

Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry

**FOOD FOR EDUCATION AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (FEED)**

Washington, DC
July 27, 2000

Presented by:

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. My name is Carole Brookins. I am Chairman and CEO of World Perspectives, Incorporated, a Washington-based analytical and consulting company that focuses on political, economic and trade factors affecting agricultural markets and the global food system.

I appreciate your invitation to participate in this hearing to review the proposal to implement an international school lunch program and would like to submit my testimony for *the Congressional Record*.

Sometimes there's a good idea whose time has come. This is one of them. I applaud the leadership that Ambassador McGovern has taken in clearly defining this issue and working within the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) to develop a proposal that would support this important goal of providing universal school lunch to all children in the developing world. And I am very pleased that President Clinton showcased this initiative at the recent G-8 Okinawa Summit.

Having considered this issue for several years, I believe that the question before you today is not the merit of the concept, but the best "means" to carry it forward. If implemented appropriately and effectively, it could be to the next 50 years what Food for Peace (PL480) brought to the world's hungry over the last half century.

First, the merit of concept.

As we move into the 21st century, nearly 80% of the world's population lives in the developing world, in countries ranging from fast growing "emerging" markets to poorly developed economies. The education deficit in most of these countries is one of the most serious drags on sustainable economic growth and social improvement that reaches all of the population, rather than concentrating total wealth and economic opportunity in the hands of a small, elite, well-educated class.

This leads to reduced trade and market opportunities when substantial numbers of people are left out of the economic mainstream, and the consequences of this can adversely impact U.S. national security interests as well. Take Indonesia today as a striking example.

At the same time, studies are repeatedly confirming the direct linkages between adequate nutrition and the capacity to learn—both in infancy/childhood years, and throughout a person's lifetime. President Clinton and Secretary Glickman are on the record: "There is a vital link between nutrition and learning...the link has never been closer."

Moreover, in order to broaden international support for the goal to eliminate child labor, there must be accompanying recognition that no mother or father put their young children to work if there is enough food to feed the family. Eliminating child labor will not occur without the necessary capacities to feed families and to give parents the means to better the lives of their children through education.

Thus, even before we can aspire to ending the “DIGITAL DIVIDE,” we must first end the “NUTRITION DIVIDE.”

In brief, then, what makes a targeted international school lunch program such a good idea?

1. If children don't get the proper nutrition at an early age, they cannot learn and their brains don't develop properly.
2. If parents know their children can and will be fed in school, they will send them to school and not be forced to put them to work as child laborers.
3. If the developing world—where more than 80 percent of the world's population lives and where the largest share of global population growth is taking place—cannot better educate their children, they will be left out of the global economy's potential.
4. If people can't improve their living standards through jobs and raise their economic potential, the result is growing inequality and destabilizing social and political problems.
5. Conversely, if more people can improve their participation in the economy and global markets because they are better educated, this raises incomes, purchasing power (for food, etc.) and trade and effectively makes this approach a true market development initiative.

Second, the Means to the End.

A wiseman once told me that 10 percent of a successful business venture is the “idea” and 90 percent is the “implementation.” With this in mind, there are a number of considerations that are critical to putting a sustainable program in place.

Bilateral and multilateral food aid programs have been operating for more than 50 years. Some have been more effective than others. Problems in implementing other school lunch programs over the years, such as cost-effectiveness and practical implementation issues including logistical problems, have been identified. Most importantly, sustainability of the programs has been a problem, because most such programs have relied almost exclusively on government budget support.

This is not to say that the World Food Programme's (WFP's) coordination of donations of food aid has not been highly successful in alleviating many emergencies and in providing a basic food security safety net where necessary. In addition, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been effective in delivering both food and technical assistance that has been provided by donors through bilateral or multilateral assistance. They have tremendous resources and experience to bring to this program.

I agree that all of these experienced players need to be involved in creating a sustainable initiative. However, I believe past experience and the structure of today's globalized economy means that this ambitious goal cannot be sustainably achieved by simply adding on to the broad programs that are already being carried out using only public sector financing and administered by

national and multinational public sector institutions.

If there is anything we have learned from the last two decades, it is that the tremendous momentum of wealth creation, flexibility, innovation and productivity is in the private commercial sector.

So, I would like to set out my own implementation guidelines:

1. IT MUST BE A PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE.

To provide an approach to deliver school lunches for all children in the developing world on a sustainable basis requires not only food supplies (food aid, imports and domestic production), but also technical assistance (logistics, management both at a national and local level), infrastructure, distribution systems and a variety of other activities.

Private corporations, foundations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the World Bank and other regional development banks need to be brought in early in the program planning with governments and the FAO to maximize the success potential.

2. IT MUST NOT BE A FOOD DUMPING INITIATIVE.

To support this objective of universal school lunch, there will need to be a combination of food aid, commercial imports and purchases of in-country food supplies. For example, to counter concerns in the recipient country about potential disruption to its market, food aid could be monetized for the purchase of domestic supplies and to support the improvement of internal logistics and distribution systems.

3. IT MUST NOT BE LAYERED INTO EXISTING BUREAUCRATIC AGENDAS.

There are a wide variety of foreign assistance/food aid initiatives providing educational and child nutrition support already operational in one or many countries. Too many good ideas get swamped or drowned in bureaucratic channels.

In my view, in order to assure the integrity of this mission and its viability, I have suggested establishing a new U.S. institute (private/public) which I have named "Food for Education and Economic Development" (FEED). FEED could be mandated much as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) was in 1983, receiving annual congressional appropriation and governed by an independent, nonpartisan board of directors. A copy of this proposal is attached to my testimony.

4. IT MUST BEGIN ON A SMALL, TARGETED SCALE.

I would suggest that this type of program begin with a few specific pilots in countries or regions of countries where the national and local governments are committed to universal child feeding/education. A good start would be to target pilots in Latin America, Asia and Africa—based upon COMPETITIVE submissions.

5. IT MUST SUPPORT GLOBAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT.

I've never met a farmer who didn't believe in using his agricultural resources to feed hungry people. Feeding kids is a far better use of taxpayer money and it meets a lot more of our strategic economic and political goals for the world—and FOR BUILDING LONG-TERM MARKET GROWTH—than simply throwing funds to take out crop acreage or direct emergency payments to farmers to offset low prices because markets aren't big enough.

Conclusion:

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I strongly support Ambassador McGovern's concept and the importance of an international school lunch program. At this time of abundant global grain stocks, the U.S. should provide financial support and global leadership for other countries to join in this initiative to build the future marketplace.

However, I would urge that the Senate Agriculture Committee seriously support this proposal with a view to directly involve, engage and commit the private business community—both local and global—in DESIGNING and IMPLEMENTING the programs to be carried out.

One approach that might be considered to bring together all the involved U.S. participants is contained in my proposed Food for Education and Economic Development (FEED) Institute.

I'd be happy to answer any questions.

First Draft: January 1999 **REVISED DRAFT: April 24, 2000**

Proprietary Concept Paper:

**FOOD FOR EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
(FEED)**

Conceived By: Carole Brookins
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BACKGROUND

As we move into the 21st century, nearly 80% of the world's population lives in the developing world, in countries ranging from fast growing “emerging” markets to poorly developed economies. The education deficit in most of these countries is one of the most serious drags on sustainable economic growth and social improvement that reaches all of the population, rather than concentrating total wealth and economic opportunity in the hands of a small, elite, well-educated class.

Moreover, in order to broaden international support for the goal to eliminate child labor, there must be accompanying recognition that no mother or father put their young children to work if there is enough food to feed the family. Eliminating child labor will not occur without the necessary capacities to feed families and to give parents the means to better the lives of their children through education.

Today, developing and particularly countries that faced economic contraction due to the 1997 Asian financial crisis have fallen back in their capacities to support education of their populations. Additionally, parents aren't sending their children to school because they cannot afford it. Many emerging market economies in Asia, for example, made huge economic gains over the past two decades due to the financial and human resources directed to developing a well-educated and trained workforce. They committed substantial government revenues to elementary and secondary education. That money is no longer available. Although the IMF and World Bank emphasize the need to build a viable safety net in crisis countries, their financial support is widely diverse and lacks focus.

At the same time, studies are repeatedly confirming the direct linkages between adequate nutrition and the capacity to learn—both in infancy/childhood years, and throughout a person's lifetime. President Clinton and Secretary Glickman are on the record: “There is a vital link between nutrition and learning...the link has never been closer.”

Bilateral and multilateral food aid programs have been in place for more than 50 years. However, they are targeted to numerous objectives beyond crisis response, and, where the U.S. has authorized monetization, those funds are scattered to any number of AID/NGO project priorities—many which have no link to feeding people.

It is time to take a direct, targeted approach to utilizing food aid in an integrated approach to capacity building that builds stronger national institutions, communities and human resources. At this time of a U.S. farm crisis of 1999-2000, and large global grain stocks, the U.S. should seek to fund (as part of a safety net) a **FOOD FOR EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (FEED)** donation program and provide the global leadership for other countries to join in this initiative to build the future marketplace.

I am proposing that the U.S. take a lead role. The U.S. should enact legislation establishing a **FOOD FOR EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE**, supported by private (corporate and foundation) and public funding, that would receive official U.S. government

authorization. The example for beginning this institute could be The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) which is a private, nonprofit, grant-making organization created in 1983 to strengthen democratic institutions around the world. NED receives an annual congressional appropriation and is governed by an independent, nonpartisan board of directors.

FOOD FOR EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (FEED)

The Food For Education And Economic Development Institute (FEED) would serve in developing an integrated, sustainable approach toward providing school breakfast/lunch programs in developing countries. FEED would provide the combination of integrated assistance (food aid, technical assistance, human resource development, infrastructure and distribution capacity building) to meet the nutritional requirements of all peoples through a combination of purchases/donations of domestically-produced food, imports and food aid.

The FEED process:

1. A nation requests a FEED program and legally makes a commitment to building a sustainable school breakfast/lunch nutrition program.
2. FEED acts as the clearing-house for providing the components in a “turn key” operation tailored to the particular country's (or region of a country) requirements, and utilizing in-country resources. IDB experts and funding, bilateral donor support, and private industry contribution. .
3. FEED's components:
 - Analytical Support in Determining Dietary/Population Requirements and Building a 20-year model
 - Mapping out the logistics for urban-rural, rural-regional in country-purchase and import/in-country distribution
 - Determining the domestic purchase/supply, import, food aid requirements and cost
 - Developing teams of developed economy experts in the public sector who currently manage school breakfast/lunch operations and using their expertise in an advisory capacity with the country's own selected steering committee (private and public sector)
 - Human resource development through training at the national and community level in purchase, distribution, food preparation, etc.
 - Organizing a coordinated team of support from active non-governmental organization (NGOs) involved in development activities in-country, and private businesses (multinationals, locals) prepared to contribute to some level of support (funding, processing, transportation, food product supply, etc.)

FEED could begin with a pilot project—or three pilot programs—selected in each of three regions (Africa, Asia, Latin America). It would be useful to take a country which is already committed to some aspect of providing food to children in schools. Although this would be kicked off by U.S. leadership, it could be organized as an internationally supported commitment.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to traditional food aid and/or feeding programs which have been primarily—if not totally—managed and funded by the public sector, FEED brings together all parties as stakeholders in the future of the global economy and the local development that will make it possible.

The benefits of the FEED approach are:

- Builds a true private:public partnership;
- Builds a positive aspect of “food aid” (vs the negative concept of replacing domestic farm production) by using monetization proceeds to purchase domestic food supplies for the program;
- Builds TOTAL SHORT-TERM DEMAND/CONSUMPTION of food;
- Builds human resources, particularly among women, as administrators of FEED at the individual local/school level;
- Builds distribution infrastructure using monetization proceeds and/or World Bank (WB) or other IDB funding for basic infrastructure and technical assistance;
- Builds capacity of parents and their commitment to educate their children, supporting the movement to eliminate child labor;
- Builds nutrition and improved physical and mental processes for people in developing countries—which account for more than 80% of the world's population;
- Builds improved relationships between international companies that invest in developing countries and the communities where they do business;
- Builds long-term higher demand for agricultural/food products through educating and training more people which will result in higher incomes/purchasing power.