



A Series on Integrating Climate Change & Natural Resource Management into Feed the Future

Remarks on Integrating Natural Resource Management and Climate Change to Achieve Feed the Future Objectives

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Speaker

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Paul Weisenfeld:

Good morning. Welcome. It's really good to be here. This is actually my first opportunity to talk about my new responsibilities. I started last week heading the Bureau for Food Security with a strange title, Assistant to the Administrator. The heads of our bureaus are typically called Assistant Administrators but I think as people who follow AID closely know those positions are Presidential appointed and Senate confirmed positions heading a bureau and the administrator can't wave a wand and create new Presidential-appointed positions.

So if he creates a new bureau without getting Congressional approval we've got to play around the margins. So we came up with the title Assistant to the Administrator. But it is heading this new bureau that we're standing up. Before I get into any details I do want to say thanks to QED for hosting this event. It's really important we appreciate them stepping out and taking leadership on hosting these kind of events.

This is a second in a series of events with colleagues from different agencies, from civil society. Is there private sector colleagues as well? And people from missions overseas. So it's great that we have so much interest in this. The topic is a critically important topic. Now I think people know that the Bureau was stood up last November with Ambassador Bill Garvelink leading the Bureau and with Greg Gottlieb as the Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Bureau. Ambassador Garvelink has been asked by the administrator to move on to – to take a role in strengthening the critical relationship we have with the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

I think all of you know how important that civ-mil relationship is for us given a lot of the efforts we're engaged in around the world. So it's really important that Ambassador Garvelink is willing to step into that role. He played an important role here in helping to stand up the Bureau. So I feel like I'm coming in after he's done a lot of the heavy lifting in putting things in place. So we'll miss his leadership and his guidance here but we can certainly call on him when things get tough.

Julie Howard who some of you have heard about – there have been some public announcements about this but we need to get a general announcement within the agency that we can share more broadly – has been hired as the Deputy Coordinator for the Feed the Future interagency initiative. Bill was actually playing both roles. When the Bureau was stood up there was a Feed the Future coordinator role and a Bureau role. The Administrator is the interim coordinator for Feed the Future and the deputy coordinator role was being filled by Bill and the Assistant to the Administrator. He was wearing both hats.

Obviously that was an enormous amount of work. There are both responsibilities on both sides. So what the administrator has done is recognize the initial conception of filling both jobs. So Julie Howard is the coordinator for the Feed the Future initiative and I'll be heading the Bureau. She's leading donor and NGO coordination and interagency coordination around strategy and policy development where our role in the Bureau is leading strategic implementation of Feed the Future for USAID. USAID is the lead agency in Feed the Future.

As we continue to move forward on this and strengthen – with the programs that we're doing strengthening partnerships with stakeholders is absolutely key. Robust engagement with all of our partners from civil society, the private sector, everyone else we know is critical to success. People who follow AID closely are certainly aware of the USAID Forward Initiative which is the Administrator's reform agenda for the agency which has seven different principles but a key one is strengthening partnerships – more robust partnerships, deeper partnerships and partnerships with a broader range of actors. So these kinds of events are a critical way that we can move forward on that effort.

Another key principle I wanted to raise is, again, for those who follow USAID closely will know what the QDDR is – the Quadrennial Development and Diplomacy Review. It was done jointly by the State Department and USAID. The kind of overall guiding principle of that vis-a-vis the USAID was to make USAID the premier development agency. Within that frame we know that the administrator has placed his primary focus in terms of programming on Feed the Future. There are obviously country priorities. We can't get away from the fact that Afghanistan and Pakistan are critical country priorities but in terms of overall programming Feed the Future is the number one priority for the Administrator.

So what does that mean in terms of making USAID the premier development agency? It means that for things like these types of engagements where we see ourselves it's trying to be thought leaders on the critical issues related to food security. We want to be the thought leader in the development community as our contribution to making USAID the premier development agency. Being a thought leader requires that we take advantage of all of the capacities and knowledge and of folks who work with us and our folks in the field and our folks who work in Washington and our partners, and collect it in a way that we have – I need to borrow a team from the private sector – in a way that we're really aware of what our corporate learning is, that we know what we know is kind of the way that you hear the oil companies talk about it, that we get that knowledge down to the people who need to know it.

So these kinds of events are part of us stepping forward and thinking strategically about how we do that and it's an early part of generating knowledge. We need to move forward with a strategy to be much more deliberate about getting our kind of corporate knowledge together, drawing on all of these capacities and getting it down to the field. We're really interested if all of you have experiences in this and input we're interested in your thoughts as to how we can do that better but we're going to move forward with developing a knowledge management strategy and Zachary [Baquet] is one of our key people involved in that. It's something that I think you know in USAID it's something that all agencies and institutions I should say rather than agencies struggle with if you're spread across many countries and you have a decentralized structure like USAID that obviously brings a lot of great benefits in terms of innovation in the field but it brings struggles in terms of capturing that knowledge and spreading it out and scaling it up. So we want to think clearly about that and carefully.

So turning to Feed the Future more specifically. I think as I already said this is a high priority for the Administrator, it's high priority for the President. This is a Presidential initiative. The Administrator reminded me several times when he asked me to take this job that in his one on one meetings with the President only a couple of things come up, three, four things max. Obviously the critical country priorities are one but Feed the Future always comes up. So the President is focused on this initiative. That makes it a priority for us without question.

Now why is that? We know there's a lot of attention right now to food price hikes and we know that the last big experience with this was in the 2007, 2008 period. We know that the led to a lot of political instability, social instability, unrest. That gets the attention of senior policymakers in and outside of development circles, but as the Administrator reminds me a lot, what's less widely known about that experience is it led to something on the order of 100 million people who went to bed hungry at night, reversing really decades of development progress. That's... those who are engaged and steeped in the business of development, that's what we care about. You can struggle and struggle for years and years and then very quickly reverse that progress.

That has to do with the fundamental basis of improving agricultural production. It's very precarious. Agriculture is a precarious business in a lot of senses. The goal of this effort is to make it less precarious and to make sure that we have a situation where we don't risk some change in the environment or increased demand from China for protein that has the impact of increasing food prices worldwide, thrusting large numbers of people into poverty that affects mostly children, if you look at developing countries. We also know from newer

nutritional research that when children are affected in that way over a long time it has a permanent impact on stunting their physical, intellectual and mental development. So this initiative is about putting in place a situation where we can have a lasting impact on making sure that doesn't happen. So that the hard fought gains of economic development over years don't get reversed overnight.

Before, Susan [Bradley] mentioned I was the Director in Peru. Before that from 2002 to 2006 I was the Director in Zimbabwe. I used to – years and years before that I was serving in South Africa and I used to cover Zimbabwe and I went in and out of South Africa and Zimbabwe a lot when South Africa was under apartheid and Zimbabwe was the shining star of Southern Africa in moving forward. Then serving there 2002 to 2006 it's a completely different situation. Very similar. Very hard fought gains in terms of social progress, social indicators that were all wiped away because of a couple of bad policy decisions. That's what this initiative is about.

I guess the good news is we know how to do this. Right? I mean people have been struggling in this area know what to do to reverse this problem and to make significant gains. We know agriculture is highly susceptible to the weather, that bad policy decisions such as Zimbabwe can erase gains quickly but the challenge is to scale up and scale out what everyone learned during – from the Green Revolution in Asia. It really lifted millions of people out of poverty and created stable societies are good trading partners for the United States and good global citizens and they do everything right. It's the – our Administrator likes to say this is about building more South Koreas and fewer North Koreas. That's what we want.

If you think about – I know when I was a child in the '60s South Korea was a country that we still worried about famines in South Korea. Does anyone worry about a famine in South Korea now? We worry about whether South Korea's companies are going to kick the butt of U.S. companies on international markets. So that's what this is about, more South Koreas and fewer North Koreas. So improved agriculture won't make that happen overnight, right? It's not a panacea. In development there are a lot of things that have to happen but the countries that make substantial progress to use the South Korea model again, that make dramatic progress over years they start with agriculture. They start with dramatic improvements in agricultural productivity that result in increased incomes and better nutrition for their people. So that's what we're doing.

So how do we do it? There's a lot on the website about this, but one of the things that week now we have to do is invest in small holder farms. These rural societies that we work in are rural societies and they're populated by small

holder farmers. That's the unit of production. That's where we need to focus our efforts and many of them are women. It deals with – it's a challenge in societies where you're trying to economically empower people and most of them are women. It involves a lot of cultural change but that's the business that we're in.

We also know it means aggressively involving the private sector. I know for many, many, many years development agencies taught people how to grow a better ear of corn and it took decades for people to figure out, "If no one wants to buy the corn what are we really doing?" So we all know markets are critical. So you have to aggressively involve the private sector. The private sector helps us scale up. It brings sustainability. It brings market access. That's what allows people to increase their income sustainably. We know kind of the old practices of better techniques, improved seeds, improved fertilizer, better farming techniques, better post-harvest practices those are critical. If you take people with income of less than \$1.00 a day and you throw those inputs at them without anything else you can increase their income dramatically but you have to add on this other stuff to have kind of sustainability and scale. So we know how to do that.

We also know that getting a little bit to the subject of this session that you have to do it – doing it sustainably means you have to manage soil practices better. You can't deplete the soil by over use of fertilizers or bad use of fertilizers. So it has to be done in a way that's conscientious of environmental considerations. We know that you have to do it in an integrated manner. If you just increase incomes – we've seen in many parts of the world you can increase incomes and not decrease under-nutrition and that's not the answer. Because we want to put more money in people's pockets but make people healthier at the same time. There are countries that do it that way and other countries that don't and that's kind of the model that we're selling in the Feed the Future initiative, an integrated model that increases incomes and reduces under-nutrition.

Another big part of this initiative is – and this is if you read the QDDR and the PPD, the – I never remember what that stands for. It's Presidential something Directive, Policy Directive? A big theme that cuts across those two documents is focus and selectivity. People who have been around aid for a long time know that we've played around with these concepts for a while. Under Ron Roskens who was the Administrator back in the late '80s and early '90s we talked about focus and concentration but struggled with what does that mean.

How do we implement that in a programmatic sense? We have very clear guidelines in Feed the Future about what focus and selectivity means. It's at all levels. It's at the level of the country. It's at the level of – so we're selecting

focus countries and people who have read on the Web know that we have 20 focus countries. It's at the level of sectors. So we are prioritizing agriculture because, as I said, we know agriculture is key to helping countries move forward and make the kind of advances that South Korea made.

Within agriculture focus and selectivity is at the level of targeting resources on specific value chains so that we can have substantial impact. So we're having very conscious and deliberate decisions about where we're going to invest. The principle is – I think to be blunt about this the Administration or the Agency rather for many years has had a situation where it's hard to say no. There are a lot of interest and those who work closely with aid know we're subject to a lot of interest from the Hill, from OMB, from other agencies, from various interests within countries. So we tend to have a proliferation of projects that are all very small. Some people refer to them as pixie dust. This is a conscious effort to not do that anymore because if you have millions of little projects what does it add up to? It often adds up to nothing.

You make a couple of people's lives better. You can make – our prior administrator Natsios has often said, Andrew Natsios, "You'll never find a bad AID project." Right? Travel anywhere in the world, pick any AID officer to have them – take them to see the project. Great stuff. Changing people's lives but what does it add up to? If every little officer has one project and it's not focused in a way that has sustainable high impact it doesn't add up to anything. So that's a critical part of this initiative.

Okay, back to resource management. So we know that if we're going to feed growing populations around the world and everyone knows that by 2050 we're supposed to have – is it 9 billion people? Is that right? I'm not usually good at remembering numbers. It's because I was trained as a lawyer so we specifically move away from numbers. One of our conscious targeting decisions. So if we're going to feed growing populations we have to dramatically increase agricultural productivity. There's just no way around that. We have to do it in a way that's sustainable, that takes into account issues of climate change for crops, for fisheries, for livestock, the water management. That's just fundamental. So we need to incorporate that into what we're doing into the Feed the Future initiative. So we're committed to doing that.

We're committed to taking a holistic approach and we need input from our best experts on this because the science – I don't want to say the science is evolving but the thinking about how to apply it is evolving. There are issues of adaptation. There are issues of mitigation. There's a lot of literature going on in this moment, a lot of academic thinking and we want to be cutting edge and take advantage of the best thinking. So these kinds of events are hugely

important to get that kind of input. If you look at the Feed the Future Website it emphasizes this integration. So we are – there are some lessons that we know today. So we are making realistic efforts to think about integrating it in terms of better watershed management.

In my experience in Haiti covering the Haiti portfolio from here we paid a lot of attention – everyone who knows anything about Haiti knows that they have the highest deforestation rate in the world. That has an enormous impact on agricultural productivity; an enormous impact on a whole bunch of things but on agricultural productivity. People - I mean if you look back and if we reflect in an honest way – I don't remember the exact number but we did some kind of historical research in AID projects. We've spent enormous amounts of money planting trees in Haiti. Enormous amounts of money. Millions and millions of dollars and there's very little evidence of those trees now. So we have to do it in a way that provides – that is connected with agricultural productivity. So we are sustaining the environment, improving soil fertility, making the soil rich in nutrients so that people see a benefit from it.

Certainly in my personal experience working in a number of countries that's absolutely key. The people you are working with have to be able to see and touch the benefits of improved environmental practices in order to have an incentive to sustain it. Farmers know about their soil. You can take a farmer in Malawi, in Iowa, in El Salvador, they're worried about the soil, they're worried about the rain. They know when the soil is rich in nutrients and when it's not and they know what to do but it's often they don't necessarily – the same farmers who worry about the soil go climb up several miles up into the mountains and cut down to trees for charcoal for cooking. So they have to – we have to make those connections for them and they have to see the benefits in kind of real time and in their pocket book in order to make sustainable improvements and better management of these issues. It's not an issue of appealing to farmers. It's got to be something that's real.

So we have a team that we've stood up to work on integrating these issues and we're looking at other bureaus, our Economic Growth and Agriculture and Trade Bureau, which I think we need to view as our sister bureau because a lot of the people in our bureau came from that bureau. They came from other Bureaus as well, the Africa Bureau and the Africa Bureau is a critical partner of ours because within our 20 focus countries some of the most important countries that we're working on at the moment, kind of priority countries are Tanzania and Ghana. So Africa is our critical partner in a regional sense but the EGAT we have to view as our sister bureau and they have tremendous expertise in this area.

So we know what needs to be done and I think we're starting to make progress in a lot of these countries. I have – I'll be traveling next week to Ghana for my first trip in this job and the stories I'm already hearing are showing that people are hugely dedicated and committed to this effort and energized by – it's a double-edged sword obviously. If you have a Presidential initiative it gets lots of attention. That's the good news and the bad news. It means that someone is into your knickers and paying a lot of attention to everything that you're doing. So kind of good bureaucrats don't like that. They like to fly under the radar screen.

So there's a downside of that but it's still at the same time it's uplifting and invigorating to know that the administration and not just the Agency is committed to doing something that people in aid have struggled – people in the agriculture backstop have kind of struggled away in small offices for many years thinking that no one knows what they're doing and no one recognizes the importance of this given that the societies that we're working in are primarily agricultural societies. So that's also part of the good news that we have increased focus at the highest levels and a commitment to get resources to do this. This area in the Agency has been under resourced for many, many years. Under resourced in terms of programs in the field, under resourced in terms of research, under resourced in terms of hiring agricultural officers, training them.

So another piece of good news is we're focused on this. We are committed to moving forward with this. I think one of the best examples of that is the administrator's decision to create the bureau for food security. That's an attempt to institutionalize this because that's the way bureaucracies work. It needs to have a home and that home needs to push forward in a concerted way on this initiative. So I hope what was more interesting than Susan reading my bio. Again, I'm really happy to be here. So thanks very much.

[Applause]

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