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'If the Men Don't Eat,  
No Crop, We All Die'

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By Phil Strickland  
for Baptist Press

Upper Volta, in Africa's sub-Sahara region, is dusty even in the rainy season. Nothing, to hear it from folks who live there, is like the dry season. Then the whole country resembles a West Texas dust storm. The dust still seeps into every crevice of man and machine even though the rains have come.

The paved road to Sandwabo village was only a memory as we bumped along dirt paths. Finally, Sandwabo. No downtown. No town. Just a few groups of native huts here and there in the bush. It was another African village like hundreds of others, except for one dramatic difference. Sandwabo has a well, made possible by the Baptist Mission (organization of Southern Baptist missionaries) in Upper Volta.

Before they had the well, the Sandwabo women would arise early and walk five miles to fill their clay pots with water, hoping to get to the brackish ponds before the livestock. Now, about 2,000 people from six villages are drinking good, clear, accessible water from that one well.

In terms of the needs of the hungry of the world one well seems almost meaningless until you see the women of Sandwabo joyfully drawing up the water.

The total picture of need is overwhelming. No one really knows how many people in the world are dying of hunger. Most of the hungry die of diseases before succumbing to starvation. In the remote villages of the Sahel, in Africa's sub-Sahara, and many other parts of the world, people intent on surviving have no time for keeping records.

Most authorities, however, say that at least 10 million people a year die from hunger-related causes. That's hard to comprehend--10 million! If it takes more than a couple of minutes to read this article, 50 people will die while you are reading it.

By conservative estimates more than 500 million people are starving. One to two billion people have inadequate diets to function at full capacity. The children and old people suffer most. Sandwabo is typical. The men eat first, then the women, then the children. As they say, "If the men do not eat, there is no crop. Then we all die."

In 1974, UNICEF looked at the plight of children and declared a World Child Emergency. Pointing out that 500 million children are potentially faced with malnutrition, UNICEF estimated that 210 million actually are suffering from malnutrition.

There is now one malnourished child in the world for every United States citizen, and hungry children are increasing faster than Americans. For the Christian, one hungry child in a world which produces enough for everyone to eat should be one too many.

Upper Volta has had rain, so starvation in its cruelest forms is less visible than a year ago. We saw the skeleton bodies elsewhere; but in Upper Volta, hunger takes the much more insidious form of chronic malnutrition. Enlarged stomachs, weakened bodies, food-starved minds--these are the signatures of poverty in Upper Volta.

Samuel Yameogo, a young Assembly of God pastor and director of the Protestant Federation of Upper Volta, explained what the population explosion is doing to that country.

"When I was a boy, I learned in school that the population of Upper Volta was three million people," Yameogo said, "Now it is rapidly approaching six million."

Most people in Upper Volta still cook with wood, and each evening one sees hundreds of donkeys, carts and humans with brush piled high as they bring to thousands of people in Ouagadougou wood with which to cook and to warm their homes. To get more wood for more people, the forests are being cut down.

The problems can be seen in other, more important areas. Upper Volta holds the world record for the lowest percentage of literacy and of children in school--both 5 percent. There is one doctor for every 75,000 people. Life expectancy (38 years) ties several other countries for being the lowest in the world.

In spite of having one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world, the population of Upper Volta is growing at a rate of 2.3 percent a year, a rate that will double the population in 30 years. By the year 2000, a government that cannot now cope with the problems of six million people will have to cope with the problems of 11 million people.

The problems of Upper Volta are a vignette of the problems of the developing world. A visit to these countries brings the conviction that population must be controlled.

The projections are disturbing. The present world population growth is approximately two percent. In some countries the rate exceeds three percent. A three percent growth rate results in a nineteenfold increase within a century.

Even if there were suddenly a great reduction in the number of births, it would take a generation for the decreases to be felt. The United Nations has made an optimistic estimate that assumes a population growth of two percent until 1985, followed by a gradual decline to 1.7 percent by the end of the century. This would result in a population of 6.5 billion people by the end of the century. World population would not be stabilized until 2125, with a population of 12.3 billion.

As one person put it, "Either the birth rate will go down or the death rate will go up."

Almost as important as controlling population is controlling the rapid increases in per capita consumption in affluent areas.

The average person in the developing world consumes about 400 pounds of grain a year, most of it directly. In America, we consume a ton of grain per person, 1,800 pounds of it in the form of grain-fed meat and dairy products.

Developed countries, with 30 percent of the world's population, consume 51 percent of the world's cereal grain. Rich countries feed more grain to livestock than is consumed by another one-third of the human race.

While meat products have an important place in diets, overuse is detrimental both to us and to hungry people in other parts of the world. The American Heart Association has recommended that Americans eat a third less meat. To do so would release more grain to the market for nations facing critical hunger problems.

The world is in an explosion of change. Presently, there is theoretically enough for everyone to eat. But there is not enough for the rich countries to have and waste all they want if the poor are to be kept alive. (BP)

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This is the first in a three-part series based on a project co-sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Phil Strickland is an associate with the Texas Baptist CLC.

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European Baptists Post  
Officer, Staff Changes

Baptist Press  
12/29/75

By Baptist Press

Four assignments, two retirements and a resignation were announced by Baptists in Europe, according to European Baptist Press Service (EPBS) reports.

The annual conference of Baptists in Czechoslovakia elected Michael Kesjar, a pastor of Nesvady and previously chairman of the Slovak regional council, chairman of its central council. He succeeds pastor Vaclav Tomas, who was named honorary chairman recognizing his service as central council chairman since 1953.

In Wales, M. J. Williams, Welsh Baptist Union General Secretary, was named president of the Free Church Federal Council of Great Britain. Williams earlier this year announced his retirement as Union Secretary for 1977.

Already retired are: Nicolae Covaci, after an eight-year term as president of the Romanian Baptist Union; and R. Rabenau, secretary of the Baptist Union of Austria, after 30 years association with the Union. Succeeding Rabenau is his son Helmut Rabenau of Vienna.

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Covaci will continue his over 40-years pastorate of the Baptist congregation in Oradea, Romania.

Another staff change was announced at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, where Miss Vivian Holder, librarian since 1969, resigned to pursue further studies, effective May, 1976.

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Bicentennial Feature

Baptists Wouldn't Bow  
To Established Church

Baptist Press  
12/29/75

WILLIAMSBURG, Va., (BP)--After decades of trying to stamp out Baptists, leaders of the Virginia state church, by January 1774, wondered if their intended victims were like some creature of mythology, which, struck down, rose stronger than before.

By stretching and even breaking the law, the established church jailed many Baptists to silence them and deter their followers. But the persecution had the opposite effect. Ministers preached from prison cells, and Baptists gained strength daily.

Once virtually ignored by the state church as harmless, Baptists, with their principles of separation of church and state, constituted a serious threat to established religion. And while parish churches were almost empty, simple pioneer folk traveled many miles to hear the gospel as preached by Baptist ministers in open meetings.

The state church used reason and force in fighting Baptists but with equal lack of success. Leading influences in the regular church said theirs was the oldest religion in Virginia and that Baptists were only "wolves in sheep's clothing."

"It is well known that wolves prey on sheep," one Baptist preacher answered, "but never have sheep destroyed wolves. If Baptists are the wolves, how is it that we are persecuted and cast into prison?"

To a charge that men and women of education and influence belonged to the established church while Baptists attracted only the lower order, Baptists answered that the condition "is no more than what befell the Master and his disciples."

There was a sharp contrast between established clergy and Baptist preachers. As a rule the clergyman was cultured and well educated, respected in the community, and a man of influence. He was accepted by the best families and those in authority, and his salary from the state provided him a comfortable living.

Unlike the established clergyman, who demanded financial support by taxation, the Baptist preacher earned his own living and preached "solely because of his love for the souls of men."

The Baptist message, like the rugged American pioneer, thrived on hardship, and as these plain people and this simple faith suffered together, they developed a strong affinity for each other.

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