

Paper Presented by

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Swami Agnivesh on WFP's goal of "Zero Hunger"



Presenting a copy of his book Applied Spirituality to Pope Francis

Never before I returned from an international meet so greatly impressed as it happened with me this time for it was a meeting of the World Food Programme (WFP) of the UN which was addressed by none other than His Holiness Pope Francis who is the voice of the voiceless billions and who does not mince words when he speaks up for social justice and for whom I have profound love and respect. And there can be no other befitting topic than "Zero Tolerance to Hunger" on which he could have spoken on the occasion. **"I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink". These words embody one of the axioms of Christianity** but for the Pope it's an expression that irrespective of our creeds and convictions, may serve as a golden rule for peoples when he set 2030 as the target date for eradicating hunger. (Please see link <https://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/pope-francis-urges-increased-commitment-fight-zero-hunger> for the full text of the speech of His Holiness delivered on the 13th of June 2016)

The UN website on poverty.com brings out in stark reality of the gruesome situation. It says there is enough food (perhaps twice as much) for all human beings to eat and survive. But 21000 people die of hunger every day- every four seconds a child drops down dead! In fact the picture of a child dropping dead every four seconds appears on the world map.

And yet the same UN WFP sets 2030 for Zero Hunger.

It is precisely the date of Zero Hunger at 2030 that I questioned when I exhorted in my address to the assembled Ambassadors of over 150 countries and leaders of Faith based organizations to imagine the face of one of 21000 children who will be dead by the end of the day to be “your own child and then ask yourself if you still will continue to end hunger in 2030 or would like to do it here and now”!

Quoting from the very profound statement of Pope Francis I demanded that precious food grains that was meant for human consumption should “not be diverted for other purposes”. Obviously the Animal Farm Industry has been guilty of feeding and overfeeding and fattening the cows & pigs on Soya and Corn to get more profit from the sale of meat. Nearly 40% of food grains is thus stolen from the plates of dying hungry children. Another 8 to 10% is diverted for producing Bio- fuels and Alcohol. If this were to be stopped, there will not be a single child dying of Hunger. There was stunning silence in the great hall of WFP when I asked – Has anyone ever seen a Cow or a Pig dying of Hunger in any of the Animal Farm Industries?

Supporting the WFP’s action plan in terms of advocacy by Faith Based Leaders I put it in plain words that advocacy should mean –

Speaking Truth to Power

And making Powerful Truthful

And thereby Truth Powerful

I volunteered to work for Global Alliance for Zero Hunger for the rest of my life if we were ready to go to root causes of Hunger- Again quoting an eminent Archbishop of Latin America – Helder Camara who said –

“When I give bread to the poor, they call me a saint, but when I ask why the poor have no bread (because it is they who produce bread) they call me a communist.”

I also referred to the historic report prepared for the Copenhagen Summit 10 years ago by Al Gore & Dr. R.K Pachauri called- Livestock's Long Shadow While the authors were recognised as Nobel Laureates for Peace, the recommendations of the report were given a quiet burial. Paris COP-21 also raised issues related to lifestyle but stopped short of curbing the livestock Industry hugely responsible for deaths due to hunger and for producing Green House gases more than the combined CHG due to road, air & water transport.

David Pimental , professor of ecology in Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences put it very boldly that "if all the grain currently fed to livestock in United States were consumed directly by people who could be fed would nearly 800 millions for a year. Alternatively U.S Trade balance will boost by \$80 billion a year by exporting the same. He further adds that the average Americans would still get more than the recommended daily allowance (RDA) of meat and dairy protein with only grass fed livestock.

Animal protein production requires more than 8 times as much fossil- fuel energy than production of plant protein.

Beef cattle production requires an energy input to protein out put ratio of 54:1.

From climate change perspective every kilogram of beef produced takes 100,000 liters of water. Some 900 liters of water go into producing a kg of wheat.

Potatoes are even less 'thirsty' at 500 liters per kg.

More than 302 million hectares of land are devoted to producing feed for U.S livestock population.

I also quoted from a paper by Max Frankel of Centre for American Progress "Nearly 5 billion bushels of corn that will be cordoned off to create ethanol could feed about 412 million people for an entire year. Thus bio-fuels are also guilty of stealing food from the plates of the poor children. As the UN reported in Oct last year , 26 countries , mainly sub Saharan Africa, are still at extreme risk of hunger with bio - fuels playing a significant role in exacerbating the problem.

I hope and trust that Pope's clarion call would not go waste. If they ignore to act according to his exhortations, the members states of the UN and world faith leaders would go down in history as responsible for perpetuating hunger and systemic terrorism while paying lip service to Zero Hunger.