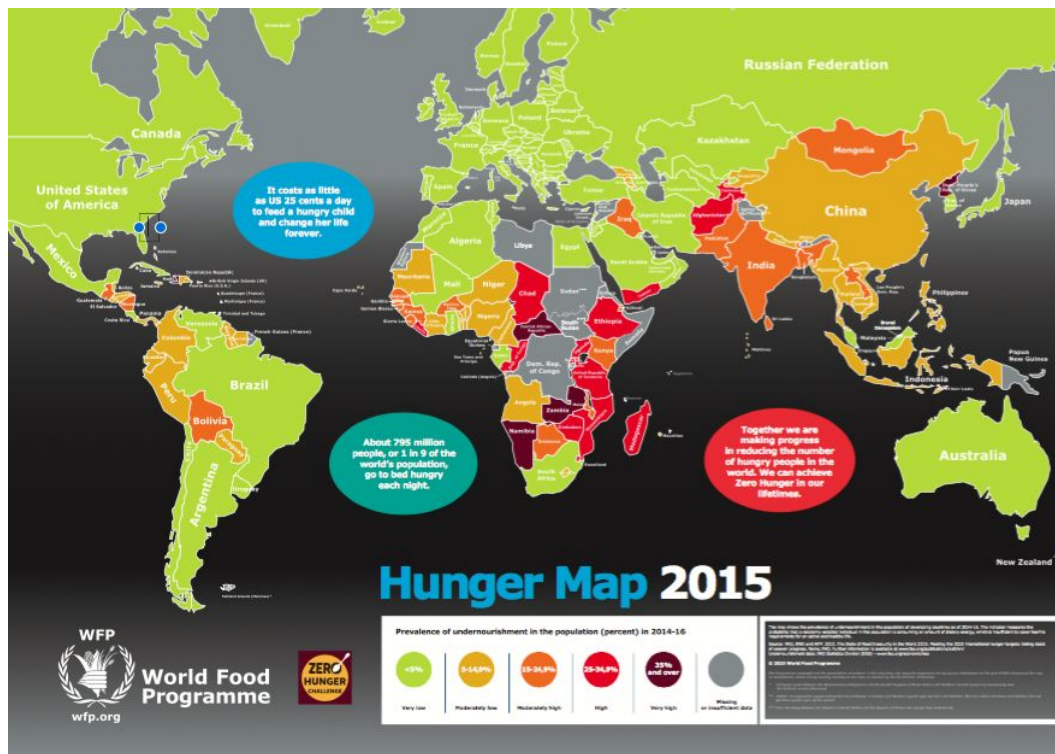


Students Learn about the History and Work of the UN World Food Programme



Monday, 3 October, 2016

Professor Georgia Shaver visited the Food, Environment and Society class on Monday, 3 Oct. to share with the students of the Masters in Food Studies Program an overview of the history and work of the UN World Food Programme (WFP).

Prof. Shaver recently retired from a career of over 30 years with WFP, where she was the Country Director and Representative of WFP's program in both Ethiopia and Mozambique during the years of catastrophic floods and drought, the Regional Manager for Southern Africa, as well as the first Ombudsman to such countries as Sudan, Somalia, Myanmar, Haiti and Bangladesh.

WFP was founded in 1964 as a joint undertaking with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and was initially started as an experiment to use food aid to support

economic and social development. Prof. Shaver defined WFP as “the child of the UN and FAO,” and shared that this interconnectivity made things complicated. “We needed to know not just the rules of the UN, but our own rules, and the rules of FAO.” WFP severed from FAO in 1990, at which point the organization redefined its identity as a food aid organization. Progressively, it shifted its emphasis from food aid (given through the surplus production of countries like the US) to food assistance through local procurement of food, which limits transportation costs, and also empowers and supports farmers who are local to the area in need.



Prof. Georgia Shaver discussing the UN Sustainable Development Goals

WFP also began implementing cash-based assistance, mobile technology, and credit cards which allow them to give families money, and allow them to decide on how they will use it. “Of course there is always a risk that they will spend the money on something that is not food,” added Shaver, “but there is enough research that shows that that is not likely to be the case - especially if you put it in the hands of women.” In fact, many of WFP’s initiatives target the education and empowerment of women, making sure that decision making and participation is available equally across genders.

Today, WFP is the leader in humanitarian air service and logistics for all UN agencies and NGOs. They partner with the UN, private sector organizations, NGOs, and governments -

federal, provincial, county, national, and local - to truly understand the needs and the culture of the people they are assisting.

Providing food assistance is no simple task, and with so many parties involved, things can sometimes get complicated. Varying political interests and needs can get in the way of the real target goal, which is to put an end to hunger across the world. Prof. Shaver has been around the world and back with WFP, and concluded her talk by sharing that she kept her moral compass aligned by always remembering that, “At the end of the day, you are feeding hungry people - and that is not a political act.”

Author: Kate J. Truini

For more on Prof. Shaver, visit :

<https://www.aur.edu/academics/international-relations4/georgia-shaver/>