

Jill Lester

President and Chief Executive Officer

Global Board of Directors

Peter G. Bourne

*Chair of the Global Board,
The Hunger Project
Former UN Assistant
Secretary-General*

Joaquim A. Chissano

*Former President, Mozambique
1997 Africa Prize Laureate*

Mohini Giri

*Former Chair, National Commission
for Women, India*

Joan Holmes

*Founding President,
The Hunger Project*

Cecilia Loría Saviñón

Former Director, INDESOL, Mexico

George Mathew

*Director, Institute of Social
Sciences, India*

Queen Noor of Jordan*

Javier Pérez de Cuéllar*

Former UN Secretary-General

Amartya Sen*

*Lamont University Professor,
Harvard University
1998 Nobel Laureate in Economics*

Steven J. Sherwood

Chairman, CWS Capital Partners LLC

Sheree S. Stomberg

*Head, Operations and Technology,
Citi Global Wealth Management*

Speciosa Wandira

Former Vice President, Uganda

George M. Weiss

President, Beechtree Capital Group LLC

M. S. Swaminathan*

Chair Emeritus

* Honorary

April 4, 2008

Letter to the Editor

In response to "The 'Bottom Billion,'" March 30, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

I applaud Paul Polak ("The 'Bottom Billion,'" March 30) for calling attention to the needs of the world's poorest people and for emphasizing the important role appropriate technology can play in ending their poverty. I'd like to add to this critical conversation. In order to have these useful and affordable technological innovations be most effective, the stage first needs to be set by building peoples' capacity at the grassroots level. A greater focus on the women of the developing world will pay long-term dividends.

Women do most of the work to meet their families' basic needs—walking miles each day to fetch water and fuel; farming food for their families' nourishment (in Sub-Saharan Africa, women produce 80% of the region's food); and caring for the young, elderly, sick and dying. Yet, entrenched gender discrimination thwarts women's access to the information, support and resources needed to do this work.

Rural women and men can best be empowered through holistic and gender-equality focused interventions. These include literacy training, skills training, microfinance, health education and community mobilization. Once individuals and communities are empowered, they become self-reliant and can better use innovative technology to sustainably emancipate themselves from hunger and abject poverty.

Jill Lester
President & CEO
The Hunger Project