

Testimony
of Ambassador William Garvelink
before the House Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight and the
Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health
“Oversight of Feed the Future: Meeting the MDGs”
July 20, 2010

Chairman Carnahan, Chairman Payne, Ranking Member Rohrabacher, Ranking Member Smith and other members of the Subcommittees, thank you for holding this important hearing today. Poverty and hunger remain at unacceptably high levels in the world today. The statistics are sobering. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute, hunger is distressingly high in South Asia, while Africa has experienced the slowest progress of all regions toward reducing hunger. Nine of those countries that saw an increase in hunger in the last ten years are in Africa.

A primary goal of the President’s Feed the Future Initiative is to accelerate progress toward the hunger-related Millennium Development Goal (MDG), cutting extreme poverty and hunger by half by 2015. While we will likely reach the hunger-related MDG by 2015 at the aggregate globally, progress in many of the poorest countries will fall far short of the target. Progress in Sub-Saharan Africa is a particular focus of our efforts in Feed the Future. Fifty one percent of Africans live on less than \$1.25 per day. That is only 7 percent less than in 1990, and a very long way from the MDG target of halving the proportion who live on \$1.25 per day.

The Millennium Development Goal is an important target and a powerful symbol of our shared commitments. It brings both political and developmental focus. It encapsulates the largest root cause of food insecurity, poverty. I spent much of my career at USAID working on humanitarian assistance and know firsthand the value of U.S. leadership in delivering food aid to alleviate the most acute suffering. But, addressing hunger over the long term requires that we rebalance our efforts with greater emphasis on sustainable development solutions, like focusing our assistance

on small holder producers, most of whom are women. And while we know that agriculture productivity is an efficient driver of poverty reduction, it alone is not sufficient to reach our goals.

As we look to the impact Feed the Future can have in Africa and globally, USAID is prepared to meet the challenge with partners across the U.S. government and with expanding partnerships globally. I want to focus on three areas, in particular, to illustrate how this initiative has shaped our expanded development assistance efforts over the last year.

The first and most important area is the coordinated and country-led planning process. In just the last year, ten countries in Africa and one each in Latin America and Asia have completed national agriculture and food security investment plans for peer and external review. These are not plans submitted to one donor or multilateral organization; they are the subject of collective input and review. These reviews represent a big step forward in the leadership and accountability of both developing countries and donors alike. They require a commitment and significant level of investment on the part of governments to organize and coordinate behind transparent country-led processes. The result of these reviews has not been a rubber stamp of approval. Indeed all the reviews that have taken place to date have resulted in roadmaps of additional work to improve the technical quality or estimates of the costs of implementation.

This process is providing greater clarity in how U.S. development assistance can leverage developing countries' own commitments and those of other development partners. In Rwanda, for example this coordinated and country-led process has mobilized 90 percent of the investment outlined in the government's agricultural development investment plan.

We also can more clearly see the areas where the U.S. has a comparative advantage to take the lead, and other areas where we can collaborate and not duplicate efforts. Under the Rwandan investment plan, for example, USAID will be jointly funding a major project for targeted and systemic transformation of hillside agriculture, together with the Government of Rwanda, the World Bank, and counterpart development agencies from Canada and Japan. By coordinating our resources around this common program we can reach a truly transformational scale. In the

area of privatization of fertilizer distribution, USAID will take the lead, drawing from our long-standing partnership with the International Fertilizer Development Center. So it makes sense that USAID will assist the Government of Rwanda in this area to implement a phased withdrawal from subsidies that have become a fiscal burden on their own budget.

The U.S. is playing a leadership role in facilitating robust country-led processes. Over the last year, we have stepped up our support to developing country governments to undertake the analysis that is needed to set priorities based on the potential impact. In all the food security focus countries, we are increasing support for capacity building and institutional strengthening as a core area of our investments to ensure sustainability that can make lasting change in their own countries. We are emphasizing a focus on reaching small scale producers and gender for example. Countries need to improve the rigor of policy making, to make hard choices about priorities given scarce resources, and to link those choices to results.

At the June 2nd review of the Haiti agricultural plan, the Government of Haiti committed to strengthening support within their national budget to agriculture and food security. And in Bangladesh, we worked with international and Bangladeshi partners to develop their national plan of action on food security from a starting point with twenty-six priority areas to a more focused agenda around twelve priorities. In Bangladesh, a country in which the U.S. has made significant investments in agriculture in the 1980s, institutional strengths in governance, including among civil society organizations, position them to make rapid progress. In Africa, a continent-wide planning process has led many countries to increase their policy commitments to agriculture with eight countries reaching or surpassing 10 percent in 2008 and an additional nine countries reaching budget shares of between 5 and 10 percent.

The second area that is critical to Feed the Future is combating child under-nutrition. Each year, more than 3.5 million children die from undernutrition which costs developing countries up to 3 percent of their potential annual gross domestic product. With an internationally coordinated effort under the food security initiative, we believe we can reach up to 25 million children. While almost all measures of global hunger are now based on measures of under-nutrition, few countries have made dramatic progress in this area compared to poverty reduction. We need to

address the multiple dimensions of nutrition, spanning access to health services, women's control of incomes, and improving dietary quantity and quality, particularly for women and young children.

One approach is not sufficient. Rwanda provides a good illustration. Since 1998, Rwanda has experienced 6 percent economic growth every year and has achieved self-sufficiency in food production through agricultural growth of around 15 percent in recent years. Despite these impressive gains, chronic under-nutrition remains at 50 percent, unchanged over almost a decade. We are developing strategies that integrate our public health investments with agricultural development, research, and gender analysis. In this way, we will leverage dedicated funding linked to the Global Health Initiative, which includes a nearly three-fold increase in requested nutrition funding over FY 2010 appropriations, with our agricultural resources under Feed the Future in new ways to increase our impact toward alleviating this underlying factor of chronic hunger.

Combating under-nutrition is also an area where we have significant scope for partnership with other donors, multilateral organizations, civil society, and the private sector to achieve success and a high level of accountability. In April, I attended an event we co-hosted with the World Bank on food security and nutrition that advanced a global call to action. At the upcoming MDG Summit, Secretary Clinton will co-host an event with Ireland to highlight our expanding tool kit of effective approaches to improve nutrition.

The third area where we are making significant progress is in the area of agricultural research. This is an area of clear U.S. comparative advantage, with our leadership in agricultural research spanning back almost fifty years to the start of the Green Revolution. In almost every country I have visited in my development career, I have encountered scientists up through ministers who received their training with support from USAID. This is an enduring legacy that both builds openness to the U.S. and supports the human capital to drive sustained development. We know that investing in agricultural research today contributes to the growth and resilience of the food supply tomorrow. When combined with other agricultural investments, improved technologies

and practices can meet the need to feed an ever growing global population with less land, less water, and a less certain climate.

On June 16th, Secretary Clinton, Secretary Vilsack, and Administrator Shah announced a new strategy for agricultural research to support Feed the Future. The 2011 budget request represents a 64 percent increase in our support for global agricultural research over 2009.

The new research strategy will increase the impact of those investments by addressing some of the gaps in the international research system. We will be more focused, investing deeply in fewer priorities to deliver solutions that can have large scale impacts on poverty and child under-nutrition. And, we will expand and strengthen the linkages between global research partners such as U.S. universities, the private sector, and the CGIAR with developing country counterparts.

The weakness of national research and extension systems in developing countries has constrained the impact of new advances in science and technology. Recognized the world over for excellence in science and for training a generation of agricultural leaders throughout the developing world, through Feed the Future, the U.S. will harness those assets to strengthen national research and extension partners. This will ensure that global research priorities address local needs and to adapt and deliver new advances to the hands of small-scale producers.

Within our own agency, we are increasing the coherence between our Washington-funded research with our Mission programs to close these gaps and achieve greater impact. Through the reforms of the multilateral CGIAR system, we have been working with other donors over the last year to significantly advance both management and strategic changes that will increase the focus of the more than \$600 million in research conducted by this valuable international system. In collaboration with USDA, we will share a draft of the new Feed the Future research strategy for further consultation with U.S. universities, industry, and non-governmental partners.

We will be launching a substantial system for monitoring and evaluation that spans both our programs and performance at the country level. This includes investing in development of host

country capacity for data collection and multilateral tools and indicators to improve our ability to measure progress against our goals and objectives. These investments will ensure not only accountability for our resources, but establish systems that endure and go beyond our programs.

With our market-led focus on agricultural growth, Feed the Future also expands opportunities for U.S. agricultural and food industries to invest in new markets overseas. As incomes increase, demand for better quality foods rises - dairy and meat, fresh fruits and vegetables, and better quality cooking oils. This expands opportunities for U.S. trade, ranging from commodities to seeds to equipment. U.S. agriculture, from our university labs, to cooperatives, to companies, to farmers themselves, has a rich history of sharing expertise and investing in development.

We look forward to expanding those partnerships, as well as with you here in Congress, as we move forward with this exciting initiative.