

EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT, ETHICAL SOLUTION TO FEEDING 9 BILLION PEOPLE: INVEST IN WOMEN

CRAWFORD LECTURE, CANBERRA AUSTRALIA

Professor Catherine Bertini

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INTRODUCTION

IT IS AN HONOR TO BE THE CRAWFORD LECTURER!

SIR JOHN CRAWFORD WAS ONE OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF MODERN INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT, ESPECIALLY IN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT – HE MADE AND THE CRAWFORD FUND CONTINUES TO MAKE - CRITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO A PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS WORLD.

THIS IS MY FOURTH VISIT TO AUSTRALIA – BUT THE LAST ONE WAS TOO LONG AGO, DURING MY WFP TENURE. I AM NOT BLOWING SMOKE TO TELL YOU THAT WHEN PEOPLE ASK, “CATHERINE, YOU HAVE BEEN TO PROBABLY 100 COUNTRIES, WHICH DO YOU LIKE THE BEST?” I SAY, “WELL THE FOOD IS BEST IN ITALY, THE COLORS PEOPLE WEAR ARE MOST STRIKING IN WEST AFRICA AND GUATEMALA, AND THE FRIENDLIEST PEOPLE ARE AUSTRALIANS.....AND CUBANS.”

I HAD MANY WONDERFUL AUSTRALIAN COLLEAGUES, INCLUDING JOHN POWELL, ALAN WILKINSON, JOHN BAILEY, ANTHEA WEBB AND MIKE SACKETT AT WFP, AND CATHERINE WALKER AT AUSAID. I WORKED EXTENSIVELY WITH THEN MINISTER ALEXANDER DOWNER AND AT THE UN WITH AMBASSADOR JOHN DAUTH, BUT THE AUSTRALIAN TO WHOM I OWE MY BIGGEST DEBT AND GRATITUDE IS MY PREDECESSOR AT THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME, JAMES INGRAM.

AFTER A DISTINGUISHED CAREER IN THE AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN SERVICE, JIM SERVED TEN YEARS AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WFP. NOT ONLY DID HE HAVE TO RUN THAT LARGE DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION, BUT HE DID SO WHILE LEADING AN IMPORTANT EFFORT TO INSTITUTIONALLY DIVORCE WFP FROM FAO. THIS WAS MUCH LIKE CHANGING THE ENGINE ON A TRAIN WHILE IT IS RUNNING FAST DOWN THE TRACKS.

HE SUCCEEDED, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 1992 AND PASSED THE CEO REINS TO ME THREE MONTHS LATER. GIVEN THAT THE USSR FELL DECEMBER 1991 AND THE WORLD WAS BEGINNING TO BE ENVELOPED WITH MASSIVE NEW HUMANITARIAN NEEDS, JIM’S ACHIEVEMENTS WERE CRITICAL TO WFP’S FUTURE SUCCESS IN HAVING THE FLEXIBILITY TO QUICKLY FEED TENS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE.

JIM HAS WRITTEN A BOOK ABOUT THIS, BREAD AND STONES, STILL AVAILABLE ON AMAZON. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND IT TO YOU; IN FACT, I ASSIGN IT TO GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE CLASSES I TEACH ON THE UNITED NATIONS AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY.

JIM INGRAM PUT INTO ACTION PRINCIPLES THAT SIR JOHN CRAWFORD ESTABLISHED. THANK YOU SIR JOHN, THANK YOU JIM.

SUBJECT INTRODUCTION

MANY TIMES DURING THE CONFERENCE TOMORROW, WE WILL HEAR ABOUT THE NINE BILLION PEOPLE WHO WILL INHABIT THE EARTH, GOD WILLING, IN 2050. OUR MISSION IS TO DISCUSS HOW TO INSURE THAT THEY HAVE FOOD SECURITY..." RELIABLE ACCESS TO SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES OF AFFORDABLE, NUTRITIOUS FOOD TO MAINTAIN HEALTHY, ACTIVE LIVES."

TONIGHT I WANT TO SHARE FIVE POINTS WITH YOU, INCLUDING:

- WHERE THESE PEOPLE WILL LIVE AND WHAT IS THE PROJECTED GROWTH
- HOW MANY ARE HUNGRY
- THE NATURE OF FUTURE FOOD NEEDS
- HIGHLIGHTS OF RELATED CHALLENGES

MOST IMPORTANTLY, I WILL ADDRESS THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AS CRUCIAL CONTRIBUTORS, AND HOW IMPORTANT IT IS FOR US TO ADDRESS GENDER ROLES IN AGRICULTURE IF WE ARE TO SUPPORT A WORK FORCE TO FEED NINE BILLION PEOPLE.

WHERE WILL THE NINE BILLION LIVE/WHAT ARE THE GROWTH PATTERNS

TODAY, WORLD WIDE, APPROXIMATELY 4.2 BILLION OF THE 7 BILLION HUMANS ARE ASIANS, OR MORE THAN HALF. BY 2050, THERE ARE EXPECTED TO BE ONE BILLION MORE ASIANS AND ONE BILLION MORE AFRICANS, OR DOUBLE THAT CONTINENT'S CURRENT POPULATION.

HOW MANY ARE HUNGRY

THERE IS GOOD NEWS: THE NUMBERS OF DESPERATELY HUNGRY, FOOD INSECURE AND CHRONICALLY HUNGRY PEOPLE ARE NOT KEEPING UP WITH POPULATION GROWTH (PERCENTAGE-WISE).

THE NUMBERS FAO STATES ARE THAT 870 MILLION PEOPLE SUFFER FROM ACUTE AND GENERATIONAL HUNGER. THOUGH THERE WAS A SPIKE IN THIS NUMBER DURING THE FOOD PRICE CRISES IN 2008 AND IN 2011, THE CURRENT NUMBERS ARE ROUGHLY THE SAME AS THEY WERE IN 1970. THE WORLD POPULATION IN THIS TIME FRAME – 1970 – 2010 – HAS DOUBLED.

THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF THIS DECREASE IS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THE CLEAREST EXAMPLES ARE HERE IN YOUR INDO-PACIFIC NEIGHBORHOOD.

INDONESIA, FOR INSTANCE, NOW THE FOURTH LARGEST ECONOMY IN ASIA, HAS AN INCREASE OF PER CAPITAL INCOME FROM \$890 IN 1994 TO \$3580 IN 2013. THOUGH HUNGER EXISTS, IT IS FAR LESS EXTENSIVE THAN IT HAS BEEN.

INCOMES IN BANGLADESH HAVE TRIPLED IN THE SAME TIME FRAME, THOUGH FROM A VERY LOW BASE, BUT POVERTY HAS DRAMATICALLY DECREASED, LIFE EXPECTANCY HAS INCREASED, AND STATISTICS FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN MATERNAL AND CHILD MORTALITY RATES ARE NOW BETTER THAN THOSE FROM INDIA.

HOW IS THIS RELATED TO AGRICULTURE? THINK OF EVERY ECONOMICALLY GROWING AND/OR SUCCESSFUL COUNTRY YOU CAN, AND NAME ONE (WELL PERHAPS SINGAPORE) WHOSE ECONOMY DID NOT START WITH AGRICULTURE. AUSTRALIA'S, AMERICA'S, THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA'S, SWITZERLAND'S.....

NOW, THIS IS OCCURRING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, WITH AGRICULTURAL GROWTH RATES IN MANY COUNTRIES NOW GREATER THAN THE GROWTH RATES IN OECD COUNTRIES.

THIS, IN TURN, HELPS ALLEVIATE POVERTY AND HUNGER. THE WORLD BANK WRITES THAT "AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IS 2 TO 4 **TIMES** MORE EFFECTIVE AT ALLEVIATING POVERTY' THAN ANY OTHER ACTIVITY.

THE NATURE OF FOOD NEEDS

WELL, IF THE POPULATION IS RISING 30%, THEN WE NEED THAT MUCH MORE FOOD, RIGHT?

NO. THE LOWEST ESTIMATES ARE THAT WE NEED AT LEAST 60% MORE FOOD.

WHY IS DOUBLE, OR MORE FOOD REQUIRED?

THERE ARE MANY REASONS, BUT A PRIMARY REASON IS THAT, AS PEOPLE BECOME LESS POOR, THEY CHANGE THEIR EATING HABITS. THEY MOVE FROM INEXPENSIVE, MINIMAL CALORIE FOODS TO A MORE DIVERSE DIET. MORE MEAT, MORE FISH, MORE VEGETABLES. IT TAKES MORE GRAIN TO RAISE BEEF, CHICKEN AND FISH, AND MORE INVESTMENTS AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO GROW, STORE AND SHIP MORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.

HIGHLIGHTS OF RELATED CHALLENGES

EVEN AFTER ALL OUR DISCUSSIONS TOMORROW, WE WON'T HAVE A COMPLETE LIST OF ALL THE CHALLENGES FACING FARMERS AND PRODUCERS. TONIGHT I WILL HIGHLIGHT JUST A FEW.

CLIMATE/NUTRITION/RESEARCH/SMALL HOLDER FARMERS/EDUCATION

THIS DISCUSSION IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT RAISING THE ISSUE OF THE WORLD'S CHANGING WEATHER PATTERNS, SOMETIMES CALLED **CLIMATE CHANGE**. ANY FARMER ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD CAN TELL US ABOUT HER OR HIS NEW CHALLENGES BECAUSE OF MORE RAIN, OR LESS RAIN, OR HOTTER TEMPERATURES, OR COOLER ONES, OR MORE WEATHER DISRUPTIONS. FARMERS, IN AUSTRALIA AND WORLDWIDE, MUST BE EVEN MORE ADAPTABLE TO CHANGE THAN THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST.

NUTRITIONAL CHALLENGES ARE BECOMING A PRIORITY, AS THEY SHOULD BE, IN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING.

FOR INSTANCE, THE MOST IMPORTANT TIME IN A PERSON'S LIFE IS HIS OR HER FIRST 1000 DAYS – FROM CONCEPTION TO AGE TWO. IF A BABY DOES NOT HAVE ADEQUATE NUTRITION DURING THIS PERIOD OF LIFE, HE CAN NEVER MAKE UP FOR IT. HE WILL BE STUNTED, PHYSICALLY AND INTELLECTUALLY. SHE WILL GIVE BIRTH TO A BABY WHOSE CHANCES OF BEING BORN HEALTHY ARE MINIMAL AT BEST.

ARE WE GROWING, AND PRODUCING, THE CORRECT TYPE OF BABY FRIENDLY FOODS IN EVERY COMMUNITY AROUND THE WORLD, AND MAKING SURE PREGNANT AND BREAST FEEDING MOTHERS AND THEIR INFANTS HAVE ACCESS TO IT? FAR FROM IT YET, BUT IT **IS** POSSIBLE.

ADULTS NEED MORE DIVERSITY IN THEIR DIETS AS WELL, WHICH ARGUES FOR MORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES ESPECIALLY, AS WELL AS A WIDER VARIETY OF FOOD AVAILABLE AND AFFORDABLE.

CHILDREN NEED FOOD TO BE ABLE TO LEARN. STUDY AFTER STUDY SHOWS THAT IF CHILDREN ARE ABLE TO EAT IN SCHOOL, FOR INSTANCE, THEY ARE LESS ABSENT AND TARDY, THEY PROGRESS FASTER, AND THEY PERFORM BETTER ON TESTS.

ADEQUATE CROPS AND FOOD DON'T ALL HAPPEN BY THEMSELVES. AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, **RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT** AS WELL AS INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT ARE KEY CONTRIBUTORS TO PROGRESS. KANAYO NWANZE, THE CURRENT PRESIDENT OF IFAD, SAID THAT: "IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT IN COUNTRIES WHERE AGRICULTURE HAS TAKEN OFF, THERE HAVE BEEN LARGE INVESTMENTS IN RESEARCH AND INFRASTRUCTURE."

CHINA AND BRAZIL, FOR INSTANCE, HAVE INCREASED R&D SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE 2000, AND HAVE PRODUCTIVITY INCREASES TO PROVE IT.

THIS IS ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S STRENGTHS, AND AN EXTREMELY IMPACTFUL WAY TO USE YOUR COUNTRY'S EXPERTISE TO HELP BUILD LOCAL CAPACITY IN YOUR GEOGRAPHIC SPACE AND IN AFRICA AS WELL.

GLOBALLY, WE SHOULD THINK BEYOND NATIONAL PROGRAMS BUT TO WHAT THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK COULD LOOK LIKE IN THE FUTURE.

LAST WEEK, BRIAN KEATING OF CSIRO AUSTRALIA WAS THE KEYNOTER AT THE FOOD SCIENCE CONGRESS IN MONTREAL. TO PARAPHRASE HIS REMARKS: DURING THE DOUBLING OF POPULATION GROWTH FROM 1960 – 2000, WE HAD THE BENEFITS OF THE GREEN REVOLUTION – ADVANCES IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION, POLICY CHANGES, BUSINESS INVESTMENT – BUT NOT WITHOUT SOME CONTROVERSY. NOW WE FACE A RANGE OF ISSUES: ENVIRONMENTAL, NUTRITIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, WASTE, OVER CONSUMPTION, ETC. AS A RESULT WE SHOULD THINK IN TERMS OF A "RAINBOW REVOLUTION" HE SAID.

A RECENT IFPRI STUDY CO-AUTHORED BY SHENGGEN FAN, IFPRI'S PRESIDENT AND ONE OF THE DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS HERE FOR THE CONFERENCE, DISCUSSES **SMALL HOLDER FARMERS** IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD, AND THE NEED FOR SPECIFIC AND DIFFERING POLICIES TO OPTIMIZE SUPPORT FOR THOSE FOR WHOM FARMING CONTINUES TO MAKE SENSE. IT IS WELL WORTH A READ. WHILE IT REMINDS US THAT ALL SMALL HOLDER FARMERS ARE DIFFERENT AND SHOULD NOT BE TREATED AS A HOMOGENOUS GROUP, THE ROLE OF PRODUCTIVE FARMERS OF THIS TYPE IS CRITICAL THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

THE WORLD IS COUNTING ON SMALL HOLDER FARMERS, HOWEVER, IN ORDER TO HELP MEET THOSE HUGE INCREASES IN FOOD PRODUCTION.

SEPARATELY, IFPRI WRITES OF **EDUCATION**: THAT EDUCATED FARMERS ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE THAN UNEDUCATED FARMERS. OF COURSE. THEY ALSO WRITE THAT WOMEN FARMERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO FOLLOW THE LEAD OF OTHER WOMEN FARMERS THAN OF MEN FARMERS.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

ALL OF THIS BRINGS ME TO MY MAJOR ARGUMENT: TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND FOOD SECURITY INVEST IN WOMEN.

WHERE DID WE SEE WOMEN IN THIS STORY SO FAR? WELL, NOWHERE EXCEPT AS MOTHERS.

BUT THEY ARE EVERYWHERE.

THEY ARE THE MOTHERS. THE COOKS. THE WATER AND FIREWOOD FETCHERS. THE CHILD CARE GIVERS. THE HOUSEKEEPERS. MANY OF THE MARKETERS, AT LEAST HALF OF THE FARMERS, MANY OPERATING THEIR OWN SMALL HOLDER FARMS. WOMEN PRODUCE 60 - 80% OF FOOD IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD, ACCORDING TO FAO.

WHAT THEY ARE OFTEN **NOT** ARE THE LANDOWNERS, THE INHERITORS OF LAND, THE FAMILY BANKERS, THE ONES WHO WENT TO SCHOOL, THE ONES WHO HAVE PAID JOBS, THE PEOPLE WHO SHOW UP AT MEETINGS AND TRAINING SESSIONS OR THE PEOPLE SOUGHT OUT BY AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION WORKERS.

IN VIRTUALLY EVERY COMMUNITY AND CULTURE, IN AGRICULTURE THERE ARE GENDER ROLES, AS IN LIFE. SOME ARE IGNORED; SOME OVERCOME; MOST LIVE ON FOR GENERATIONS.

IT MIGHT BE THE CASE IN A CERTAIN COMMUNITY THAT MEN PLANT AND HARVEST CROPS; WOMEN WEED AND WATER. IN ANOTHER COMMUNITY, THAT MAKE UP MIGHT BE DIFFERENT.

IT IS OFTEN THE CASE THAT WOMEN ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR GROWING VEGETABLES; OFTEN WOMEN ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR RAISING SMALL ANIMALS, MEN LARGE ANIMALS.

WOMEN ARE ALMOST ALWAYS WORKING IN FIELDS BY HAND. THE MORE MECHANICAL THE INPUTS GET, THE MORE MALE THE WORK FORCE BECOMES.

WOMEN ARE LESS EDUCATED THAN MEN BECAUSE MORE BOYS ATTEND AND FINISH SCHOOL THAN GIRLS, YET EDUCATED FARMERS ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE THAN UNEDUCATED FARMERS. WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO FOLLOW THE LEAD OF OTHER, MORE SUCCESSFUL WOMEN FARMERS THAN OF MEN, ACCORDING TO IFPRI.

YET WHEN GIVEN THE SAME INPUTS, ACCORDING TO FAO, WOMEN'S FARMS ARE 20 – 30% MORE PRODUCTIVE.

EXTENSION WORKERS ARE AN ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY MALE DOMAIN. FAO ESTIMATES 85% ARE MEN. THESE ARE THE FORMAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT FARMING. BUT OFTEN, IT IS CULTURALLY UNACCEPTABLE FOR STRANGE MEN TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS WITH WOMEN.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

THE WORLD HAS A GOAL: DOUBLE FOOD PRODUCTION.

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, ALREADY WITH AGRICULTURE BASES, OFFER PRIME OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUCH OF THAT GROWTH.

SMALL HOLDER FARMERS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE SOLUTION. MANY ARE WOMEN.

HALF THE FARMERS CAN'T OWN THEIR OWN LAND, MANY CAN'T COUNT OR READ, HAVE NO AGRICULTURAL EXPERTS TO TALK TO THEM, AND NO TIME TO INVEST IN NEW IDEAS AS THEY ARE HOLDING DOWN WHAT WE WOULD DEFINE AS AT LEAST TWO FULL TIME JOBS – IN THE FIELDS AND IN THEIR HOMES.

IF ONE CANNOT READ, ONE CANNOT TELL WHAT THE PACKAGE OF SEED OR FERTILIZER SAYS.

IF ONE CANNOT COUNT, ONE DOESN'T KNOW HOW MANY ROWS ARE PLANTED.

IF ONE OWNS NO LAND, ONE HAS LESS INCENTIVE TO PRODUCE ON IT.

IF ONE IS WORKING TWO JOBS, SHE IS NOT GOING TO DROP ONE TO GO TO TRAINING.

IF EXTENSION WORKERS ARE MOSTLY MEN, THEY ARE NOT GOING TO EASILY FIND AND GUIDE WOMEN FARMERS.

SO MY MAJOR POINT: TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY, INVEST TIME AND EFFORT IN THOSE LABORING IN THE FIELDS. BE SURE THEY HAVE A BASIC EDUCATION, ACCESS TO RESOURCES, FINANCING, AND LAND, AND TIME TO INVEST IN THEIR OWN PRODUCTIVITY.

TO DO THIS, POLICY MAKERS, AID WORKERS, PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERS AND OTHERS MUST ALWAYS TAKE INTO ACCOUNT GENDER WHEN WORKING IN AGRICULTURE.

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES:

YEARS AGO, I VISITED AN AREA OF RURAL ANGOLA THAT HAD JUST BEEN DEMINED DURING THE COUNTRY'S WAR. THE COMMUNITY WAS READY TO PLANT, BUT THEY NEEDED HOES. THERE WERE PERHAPS 100 LONG HANDLED HOES LEANED AGAINST A FENCE. "WHAT IS WRONG WITH THOSE, I ASKED?" "THEY ARE MALE HOES, FROM AN NGO," WAS THE ANSWER. "IS THERE A FEMALE HOE?" "YES." SO THEY PRODUCED A SHORTER HANDLED HOE WITH MORE OF A POINTED SHOVEL TYPE METAL SPADE. DID YOU KNOW THERE IS A GENDER DIFFERENTIATION IN HOES IN RURAL ANGOLA? WHY?

BECAUSE WOMEN SPENT MOST THE DAYS IN THE FIELDS WITH BABIES ON THEIR BACKS AND THE SHORT HOES, WHICH REQUIRED THEM TO SQUAT, WERE LESS BACK BREAKING THAT THE STAND UP HOES.

IN ADA, GHANA, I VISITED A LOCAL RADIO STATION WHICH WAS SOON GOING TO AIR A PROGRAM ONCE A WEEK TRAINING PEOPLE ON HOW TO GROW TOMATOES, A NEW CROP BEING INTRODUCED IN THE AREA. LOCAL RESIDENTS ALL HAD RADIOS. FARM RADIO INTERNATIONAL, A CANADIAN NGO FUNDED BY THE BILL AND MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION, HAD CREATED THE PROGRAMMING AS WELL AS DEVELOPED A SURVEY OF FAMILIES WHO WOULD BE PLANTING TOMATOES. THEY HAD TO SPEAK TO EACH HUSBAND AND WIFE TO FIND OUT: WHEN DO YOU LISTEN TO THE RADIO? IF YOU BOTH LISTEN AT THE SAME TIME, WHO CONTROLS THE KNOB? IF THOSE INFO SESSIONS WERE PUT ON AT A TIME WHEN WOMEN COULD NOT LISTEN, ALL THE RESOURCES WOULD HAVE BEEN WASTED.

THE PROGRESS ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN BANGLADESH HAS GONE HAND TO HAND WITH WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT, WITH ESPECIALLY STRONG NGO WORK BY BRAC AND THE GRAMEEN BANK, AMONG OTHERS.

THINK ABOUT THE DAILY ROLE OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN COLLECTING WATER AND FIREWOOD. DID YOU EVER THINK THAT THEY ARE THE PEOPLE WHO BEST KNOW THE STATUS OF THOSE AVAILABLE RESOURCES IN ANY COMMUNITY – ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS, THEY ARE. HOW CAN THEIR KNOWLEDGE BE USED?

SOMETIMES, YOU MAY HEAR ABOUT “GENDER NEUTRAL” POLICIES. “WE DON'T DISCRIMINATE. OUR POLICIES ARE ALL GENDER NEUTRAL.” THIS IS HOGWASH. DON'T TRUST ANYONE WHO TELLS YOU THEIR POLICIES ARE GENDER NEUTRAL. THAT MEANS THAT THEY PAY NO ATTENTION WHATSOEVER TO THE ROLES OF WOMEN AND MEN. YET, IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, IN LIFE, THERE ARE MANY GENDER SPECIFIC ROLES.

IF WE DO NOT PAY ATTENTION TO THEM, IF WE DO NOT BUILD POLICIES AROUND THEM, WE ARE WASTING OUR TIME, AND THE TAXPAYERS' MONEY – OR SOMEONE'S MONEY, AND TIME.

AUSTRALIA IS, AS ALWAYS, IN A KEY POSITION TO INFLUENCE THE REST OF THE WORLD ON AGRICULTURE. YOU HAVE HUGE CREDIBILITY BASED ON YOUR OWN HISTORY, YOUR CURRENT TRADING LEVELS, AND THE IN-DEPTH EXPERTISE YOU HAVE IN R&D, UNIVERSITY SKILL SETS, STRONG NGOS, AND GOVERNMENTAL EXPERIENCE. THE REST OF THE WORLD ALWAYS LISTENS WHEN AUSTRALIA TALKS ABOUT AGRICULTURE. ON TOP OF THAT, THIS YEAR YOU HAVE THE G20 TO LEAD.

YOU ARE PERFECTLY POSITIONED TO LEAD ON A RANGE OF POLICY PROGRAMING DESIGNED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR SKILL SETS AND REPUTATION IN A MISSION TO LEAD ON BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF THE PEOPLE ON WHOM THE WORLD IS COUNTING, TO PRODUCE MORE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD: WOMEN.

SO HERE IS A BASIC PLAN:

- ENSURE THAT EVERY GIRL HAS A PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION
- CONVINCE GOVERNMENTS TO CREATE UNIVERSAL SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEMS
- IMPROVE ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN; TRAIN GIRLS HOW TO TEACH THEIR MOTHERS
- USE THE INTERNET, USE CELL PHONES, USE THE RADIO, TO REACH WOMEN FARMERS WITH INFORMATION AND TRAINING
- SUPPORT TECHNICAL TRAINING IN AG AND RELATED PROGRAMING AT BASIC LEVELS AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION OPTIONS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS
- ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF OUT OF THE BOX EXTENSION SYSTEMS
- SUPPORT INNOVATIVE PROGRAMING FOR GIRLS AT AND OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL TO CUT DOWN ON THEIR TIME SPENT ON CHORES AND ALLOW MORE TIME FOR SCHOOL – LIKE PLACING WELLS AT SCHOOLS

- ENCOURAGE NATIONAL POLICIES THAT MAKE OWNING AND INHERITING LAND, REASONABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN
- DOUBLE DOWN ON PROGRAMS TO GROW VEGETABLES AND FRUITS – IMPORTANT FOR NUTRITIONAL NEEDS -- AND INDIGENOUS CROPS THAT WOMEN ARE MOST LIKELY TO TEND AND FROM WHICH THEY CAN EARN INCOME
- CREATE SYSTEMS WHERE THE VOICES OF WOMEN CAN BE HEARD – ABOUT NUTRITION, ABOUT NEW CROP DEVELOPMENT, ABOUT IMPLEMENTS NEEDED TO BE PRODUCTIVE
- ENCOURAGE BANKS TO LEND TO WOMEN AND MEN SMALL HOLDER FARMERS
- BE SURE THAT WOMEN AND MEN, GIRLS AND BOYS, ARE COUNTED – IN BIRTH STATISTICS AND IN ANY OF OUR OWN RESEARCH. GENDER AND AGE DISAGGREGATION STILL IS NOT WIDESPREAD AND THAT DATA HELPS DRAMATICALLY WHEN WORKING ON POLICY
- HOLD GOVERNMENTS ACCOUNTABLE FOR BASIC SAFETY OF ITS CITIZENRY AND FOR HAVING REAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THOSE WHO PHYSICALLY ABUSE THE ABILITY OF GIRLS AND WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN WORK AND EDUCATION

FOR YEARS, THOSE OF US WHO HAVE CARED ABOUT INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURE HAVE BEEN PREACHING ONLY TO OURSELVES. AID LEVELS DECREASED, INTEREST DECREASED, SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRY AGRICULTURE DECREASED. BUT SINCE THE 2008 FOOD PRICE CRISIS, THE WORLD HAS WOKEN UP TO THE FOOD NEEDS OF THE CURRENT AND FUTURE INHABITANTS OF THIS EARTH.

AUSTRALIA IS EXTREMELY WELL PLACED TO LEAD THESE EFFORTS FURTHER AND WILL BE MOST EFFECTIVE IN DOING SO IF IT PROMOTES POLICIES THAT REFLECT THE RELATIVE WORK AND EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN AND OF MEN IN AGRICULTURE.

TO HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT, WE COULD BORROW AND FOLLOW THE WORDS OF ONE OF AMERICA’S FOUNDING MOTHERS. ABIGAIL ADAMS WAS THE WIFE OF JOHN ADAMS, ONE OF THE SIGNERS OF THE COLONIES’ DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND LATER A US PRESIDENT. WHEN HE WAS WORKING ON THAT DECLARATION, SHE WROTE TO HIM:

“DON’T FORGET THE LADIES.”

IF WE IGNORE THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE, WE CAN GUARANTEE REDUCED EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR EFFORTS.

IF WE HIGHLIGHT AND SUPPORT THE ROLE OF WOMEN, THE WORLD CAN REACH MUCH HIGHER LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTIVITY, AND SUCCESS.
