looking at a famine insurance scheme in Ethiopia -- a country with the highest per capita donations for emergencies, and the lowest for development. We are also looking at ways to maximize the impact of donations by changing our business processes. Ultimately, our goal is to be out of business in Africa. We are extraordinarily proud that globally WFP has phased out food aid in 25 countries since the mid-1990s. One day we want to phase out of Africa too.

The kind of life threatening hunger that could have destroyed One O'Clock's life in Darfur has vanished from the developed world. The streets of New York are not filled with hungry orphans, there are no stunted young girls and boys begging in Geneva, no children have lost their sight from a lack of vitamin A in Sydney. Hunger is largely unseen in the developed world. It is your responsibility and mine to be sure it is not forgotten too.

