

**Speech by Sheila Sisulu, Deputy Executive Director, Hunger Solutions**

**UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME**

**CONCERN WORLDWIDE HUNGER CONFERENCE**

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**Innovations in Fighting Hunger**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate Concern Worldwide on your 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which you have chosen to mark with an International Hunger Conference – most appropriately on World Food Day itself. I look forward to continuing our strong links with Tom, and Concern Worldwide, with whom the World Food Programme works in 10 countries in Africa and Asia. I'd also like to take this opportunity to commend the people and Government of Ireland for sticking to their commitment to reach that **0.7 percent** of GDP (in overseas assistance) by 2012.

As we've heard many times today, hunger is on the march. The ranks of the *urgently* hungry could soar to more than a billion next year. We have much work to do.

As I think we're all agreed, the financial havoc of recent few weeks has demonstrated powerfully the impact of global economic developments on the world's most vulnerable, many tucked away in small villages, but no longer shielded from global economic storms.

A grain trader in a dusty stall in Addis Abbaba leans on his donkey and talks about setting his prices every morning by checking the Chicago Board of Trade prices on the Internet. Farmers in the Rift Valley of Kenya say they are going to plant one third of what they did a year ago because the price of oil has driven the cost of fertilizer and diesel in their villages up 400 percent virtually overnight. They cannot plant, and hunger spreads.

After being pounded by four hurricanes, agricultural producers in Haiti voice their fears in the midst of financial crisis, that the United States will buy fewer exports, triggering a rise in poverty. So we see the macro and the micro colliding as never before in human history.

These events have also demonstrated powerfully the impact of hunger on the fragile political and economic stability of nations across the developing world.

The aggressive acceleration of food commodity prices has sparked massive strikes, violent protests and riots in more than 40 countries.

Continued – and increased – funding by our donors is absolutely critical to addressing the greater suffering as a result of high food and fuel prices. As you might imagine, WFP's budget has virtually doubled overnight, from \$3 billion to \$6 billion in 2008. Since March, we received \$1 billion in response to an appeal to help us cover increased programme and operational costs due to high food and fuel prices. Donors have been generous and so, on behalf of the hungry people in the world, we are thankful. *But we still have a way to go to reach that six billion dollars!*

This year, the World Food Programme will help 90 million people in urgent need of food, including 20 million children in our school feeding programme – to whom we give a cup of enriched porridge and sometimes take-home rations. For many children, this is often the only reliable source of food they get in the day.

This cup is like those used in many of our school feeding programmes in Africa. Between June last year and January 2008, 40 percent of the food in this cup was

lost, simply because of rising commodity prices. This held true for our emergency ration in places like Darfur, where WFP feeds three million people a day.

As agreed, the unfolding financial crisis, which is hitting everyone hard, is hitting developing countries disproportionately hard. It cannot be used as an excuse by the world *not* to come to the assistance of fragile democracies facing hunger.

Without effective and **innovative** action, the food crisis will deepen as nations use whatever means they can to ensure adequate food for their populations. This past year, fearing the political consequences of rocketing food prices, up to 40 nations imposed export bans and trade restrictions on commodities. These policies had a direct and immediate impact on the price and availability of food around the world – and threatened WFP’s capacity to obtain and deliver humanitarian food supplies.

At the same time, FAO predicts the world will need to produce twice as much food by 2050 to meet growing demand and a soaring global population. This could be a huge opportunity for developing world farmers if we get this right. With so many more people to feed, we must raise production. Otherwise the shortages will increase in scope and magnitude.

So how do we tackle hunger? I'd like to outline some of WFP's approaches in a moment, but first let me state very clearly that partnerships are absolutely fundamental to our work if we are serious about fighting hunger.

The initiatives I want to describe are included in WFP's new Strategic Plan. They mark a historic shift from WFP being a *food aid* agency to what we are calling a *food assistance* agency. By this we mean that, in all of our operations, we will ask how our interventions meet not only the critical emergency needs, but, whenever possible, help ensure that we break the cycle of hunger at its roots. In this Strategic Plan, WFP has introduced a more nuanced set of tools that allows us to ask what is causing the hunger and which interventions would be most appropriate to address those conditions.

WFP now receives a greater proportion of resources in cash rather than in kind. This opens new possibilities for a more flexible response. Already WFP uses 80 percent of the cash it receives to purchase food in developing countries – more than \$612 million in 69 developing countries last year. More than \$250 million of that was purchased in Africa. And thanks to the progressive approach adopted in Rwanda, we have been able to purchase food worth \$3 million there. Local and

regional purchases generally mean that food is more in line with local tastes and dietary habits as well as lowering transport costs while boosting the local agricultural economy and promoting local and regional trade.

But we can do even better. We are launching a programme called Purchase-For-Progress (P4P) which is designed to connect small farmers to markets. Supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Howard Buffet Foundation and the Belgian Government, P4P builds on WFP's local procurement and takes it a step further – reaching smallholder and low-income farmers and enabling them to gain more from supplying food to our global operations. From the very beginning of the supply chain, WFP will introduce innovative procurement and programme practices to reduce the risks faced by farmers. These include purchasing directly from farmers' associations and forward contracting which will help to develop secure markets for farmers' surpluses. P4P will also focus on developing local opportunities to process food, thereby increasing the availability of nutritious products in the local markets.

By combining our purchasing power with the technical and managerial contributions of other partners, WFP hopes to have a role in longer-term solutions,

bringing sustainable increases in agricultural production, particularly in the context of the present food crisis.

Partnership is essential for the successful implementation of P4P. Initially, the programme is being started in 21 countries, where WFP will partner with Governments, UN agencies, NGOs and other players in agricultural development collectively to support both the productive and marketing capacities of low-income and smallholder farmers. As Josette Sheeran, our Executive Director, said at the recent launch of P4P at the UN General Assembly, “P4P is a win-win – we help our beneficiaries and we help small farmers and their communities.”

Another innovative tool to emerge from our Strategic Plan are vouchers and cash transfers which allow us to meet identified needs in a more flexible and appropriate manner. Working with experienced NGO partners is crucial to the effective use of these innovative measures, which will undoubtedly harness our potential to provide assistance in ways that strengthen local markets, enhance the productivity of small farmers and empower beneficiaries.

But we know we have to tread carefully. Vouchers and cash transfers present both opportunities and limitations that need to be weighed carefully according to

context. The appropriateness of these measures hinges on programme objectives, food markets, implementation capacities and sound delivery and monitoring systems.

To get ahead of the hunger and undernutrition curve we need what's been described as the "value-chain" of defeating hunger – embracing universities, researchers, the private sector, governments, farmers, development workers and, of course, the nations themselves. This "value-chain" covers everything from agricultural research to inputs, to planting, to equipment, to harvest, to storage, to delivery, to market connections that depend and thrive on open trade.

We have seen that school feeding is particularly powerful as it brings multiple benefits; schools become the centre of life and girls go to school. This is the least expensive human rights programme I have ever seen. For 18 (EURO) cents a day, in fact, we see an even number of girls and boys in school. For example, in Pakistan – where 48 percent of the families said they would never send their girls to school – after a school feeding programme was introduced we saw 100 percent attendance.

As many of you know that have worked in schools, an extra ration given at the end of the week to girls will encourage them to stay in school until the age of 16. An extra ration to AIDS orphans at the end of the week makes it more likely that they can have a home as people will take them in if they are able to help the family.

When put together with an essential package of interventions with our partners, the World Bank, WHO and others, it is transformative. If you put some sprinkles on the food you can take care of iodine, iron and vitamin A deficiencies. If you add a deworming pill you can transform a child's life. If you add hand washing, malaria and HIV/AIDS education it has an even bigger impact; all of this for just 18 cents a day.

With our corporate partners, we are exploring exciting new nutritional products that will transform the lives of malnourished children. Just this week, together with DSM, we won a business innovation award for the MixMe micronutrient powder. By adding sachets of MixMe to starchy food such as rice and maize which lack essential vitamins, parents can do "home fortification" to ensure their children get the micronutrients so vital to physical and mental development.

Other examples of power-packed food are a sweet kind of paste developed with WFP and local food scientists in India made from chickpeas. We sent this into Myanmar because it does not require refrigeration or water and if it is given to a child it is full of nutrition and vitamins. They love it and it tastes great – it's also wonderful for under two-year olds.

Another nutritional invention is a date bar developed by Egyptian food scientists for school feeding. This is the wave of the future. This is where we can get the greatest impact for the least investment in helping people address undernutrition.

We are agreed that hunger is no longer an acceptable part of the human condition. And we do actually know how to end hunger – many countries have made enormous strides. We have the science and technology to end hunger. So let us invest all our ingenuity towards this goal.