

## **Forging Alliances, Forging Ahead Against Hunger National anti-hunger movements share ideas, explore funding opportunities at Washington forum**

by Teresa Buerkele,

**12 December 2008, Washington, DC** – Hunger-fighting groups from seven countries met here this month to share their ideas and experiences in an effort to strengthen partnerships in the battle against hunger and malnutrition.

“Now that the world is faced with a financial crisis and the threat of economic recession in its richer countries, the focus of international attention has shifted away from food-related issues,” said FAO Assistant Director-General Lorraine Williams, Chair of the International Alliance against Hunger.

In her remarks to the National Alliances against Hunger Forum, Ms. Williams cited the International Alliance’s appeal to US President-elect Barack Obama “to make the emancipation of humanity from hunger a centerpiece of American foreign policy.”

She added, however, that “appeals to individual leaders, if they are to carry weight, must be reinforced by building a strong constituency of public support for the idea that mankind can – and must – rid the world of hunger once and forever.”

### **Fostering partnerships**

The Washington meeting was an effort to increase such support by bringing together participants from national hunger alliances, foundations, civil society organizations, government and the private sector.

Participants from Brazil, Canada, Israel, Jordan, Mexico, Sierra Leone and the United States shared ideas and best practices that could be promoted and taken up by others. The forum also sought to raise awareness of potential donors on the importance of interaction across national groups working on hunger issues.



**Participants from NAAHs sharing views**

The meeting featured presentations by the UN Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Hewlett Foundation, as well as potential corporate partners, such as Sodexo, one of the world's largest food services and facilities management companies, and the US agricultural cooperative Land O'Lakes. Civil society organizations were also represented with presentations by the Global Foodbanking Network, Catholic Relief Services and the Global Child Nutrition Foundation.

### **Congressional briefing**

Participants also attended a briefing on the global hunger crisis with members of the US Congress and their staff.

“Hunger is a political condition,” said Congressman Jim McGovern, Co-Chair of the House Hunger Caucus. “We have to hold elected officials accountable.”

McGovern was optimistic about the opportunity to make hunger a priority issue of the new US administration, saying that 116 members of Congress had signed a bi-partisan letter to President-elect Obama, calling on him to create a high-level White House position to design and implement a comprehensive strategy to fight hunger.

“Countries make pledges all the time. Enough!” McGovern said. “We have a thousand plans. We need one. This really isn't that difficult if we have political will.”

The meeting was hosted by the US Alliance to End Hunger and the FAO Liaison Office for North America on behalf of the International Alliance, a voluntary association of international organizations, national alliances against hunger, civil society, social and religious organizations and the private sector. The International Alliance was founded in 2003 by the Rome-based food and agriculture agencies – FAO, the World Food Programme, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and Bioversity International – to advocate jointly for more determined action against hunger and malnutrition.



**Francis Webber of Sierra Leone's NAAH**