



To feed the Hungry

By Neva Hecker

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Food — and enough of it — has always been one of man's most pressing problems. But it took him thousands of years before he got around to doing something about it.

The second world war made nations aware, as never before, of other nations — nations with different cultures, different religions, different standards of living. And so man became more conscious of, and concerned about, his fellow man. They all shared a common problem: how to get enough to eat. The gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" became more evident. The "have" nations felt a moral responsibility toward the "have-nots," and decided that something must be done.

And so FAO came into being. In 1943, at the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture, a decision was made to set up a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). This specialized agency deals on a world-wide, organized scale with the many problems of growing, eating and sharing food.

No one nation could undertake this herculean task. It could only be carried out by the concerted action of many nations and many people. Nations play their part by contributing to the budget of FAO.

But money and governments can do nothing without people. In

the Rome Headquarters, almost in the shadow of the Colosseum, more than a thousand people plan and hope and strive to solve the world's food problems. And in the field, about 200 experts are helping the less developed countries to help themselves. They do this in two ways:

a) by demonstrating how better crops can be planted, how more fish can be caught, how animal diseases can be controlled or prevented, how to provide more nutritious food, how to raise better poultry — to name just a few "hows";

b) by training local people in the developing countries to carry on the work once the expert has left the country.

In their own separate fields, the experts and the missionaries are dealing more or less with the same problems and working along the same lines — the improvement of standards of living and education, and the bettering of conditions for rural populations. As Monsignor Luigi Ligutti says, the more these two groups work together, the more far-reaching will be the results.

Monsignor Ligutti is the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to FAO, and also Director for International Affairs of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference in

An empty cup... tears...
But Josephine and Lucey
will soon take care of that.
They belong to the Holy
Child social welfare club
(Takoradi). With M. Maria
Assumpta, they distribute
food each week to the poor
in neighboring villages.



the United States. His long history of working with rural populations gives him an unparalleled background for dealing with one of the main activities of the Office of the Permanent Observer in connection with FAO, "to prepare missionaries for technical and moral cooperation with FAO field work in the less developed countries." Special effort is being made by Mons. Ligutti and his Liaison Officer, Miss M.J.A. Groothuizen, to contact the Mission Sisters and make them aware of the help available to them through FAO.

When Mother Maria Assumpta came to Rome on leave from the Holy Child Teacher Training College in Takoradi, Ghana, one of the first places she visited was FAO. Mother had a problem. She conducts a home economics course at the College and part of the project is a chicken hatchery. Some of the chickens refused to hatch; incubation has its own difficulties in the tropics. "What do you think is wrong?" Mother asked Dr. Hans J. Engler, poultry expert in the FAO Animal Production and Health Division. Together they studied the problem, Dr. Engler gave her some expert advice, as well as some literature on the

subject, and put her in touch with a local government authority in Accra.

Last August when Miss Groothuizen went to Nigeria and Ghana on a survey tour, she visited Mother Maria Assumpta at Takoradi and had an opportunity to see at first hand the result of this advice and help. "I've never seen such beautiful and healthy chickens and turkeys, they're absolutely blooming!" she exclaimed.

The field in which missionaries and FAO come closest to working together is the field of home economics. As FAO Home Economics Officer Mary Elizabeth Keister pointed out, "Home economics is concerned chiefly with home and family, with promoting the physical and mental welfare of family members through improvement in the home and on the land."

In the mind of the average person, home economics is largely concerned with food. In the area of family feeding and in education in methods and diets, home economists working in Africa have a singular opportunity to introduce beneficial changes. Margaret Crowley, working in Nigeria under FAO's Freedom from Hunger Campaign as home economist and nutritionist, has

come up against questions of diet and feeding the hard way. Her special project is to improve local diets by making the best use of cheap and readily available vegetables such as beans, peas, lentils and soybeans, and to encourage the people to grow more of such food. This will help to introduce more protein into an otherwise very starchy diet, and by using more of these foods daily, the people will be able to feed their families a more balanced diet.

Miss Crowley's day starts at 7 o'clock when, with her two African assistants, she prepares the food and kitchen equipment for showing the village women how they can improve their diets. The team then set off in their station wagon, over the red and dusty dirt roads, to the village where they have been invited to give their demonstration. A whole meal is cooked in front of the villagers, with the Nigerian assistant explaining each step in the local language. Everyone tastes a dish and the recipe is given again in detail. The women are encouraged to cook and serve at least one dish they have seen demonstrated, and to bring something they have cooked to the next meeting.

How can missionaries have a part in this FAO-sponsored help to African people? Miss Groothuizen was most emphatic about the necessity for learning the new techniques of approach and demonstration. "It's more than *knowing*," she pointed out, "there's a special skill in *doing*. It's not enough to be skilled in domestic science as such. It's necessary to know the way to communicate this knowledge to others, to out-of-school groups, and to community development projects."

The Sisters can also send pupils to participate in courses organized

by FAO experts. Both Dr. Keister and Miss Groothuizen stressed that FAO must work through governments. During the period of his assignment in the country, the expert is bound to the government and is not free to depart from his scheduled program to serve individuals. "But," Dr. Keister explained, "missions can apply to the government for help. Where there is an expert already in the country, he is generally looking for a group through whom he can work."

In this connection Miss Groothuizen suggested that all the Sisters in each region could get together, even if only once a year, and submit their needs to the government. "This organization of the Sisters would facilitate matters in dealing with the authorities." Since both government and Mission Sisters are working towards the ultimate benefit of the country and its people, the government is usually more than ready to provide information and help.

FAO also makes available a wealth of information in the form of Technical Assistance reports to Governments. Numbering nearly 2,000 now, these reports cover every phase of FAO's work in the field. Each one represents a "mission accomplished" and can be obtained for the asking, either directly from FAO or through Mons. Ligutti's Office at *Palazzo San Carlo, Vatican City*. His office can also act as a sort of "clearing house" of information on FAO's activities in the country. Missionaries can write to Mons. Ligutti or his staff to learn if there is an expert in the country with the specialized knowledge which will help them solve their particular problem. Then by contacting the government, it would be possible for them to find out whether they can take advantage of the expert's presence.

"It's important," Dr. Keister said, "to stress not only the availability of information but also the practical help from experts on the spot. They are always looking for channels through which to work and reach the people."

"To reach the people" - there is the key. It is the people who must be reached, who must be taught the better way, for instance, of growing and preparing and eating better food. In 1957 FAO published a booklet called "Millions Still Go Hungry". It contains one startling, almost shocking state-

ment "there has probably never been enough food to feed everyone well." One of the main drawbacks to building the world of future generations is just plain hunger. This is the challenge that FAO and the missionaries face together. The problems are immense, but the will-to-do is there.

In its way, whether it realizes it or not, FAO is instrumental in carrying out a great apostolic work, one of the corporal works of mercy, taking the words of Our Lord and making a living reality out of them - "*Feed the hungry.*"



Conference in St. Peter's Square . . .

Monsignor W. E. Kaiser of Catholic Relief Services (USA) discusses Catholic aid to the poor of Nigeria with Bishop John Aggey, Auxiliary of Lagos, and Bishop John Anyogu of Enugu (right).