

“Keeping Corporate Philanthropy Alive”

**Bruce Chizen
President & CEO
Adobe Systems**

**Article
*San Jose Mercury News***

Keeping Corporate Philanthropy Alive *by Bruce Chizen*

Corporate philanthropy has long been a cornerstone of U.S. Business. From the industrial magnates of the 19th century to the high-tech leaders of the late 20th century, corporate profits have been used to seed arts, education and humanitarian efforts worldwide.

However, given recent local and global events, corporate philanthropy now faces one of its greatest challenges ever. The horrific attacks of September 11th have brutalized our nation, both physically and emotionally, dealing a new blow to an already slowing economy. By some estimates, the hit to the U.S. economy as a result of the attacks is now at least \$100 billion, and that's on top of the tens of billions in property damage and the staggering loss of life.

With the magnitude of this crisis, many American businesses are turning inward. Out of necessity, some are focused on stabilizing shaken businesses, while others are focused on resuming growth. As enormous as these challenges are, we must not lose sight of the role U.S. corporations have traditionally played as global philanthropists. And we must stay focused on our commitment to giving.

Currently, almost 800 million people in developing countries remain locked in a desperate cycle of hunger and poverty. That's more people than Western Europe and North America combined. Hunger not only debilitates people, it weakens nations. Afghanistan is a good example. Ironically, terrorism experts agree that one important avenue in fighting terrorism is addressing global poverty and hunger.

While America has always been a leader in feeding the world's hungry, many Americans still believe that poverty is a scourge that will never go away. On the contrary, there is one organization that is actually impacting hunger on a global scale. While relatively unknown in the U.S., the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has figured out how to alleviate poverty and hunger worldwide. FAO does not simply give people food – it gives them the means to grow the food themselves and thereby achieve their own food security, independent of aid.

To many this may sound like an over-simplification of an enormously complicated problem, but the truth is that it's actually working. More than 900 microprojects all over the world are financed by FAO's TeleFood Fund. Although small in scale and cost, these projects make a significant impact. Projects include providing silos in Bolivia to yield more harvest; pedal-pump gardening in Senegal to get water to crops; teaching bio-intensive farming to unemployed women in the Philippines. As simple as these projects sound, they address the root cause of poverty – lack of education and essential tools. It's inspiring to see these communities thrive when they are able to control their own destinies.

Through these and other projects, the FAO, along with leaders from 185 countries and the European community have pledged to cut the number of the world's hungry people in half by 2015. With the help of corporate America, they'll do it.

This week, FAO is putting on a series of concerts in Seattle, WA to honor World Food Day (Oct 16th) and to raise awareness in the U.S. regarding the problem of world hunger. The concerts, organized by Groundwork 2001, are taking place from October 14-22. They feature world-renowned artists such as REM, Pearl Jam, and Alanis Morissette, all of whom are donating their performances. The Honorary Chair of the Advisory Committee is singer Madonna, who has contributed her time, money and influence to see these concerts to success.

For those who are unable to attend the concerts, virtual "backstage passes" are available at www.groundwork2001.org. The concerts, entitled "Act To Reduce Hunger," will culminate in television broadcasts to be seen by billions of people in more than 100 countries worldwide. The American broadcast will take place on Thanksgiving weekend on VH-1. The world premiere will follow a few weeks later. Proceeds from the concerts and broadcasts will go directly to FAO's TeleFood Fund which supports these small-scale farming and food production projects around the world. Every dollar raised goes right to work.

Through Adobe's partnership with the FAO, we have seen firsthand the potential that exists to combat hunger by providing people with the knowledge and tools they need to rise out of poverty. Clearly, the concept of food for all is not an impossible dream, but a goal that is achievable within our lifetimes. But this effort will take all of us – governments, corporate leaders, private donors and the entire global community – to make it happen.

The terrorist attacks of September 11th have given the Groundwork 2001 benefit concerts even more meaning than they previously had. They now serve as a dramatic symbol of America's commitment to remain engaged with the world as an equal and active partner of hope. They will aid millions of the world's poor and hungry who, too often, become the pawns for terrorists. In a way, what could be more fitting than to respond to terrorism by highlighting the generous spirit of the American people?

As a broad request, I ask other U.S. Businesses to join Adobe in addressing the challenges of keeping corporate philanthropy a priority. More specifically, I ask for your support in the battle against world hunger being waged by the FAO. If the U.S. is to lead a worldwide recovery, then one of our priorities must be to strengthen the health and stability of our global population.

(Bruce Chizen is President and CEO of Adobe Systems. Groundwork 2001 was made possible by the support of Adobe Systems Incorporated)