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## **World hunger on the rise**

*By Prasad Natoo*

According to a United Nations Food Agency report released late last year, world hunger was reduced during the early 1990s. Many world leaders believed that consequent food crises could be either contained or averted and the sufferers extricated from their affliction.

This was not to be. The same UN report portends that close to 850 million people go to bed hungry every night, the vast majority in Africa and Asia. That's nearly quadruple the population of the United States. This ever-growing number continues to stagger and burden monetary and relief organizations.

Furthermore, the population explosion in Asia and Africa, coupled with rampant HIV/AIDS, has done nothing but exacerbate this already pertinent disaster. Even worse, the rate of undernourished people in developing nations continues to rise at almost 5 million a year.

Legislators and policymakers at the highest levels have done a lot, but there is no reason why college students can't get involved.

At UMKC, Model UN has been strident in its pursuit of finding creative solutions. Model UN is a great outlet for students who wish to participate in deliberating and analyzing many of the problems facing the world today.

"Although much has been achieved, a greater participation is needed to make Model UN even more prominent" said Dr. Karen Vorst, faculty advisor for Model UN.

And participation was what they got last week for a forum titled "United Nations and the United States, Partners in Feeding a Hungry World." Held at the University Center, the event was co-sponsored by the Greater Kansas City chapter (UNA-GKC) and Kansas City Public Television (KCPT).

The high-profile guest panel included: Judith Lewis (Director of the U.S. Relations Office, U.N. World Food Programme); Lauren Landis (Director, Food for Peace); Charles Riemenschneider (Director, Liaison Office, North America, U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization) and Bert Farrish (Deputy Administrator, Commodity Operations, Farm Service Agency, U.S). The fruitful osmosis of ideas with the guests cemented the belief of many present at the forum that college students need to play a much greater role.

he guests at the forum impressed upon the audience that funding of several projects by various UN agencies and countries such as Brazil, Mexico, India and China have managed to reverse the seemingly irreversible. However, Lauren Landis alluded that progress made in countries such as Afghanistan, Congo, North Korea, Guatemala, Ethiopia and countries south of sub-Saharan Africa, has in actuality not solved the "root of the problem."

Out of all donor nations, the United States still ranks the lowest in the donated monies to per capita income ratio.

When asked whether the United States had failed in its responsibility to address this disaster, Lauren Landis made it clear that during the last fiscal year, the budget allocation for her department, Food for Peace, had in fact risen from \$843 million to \$2.3 billion. "In terms of aid, the United States has consistently been the largest donor nation," added Judith Lewis.

Hitherto the world food crisis has been a target of heavy criticism. Charles Riemenschneider was quick to point out that there is a need to focus "on the roots of the problem, rather than their consequences." Correspondingly, all the guests were unequivocal in the support of the premise that emergency aid cannot really solve mass-starvation. Rather, only through a sustained period of economic development and greater production of food within the host nation can there be any hope of rectifying past failures.

Getting involved in forums and activities like the one organized by Model UN contributes to the growth and knowledge of college students.

"We seek a world view of the future where enthusiastic young people fill in the voids left by adults," Lewis said.

The struggle to eradicate world hunger is just one of the many daunting challenges facing us today. We as a global community need to, as Charles Riemenschneider put it best, "learn to appreciate the diversity of opinions in the world and come up with better solutions for perplexing problems."

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