



IBVM Justice Alert

Canadian Province, May 2008

From: Maria Lanthier
To: IBVMs, Associates and Friends

RIISING FOOD COSTS: A GLOBAL CRISIS

In recent weeks all of us have heard and read plenty about this crisis, both from the UN's officials in the [World Food Program \(WFP\)](#) and from the UN's coordinators of the [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#).

Through the UN Wire, through our daily papers and through a host of television news and issue panels these officials are sounding the alarm bells about an approaching humanitarian crisis – a vast shortfall in the world's food supply exacerbated by sky rocketing prices.

CAUSES

How did such a serious failure in food supplies creep up on the countries of the world, we ask ourselves in disbelief, or were the signs there all the time? Many causes are now finally coming to the surface, such as:

- The unchecked rise in the cost of oil (gas) which is seriously affecting farm food production and transportation to markets;
- Disruptive events of climate change after which certain areas of formerly productive agricultural lands in Africa and Asia can no longer support food crops;
- People of the rising economies of India and China now able to consume many of the types of food to which the western world had always been accustomed;
- At a time of record farm incomes in developed countries, we still continue to protect our agricultural industry with unjustifiable subsidies and tariff barriers;
- The recent practice in developed countries of using a food staple such as corn for the production of bio-fuels to run our cars - a practice that only adds to the strain on world food production.

All of the above have put food prices over the top, to the point where staple foods are now out of reach to the world's poor families.

HOPE FOR CHANGE

Several possible remedies are now being put forth which could lay groundwork for a more viable future where agriculture could be done differently. This would require immediate and long term planning as well as investment on the part of developed nations of the world. These include:

- A strong call for the industrialized nations to re-examine their dependence on oil, so that the price of oil would be allowed to drop;
- Developed countries must open the world's food markets to **MORE LIBERALIZED TRADING** by removing subsidies and tariff barriers.

An urgent call comes from the former UN President, Kofi Anan, who recently visited some of the world's most food-fragile countries like those of central Africa and Afghanistan:

- Developed countries must invest heavily in both infrastructure and agriculture production in food-fragile countries.
- Trade barriers should all be removed; investment would enable farmers in undeveloped nations to use their own traditional seed for growing while preserving the quality of soil and the water supply – all the while being less dependent on fossil fuels.

Mr. Anan calls us to recognize the fact that both Afghanistan and the countries in Africa possess lands (as well as workers) that have enormous potential for agriculture. He further states that if the approaching G8 Summit of Nations (July 2008) put such a strategy at the front and centre of their meetings, then the countries presently in crisis would rapidly arrive at being able to feed their own populations adequately.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN

While governments of the western world are beginning to send financial support to the WFP and the FAO, the United Nations knows that the support of the entire group of developed countries will be of great importance in the short term solution to food aid. In fact, one UN official states that what is now needed is an outpouring of support from the whole world such as we saw during the Tsunami a few years ago.

We are suggesting a fund-raising effort from those in our network who receive this alert. The [Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace \(CCODP\)](#) is willing to guide such a contribution towards on-the-ground use in SUDAN where CCODP has an organization to deal with development and crises that arise. Loreto Sisters, Dolores O'Connor, Anne Farren and Orla Treacy of the [Irish Province](#), have been ministering in Sudan's Catholic Diocese of Rumbek since 2006. As you may know, Sudan is one of the many areas of the globe that has been experiencing severe food shortage for some time, and now, that situation has further deteriorated with the rising cost of staple foods.

If you wish to make a contribution to this relief effort:

Please make your cheque payable to Loretto Ladies Colleges and Schools

Mail it to: Evanne Hunter, IBVM, Loretto Abbey
101 Mason Blvd. Toronto, ON M5M 3E2

If we receive your cheque by May 26th, we could transfer the total amount to the [Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace](#).

ACTION TOWARDS LONG TERM SOLUTIONS

A letter to our political leaders is attached urging that Canada should pay close attention to the meeting in Rome (June 3-5) to which the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is inviting all the world leaders. This conference will be organized by the Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO). It will aim to examine the root causes of the crisis; it will work out a strategy for addressing food shortages and soaring prices.

Please fax or e-mail or mail a copy of the letter to the following:

{If using post mail, please use the same House of Commons address for all the leaders given below. No postage is required}

Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons, Parliament Bldgs.
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Fax: 1-613-957-5579
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Honourable David Emerson Fax:
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Honourable Gerald Ritz
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Honourable Stéphane Dion
Leader of the Opposition

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Honorable Gilles Duceppe
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Honourable Jack Layton
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WISDOM FROM THE EARTH CHARTER

The document's inclusive ethical vision recognizes

- Environmental protection,
- Human rights
- Equitable human development
- And peace
- Are all interdependent and indivisible.

WE ARE ONE EARTH, ONE HUMAN FAMILY

