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World Finally Noticed,
But Too Late for Sahel

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By Phil Strickland
For Baptist Press

When the world finally got around to noticing, the Sahel was in the midst of its worst drought in recorded history. In the six countries of the Sahel, which lies between the Sahara desert and the tropical rain forest, rain is crucial. The rains had not come. Cattle were dying of thirst and children were dying of hunger.

Slowly, ponderously, the world began to wake up to what was happening, not just in the Sahel, but in numerous places.

For millions in the Sahel, however, the awakening was too late, although international aid was able to save many. It arrived in huge quantities. International relief agencies concentrated their efforts in areas with strange sounding names like Timbuktu. They brought welcome, vital relief.

But aid alone cannot solve the long-range problems of the Sahel, India, Bangladesh or any other of the 36 Fourth World Countries. (Fourth World is a term used to characterize countries which are the worst economic hardship cases. Third World refers to developing countries, many of which are still very poor. Second World refers to communist states and First World to the developed industrial countries.) Aid has a vital role, but other important problems must be faced.

Agricultural improvement must be intensely pursued. Many nations have the resources to feed themselves, if those resources are developed properly. But proper development does not necessarily mean growing crops the way it is done in the States.

In recent years, many countries have looked at the per-acre production in America and decided that they had to try similar techniques. This has been too frequently encouraged by those who stand to gain by exporting United States agricultural implements and techniques.

American farming is "capital intensive." It requires large plots of land. The results of this approach often are disastrous in developing countries. Large numbers of small farmers are driven off the land into urban areas where there are no jobs. The cost of production goes up. Maintenance of equipment becomes a problem.

Agricultural improvements for the poorest nations must be "labor intensive." In many countries, as many as 90 percent of the people depend on farming. They should be encouraged to stay on the land and taught how to improve crops.

The Green Revolution can help at this point, but it is not the total answer. Many of the improved wheat strains require large amounts of fertilizer, water and pesticides which simply are not available to poor people and to small countries.

Marketing decisions also dramatically determine those who live and those who die in our world. A slight increase in oil prices may be definitely irritating to people in America. In Bangladesh, however, it means several thousand more people will die. Most fertilizer is made from petroleum. Higher petroleum prices mean less fertilizer.

Lest we criticize the oil exporters for making all they can, we must realize that Americans beat them to it. The United States dominates the world food market.

We discovered in the early 70's that world food requirements had grown so that food, like oil, could be priced substantially higher. So, in 1972 we began to cash in--before the Arabs did. From 1972 to 1974, earnings from farm exports went from \$7 billion to \$20 billion.

In the same period, we increased our earnings from the very poor countries to \$6.6 billion--an increase of \$5 billion. We gave less than half of that amount to those countries in aid of all types, including loans. While one hand gave, the other hand took away twice as much.

Much of mankind spends 80 percent of their income on food. When food prices double, they do not spend more, they buy less. More of them starve.

Christians and other citizens have some say regarding United States international policies. It is a say regarding who lives and dies. We are all to some degree responsible.

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The Old Testament is replete with provisions God made for the poor in the Mosaic law.

As Dr. Ernest T. Campbell, pastor of New York's Riverside Church, recently said: "It's really quite simple. We either believe the Golden Rule or we don't. The implications of the Golden Rule to the hungry of this world are clear."

The Old Testament is replete with provisions God made for the poor in the Mosaic law. The poor were to receive the agricultural tithe every third year. (Deut. 14:28, 29; 26:12). Every seventh year fallow fields were open to the poor (Exodus 23:11). Debts were remitted (Deut. 15:1, 2), and those in servitude were given freedom (Lev. 25:39-55).

Owners of fields and vineyards were urged not to glean too thoroughly so sheaves would be left for the poor (Deut. 24:19).

The New Testament is at least equally strong in its demonstration of concern for the poor. Jesus said the poor are blessed (Luke 6:20, 21). He strongly identified his ministry with the poor and made clear that wealth is to be used to help others (Luke 14:12-14).

Some today have despaired, subscribing in various forms to the "lifeboat ethic," that the only solution is to let many die, sometimes called, "triage".

Some today have despaired and are suggesting that the only solution is the "lifeboat ethic," also called "triage," a morally bankrupt philosophy that says some (the rich nations) must stay in the lifeboats while others (the poor nations) drown.

The doomsdayers will remain with us, but the followers of the God of hope will not be found there. Rather, they will seek under the power of the Holy Spirit to discover effective ways of giving cups of cold water to drink and bread to eat. (BP)

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This is the final segment of 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 for the Texas CLC.

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Plans Laid to Double Baptist
Work in North Central States

Baptist Press
1/12/76

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Final plans were made at a meeting here for the initial phase of an effort to double the number of Southern Baptist churches and members in seven north central states during the 1977-1990 period.

The meeting was attended by approximately 150 Baptist leaders from the seven states involved and several agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The seven states--Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin--now have 1,784 churches.

The proposed "North Central Missions Thrust" will seek to double this number, and also double the number of members of churches and church organizations, the number of mission chapels, and the number of baptisms.

Other specific goals will be set.

According to Orrin Morris, regional coordinator, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, 22.8 percent of the nation's population live in the seven state area. The 1970 census indicated a total population of 50,563,237 for these north central states. Less than one percent of these are members of Southern Baptist churches.

At the meeting in Indianapolis, a calendar was presented for the first four years of the North Central Mission Thrust, noting emphases for this initial phase. One of the executive secretaries from the involved state Baptist conventions will serve as president each year.

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Planners designated 1976 will be a year of awareness. The communications committee is made up of state paper editors of the north central states, with Alvin Shackelford, editor of the Indiana Baptist, serving as chairman. E. Harmon Moore, executive secretary of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, will be president this year.

Finding and enrolling prospects will be the emphasis in 1977, using the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's new Action Sunday School Enrolment Plan. State Baptist Sunday School directors will lead the drive with Lew Reynolds, Indiana Baptist conventions Sunday School director, serving as chairman and James Smith, Illinois Baptist convention executive secretary, as president.

Church extension will be the 1978 focus, with Charles Chaney, Illinois Baptist convention missions director, as chairman, and Robert Wilson, Michigan Baptist convention executive secretary, as president.

Evangelism will draw the main emphasis in 1979. Chairman will be Jim Coldiron, Michigan Baptist convention evangelism director, with Ohio Baptist convention executive secretary Ray Roberts, as president.

Southern Baptist Convention agency representatives attended the meeting and shared projects which they will use to support the North Central Mission Thrust. Representatives came from the Home Mission Board, Sunday School Board, Brotherhood Commission, Radio and Television Commission, and Woman's Missionary Union (WMU).

Through WMU, attempts will be made to lineup "prayer partner states" and other parts of the country with the seven north central states.