

A commitment to feeding the hungry of the world

We are losing the battle against hunger, experts say

Fadhel Kaboub Apr . 26 . 2004

More than 100 students joined some of the key players in food aid around the world in a discussion moderated by Nick Haines from Kansas City Public Television (KCPT) at UMKC on Monday, April 19.

"There is so little (per capita) that the U.S. provides in foreign assistance, so clearly the U.S. could do more," said Judith Lewis, director, U.S. Relations Office, U.N. World Food Programme (WFP). However, according to Dr. Lewis, the U.S. contribution to the WFP is around 50 per cent of the organization's annual budget, but students insisted that a better measure of foreign assistance is contribution as percent of GNP. In such a case the U.S. would be far down the list in comparison to other industrialized nations.

"840 million people go to sleep every day without having had enough food to survive that day," said Dr. Lewis, reminding the audience that 24,000 people die every day because of hunger.

Lauren Landis, Director, Food for Peace, U.S. Agency for International Development, discussed the politics of food aid with students in the audience. She explained that food assistance has never been compromised by any kind of political disputes between the U.S. and recipient countries such as North Korea.

Bert Farrish, deputy administrator of commodity operations, Farm Service Agency at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), explained that all the money allocated by the U.S. government for food aid is actually spent in the U.S. since it is required that all food assistance be purchased and delivered through U.S. providers. Therefore, taxpayers' money is spent in the U.S. and not abroad. "It's a win-win situation," he said.

Judith Lewis went on to speak to members of the community about the WFP's school feeding initiative in an evening event at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church. Dr. Lewis explained that on average, it costs only 19 cents a day to provide a child with one nutritious meal each school day. That is only \$34 per year.

The KC community responded with generosity by pledging their support to the school feeding program, sponsored by the WFP.

"We raised about \$400 for the WFP," said Jay Sjerven, President of the United Nations Association - Greater Kansas City (UNA-GKC) chapter.

The UMKC event was co-sponsored by the UMKC Model UN chapter, UNA-GKC chapter and KCPT; and the All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church event was sponsored by UNA-GKC chapter.

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[United Nations Association - Greater Kansas City: www.una-kc.org](http://www.una-kc.org)

[United Nations World Food Programme: www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)

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