

**2014 BORLAUG DIALOGUE**

October 16, 2014 - 11:30 a.m.

Speakers: *Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn, Howard W. Buffett*

*Introduction:*

**Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn**

President - World Food Prize Foundation

So now I want to invite Howard W. Buffett and our three ministers to come back. You know, the ministers are in such high demand to be with us. You know, two of the really tough jobs for the World Food Prize staff are referred to as herding laureates who are down here, you know, kind of keep them around, and ministers. So, your excellencies, please, thank you for joining us, and please be seated. Oh, yes, where's Danielle. That's Danielle Graham from the Africa Governance Initiative, Tony Blair's initiative.

So a year ago on this stage in these very same chairs, Tony Blair and Howard G. Buffett were here, launching and announcing 40 Chances, and this is one of your dad's photos. So they were here last year to announce the 40 Chances. First of all, they announced the book that Howard was launching, and everyone who was here got a copy of it. So we were so proud that Howard decided to launch his book here and that this was the first place. Actually, I had a copy of it before he did, and I remember giving Howard his book.

And then beside that, we have this incredible exhibit—I hope many of you saw it last night, of his photography over at the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, and Howard W. cut the ribbon for that, and it is one of the most popular parts of the Hall of Laureates. People just go in go “oh!”

And then the third thing we did was to announce these \$150,000 grants for innovative startups we were going to present to four individuals who presented the most impactful social enterprise and business plan with proposals to address issues of hunger, conflict or poverty. And they had to be under the age of 40, and for enterprises in Liberia, Malawi, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

So then the World Food Prize, as the implementing partner in this, went out seeking applications, and we generated 267, and they were really terrific proposals. And then we selected, we asked and organized four blue ribbon panels—judges included leaders in government, business and civil society—to pick the winners. And the Liberia judging panel, and Minister Chenoweth, thank you so much for leading that endeavor, and we have a laureate on each panel, Per Pinstруп-Andersen. And now we have the Malawi judging panel and Ruth Oniang'o, who was here this morning, was there with Pedro Sanchez and David Strelneck who yesterday was chairing a panel. And then the Rwanda judging panel, and at the time, the Prime Minister Pierre Habumuremyi and Gebisa Ejeta, a member of that judging, and then Monty

Jones who you heard the president refer to this morning, and Thad Simons. I know Thad is here on that judging panel. And we went through that process and got to the point.

And before we introduce the winners to you, I want to invite Howard W. Buffett, who is here, to come up and tell you more about the philosophy that he and his dad had for this program. Howard.

### **Howard W. Buffett**

Thank you, Ambassador Quinn, and a special thank you to your entire team who have worked tirelessly to make this come together.

As all of you in this room know, the World Food Prize Borlaug Dialogue is really the preeminent gathering of experts and advocates working to eliminate hunger and food insecurity around the world. This year's theme challenges us with one of the most pressing problems of our generation – How can we feed nine billion people by the year 2050?

Now, we have heard this question posed time and time again over the past few days. And while we all come from different backgrounds, we are united together around this challenge. By framing this question in a 30- to 40-year horizon, it reminds us that we truly have a limited amount of time to figure it out. My father and I agree strongly with this notion, and last year here at the World Food Prize we launched a new campaign called, "40 Chances."

Some of you in this room are familiar with the concept that a farmer has a limited number of opportunities over a lifetime to grow his or her best crop. From the time that farmer starts working the land until they pass it down to their own son or daughter, they only have about 40 years, 40 crops or 40 chances to do the best job that they can.

Like farmers, all of us in this room have a limited number of chances during our career to do our best job, and for most of us in this room, we have dedicated our 40 chances to helping others. We all know that agriculture and hunger often go hand in hand because a majority of the world's poorest individuals are smallholder or subsistence farmers. These farmers are forced to take the biggest chance every year, because their crop can mean the difference between life and death.

This is a global challenge, but it needs an inclusive response from the poorest smallholder farmer to each of us in this room, we are in this together. Each of us attending the World Food Prize has a unique opportunity to empower others to make the most of their limited opportunities to change the world. We have a responsibility to use our 40 chances for the wellbeing of others, which is at the core of the 40 chances mindset and the premise behind the 40 Chances Fellows Program.

Today you will meet the 40 Chances Fellows, and you will hear about their extraordinary work. Each of them is living proof that a single individual has the potential to change the world, and we know that they will continue to inspire others striving to do the same.

We were able to identify, recognize and now support these fellows through our amazing partnership with the World Food Prize Foundation and with the Tony Blair Africa Governance

Initiative, along with the support from our excellencies on the stage and the amazing judging panels that you heard about from Ambassador Quinn just a minute ago. Without this collective effort, the program could not have been possible.

Each fellow has a unique background, one that we can all learn from, approaches that are localized for their community but relevant for our global challenge. One fellow was focused on equipping youth with important leadership and technical skills. Another is developing technology solutions for smallholder farmers and cooperatives. They're developing the right cropping systems and business practices and seeking solutions through new developments such as fair trade, value-added processing facilities. And, while their solutions vary, based on the needs and local capacities, they remain united around that same common vision. Each is seeking ways to permanently and sustainably lift others out of poverty and away from hunger and ultimately give them a better chance. I can think of no goal more worthwhile.

So when I think back to this dialogue's theme, whether or not we can feed nine billion people by the year 2050, I am not only hopeful, I am convinced that, with more and more individuals like the fellows you are about to meet, we will be able to rise to and meet that greatest challenge. Thank you very much, and congratulations.

### **Ambassador Quinn**

You know what they say – what is about the acorn doesn't fall far from the tree. Wow. You've got your dad's passion and drive for this, Howard, so we're so pleased to be associated with you, as well.

This is actually the single-most difficult part of the entire three days of the Borlaug Dialogue, and that is how to orchestrate how each one of the fellows comes up on the stage, gets the picture taken, we include the appropriate minister, and then we have them all and bring them back for a group picture. So bear with me now as we orchestrate this. So we're going to bring first the certificates up here, Judith. I want you to meet Stephen Lauer. Stephen, just walk up here in the lights. Stephen is the guy on the World Food Prize staff who's done all the work to make this happen. None of you would be here except for Stephen. I'd be up explaining why we hadn't been able to do this.

So we're ready to go? Okay, so our first winner. Mahmud Johnson:

[Audio recording]

Mr. Johnson is a Liberian entrepreneur and the founder and CEO of J-Palm Liberia, an agricultural startup company. Barely a teenager when the most recent civil war broke out in Liberia, Mahmud is driven by the experience to help his country rebuild by creating jobs and other opportunities for his fellow Liberians to live in dignity and economic freedom. Since completing a B.A. in economics at Dartmouth College in 2013, he has worked with smallholder farmers and agricultural sector stakeholders as a consultant on two USAID projects. Mahmud also served a senior economic analyst with Aurora Solutions, Inc., a consulting firm that works at the intersection of economic development and corporate strategy in Liberia. Mr. Johnson will use his 40 Chances award to establish the Kernels for Peace Initiative, or K4P, Liberia's first fair trade palm kernel oil processing factory, which will help bridge the gap between Liberia's

wasted palm kernels, estimated at a value of \$4 million dollars, and the market demand for palm kernel oil. As a social enterprise, K4P will work directly at the frontlines of socioeconomic transformation in rural Liberia by purchasing palm kernels from smallholder oil palm producers. K4P will help increase their incomes by an average of 25 to 35%. Additionally, K4P will create an estimated 85 additional permanent, full-time jobs for rural women and youth and will invest 50% of its profits into the community after the first two years of operation.

### **Ambassador Quinn**

So let's have another round of applause for Mahmud Johnson. And he told us that, given the terrible problems and crisis, he's anxious to return, because what he's going to do is so important to Liberia's economy.

So next is Malawi. We don't have a minister from Malawi, but we have the three ministers who can help stand in, in that spirit, and Bettie Kawonga:

[Audio recording]

The 40 Chances Fellow for Malawi is Ms. Bettie Kawonga. Ms. Kawonga is a Malawian animal scientist with 13 years of experience in livestock production, project management, and student and farmer training. She is motivated by the conviction that investing in youth is essential to securing a positive future for Malawi. Currently pursuing her doctorate at the University of Kentucky, Ms. Kawonga is also a lecturer in dairy science at Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR). Ms. Kawonga will use her 40 Chances award to establish a network of Community Business Incubation Centers, which will enable under-employed Malawian youth to become successful entrepreneurs in the Malawian dairy sector. The Community Business Incubation Centers will equip youth with leadership and technical skills in dairy husbandry and value addition, agribusiness management, loans and savings, and business proposal writing. Youth will be matched up with business mentors and provided with startup funds from an endowment to be created using a portion of the 40 Chances award money.

### **Ambassador Quinn**

One of the best parts of my job was calling each of these recipients and letting them know that they had won \$150,000, very memorable phone calls.

So our next recipient is from Rwanda:

[Audio recording]

The 40 Chances Fellow for Rwanda is Ms. Lilian Uwintwali. Ms. Uwintwali is a Rwandan businesswoman and founder and CEO of M-Ahwiii, a software development firm. Her vision is to deliver a brighter and food secure future for Rwandans by bridging the gap in agriculture and strengthening chains through information and communications technologies. In 2011 M-Ahwiii launched the Agro-FIBA technology platform, which provides e-extension services, market information, and financial information to about 3,000 smallholder farmers through the internet and through text messages. Ms. Uwintwali and her colleagues decided to launch the

Agro-FIBA platform after visiting with farmers and discovering their great need for information about available markets for their harvests and how to access bank loans and other useful information that would benefit them to improve on their farming activities. Ms. Uwintwali will use her 40 Chances Award to scale up the Agro-FIBA platform through partnerships with at least ten farmer cooperatives and build M-Ahwiii's structure and technology capabilities to enable continued expansion.

### **Ambassador Quinn**

And now Sierra Leone.

[Audio recording]

The 40 Chances Fellow for Sierra Leone is Mr. Emiliano Mroue. Mr. Mroue is an Argentinian businessman and cofounder and general manager of West Africa Rice Company (WARC), which integrates smallholder farmers within its production scheme to accelerate their transition to subsistence to sustainable farming. Mr. Mroue's concern for the poor and marginalized is rooted in his experience growing up in the tough reality of a small farming town in the Argentine Pampas and by transformable experiences with poorly paid silver miners in Bolivia and refugees fleeing conflict near Kabul. In 2011 he left a position as a corporate manager of purchasing at Hinkle in Germany and relocated to Sierra Leone to found WARC, desiring to use his business skills and connections to make a concrete impact in the lives of smallholder farmers. Mr. Mroue will use his 40 Chances award to introduce and pilot a soy-rice crop rotation system on 50 hectares of WARC's land. Despite the high potential of a rice-soy cropping system, in improving the livelihoods and diets of West African farmers, it has never been attempted in Sierra Leone outside of research plots. Should the rice-soy rotation prove successful, WARC will support the smallholder farmers it works with to integrate a similar rotation into their farming practices, improving soil fertility and generating scarce animal feed to foster protein consumption, which is among the lowest worldwide.

### **Ambassador Quinn**

So let's have a nice hand for him. And now the ultimate challenge, to bring the other three winners back, and all be together in the middle – the ministers on one side, Howard and Danielle and myself on the other. And you better have the wide-angle lens, Jim, on the camera for this. So let's have one final round of applause for our recipients.

And let's have a special round of applause for the vision of Howard G. and Howard W., because he was at the center of this for doing this, to Tony Blair and the Africa Governance Initiative was on the frontlines of development in Africa, for their vision, and for the privilege we had of partnering with you on this. So, please, one more round of applause and thanks.