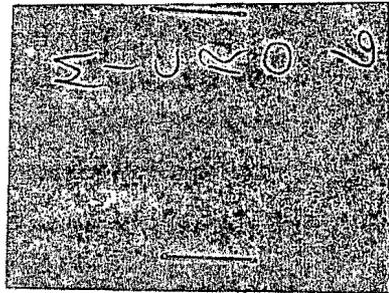


Transcript

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
REMARKS TO NATIONAL LESSONS WITHOUT BORDERS CONFERENCE  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND  
SEPTEMBER 16, 1996**



Thank you. Thank you very much. I want to start by apologizing for the delay. It took a lot longer in the rain to get here than anyone had planned and I'm very, very sorry that anyone had to wait and I hope you've not been inconvenienced.

But I am delighted to be here and I'm especially pleased because as I look out in the audience, I see that we have both those who are participating in the Lessons Without Borders Conference, who themselves are development experts who are working both abroad and here at home and dealing with the most pressing human needs that we face around the world, but I'll also note that there are younger students and faculty from Johns Hopkins who may not be as familiar with what this conference is about. And so I'm delighted that you have both those involved in it and those who are interested in these lessons, and I look forward to sharing some of my impressions with all of you.

I particularly want to thank Mayor Schموke and his wife Dr. Schموke who are here for their friendship and support but also more particularly, Baltimore was the first city that really embraced the idea that the work that the United States had been doing abroad for decades might possibly have something to teach us here at home. And under Mayor Schموke's leadership those lessons have been taken to heart and put into effect.

We're also always pleased to be anywhere with your United States Senator Paul Sarbanes and his wife Christine Sarbanes. I'm particularly pleased though, on this occasion, that Mr. Sarbanes has been a consistent, reasonable voice on behalf of American involvement around the world in the area of development.

Congressman Cummings is here as well and our Ambassador to Bangladesh, David Zamiro (phonetic). I also want to thank Johns Hopkins. Once again I must say I love coming and Dr. Brody is always such a delight for me to read about and learn about what this great university is doing, and I want to thank you for hosting this. But more that for the role that Johns Hopkins has played in development work and in particularly the work of USAID for many years.

And then finally I need to thank Brian Atwood, the administrator of USAID, who has brought a new sense of energy and urgency and common sense to the agency and has really made a difference under his leadership, not only in making our work abroad more effective but beginning to explain to those of us who pay for it, the American taxpayer, why it is a good investment to be doing what we are doing around the world in helping people to become self-sufficient, understand what democracy means, what the requirements

of citizenship are.

So all in all, it is a great pleasure to be here and thank all of you who are involved in this conference for bringing so much energy, faith and commitment to the partnership that is represented by the USAID experience abroad and in our communities here at home.

Since Brian Atwood launched the USAID initiative "Lessons Without Borders" two years ago, I've been following its progress with great interest. And I've been extremely pleased to see that the program has already helped improve the lives of thousands of American children and families.

Now let me just explain to those of who are not development experts what we're talking about, and I'll do it by giving you a few examples of what has happened abroad that the United States has helped fund and provide technical assistance for, and what we have learned which we then have brought home.

For example, here in Baltimore we have seen how grassroots strategies pioneered in Nairobi, Kenya, can also improve childhood immunization rates and encourage economic development in America. As you may know, Baltimore has increased its childhood immunization rates from 62 percent to over 95 percent by adopting a simple strategy of replacing complicated jargon and brochures that people didn't read with a door-to-door, person-to-person initiative, so that people in the neighborhoods where the largest numbers of children not being immunized would find a knock on the door and a neighborhood worker standing there to say, "Have you gotten your baby immunized?". If not, "Why not?" and "How can I help you get that done?"

I'd often wondered in the years during which I was involved in trying to increase the immunization rates of American children why, for example in this hemisphere, the United States would have the third or fourth worst rate of immunization, while so many countries that were poor and had a high rate of illiteracy were doing a better job than we. What were we not doing?

It really boiled down that in many other countries USAID was helping those countries create infrastructure that would reach out to families to persuade them to bring their babies in for their shots. And often times it would be a worker who would go up across the mountains of Peru or through the rain forests of Central America or out into the savannahs of places like Kenya, finding families and helping them overcome the obstacles of knowledge and awareness, or transportation or fear or whatever else might stand in the way to be sure that their children would be immunized.

So when we look at what we have done as a country abroad, I thought it was just common sense that under Brian Atwood's leadership USAID, which cannot fund programs here in the United States, that is not its mission, would though be able to share its expertise and acquired experience with cities like Baltimore.

For decades, USAID has supported efforts in developing countries to address the debilitating problems of poverty: Poor nutrition, poor pre-natal care, disease, illiteracy, and unemployment. USAID workers and their partners abroad have seen firsthand what is practical. So how then can we profit from that?

Well that is what this conference is all about. We are bringing together the people who have done the work on behalf of you and me, through our development efforts with people who are working in our cities and our rural places here at home.

Over the past four years I have seen firsthand many programs around the world that really work. I have become somewhat of a cheerleader for USAID and development efforts because I, like perhaps many of you, am not very knowledgeable about what we actually do in foreign aid, and many people in our country have an idea that we spend a huge percentage of our budget on foreign aid. In fact often times in public polls when citizens are asked, "How much do you think the United States spends on foreign aid?", the answers range from 15 to 25 percent of the United States budget. And often times then the person asking the question will follow up and say "Well how much do you think we should spend to try and deal with problems in other countries, both to help the people there and to stop the spread of several problems to make the world safer for American interests?", and people scratch their heads and say "Well maybe ten percent."

Well of course the fact is we spend less than one percent on foreign aid, on the kind of work that is done not only to keep our embassies going abroad, to take care of you when you travel and might need some help, but to do this kind of work as well. And I have seen and become somewhat of a witness about how effective the relatively small amounts of money so many of our programs abroad rely on are. In their children's lives and to know what to do, take care of their children more effectively. I see in this country similar kinds of

We've already heard reference to a dinner that is being held later this evening in honoring an institution called the International Center for Health and Population Research in Bangladesh. That center has had lots of help from Johns Hopkins as well as from USAID. The doctors there have saved millions of young lives through their pioneering use of something called Oral Rehydration Therapy. That is a method of treating serious cases of diarrhea with a basic salt-and-sugar mixture. Now I brought up this packet with me to show those of you who are students here at Johns Hopkins what I'm talking about, because the others who are working in this field know very well that inside this packet is a mixture, a combination of salt and sugar that when dissolved in clean water and administered to a person with diarrhea, particularly a child is most likely the one to be afflicted with perhaps fatal diarrhea, that child's life can be saved. It doesn't even have to be in a hospital or intravenous fluid going through the veins if this is administered over a long enough period of time.

I walked along the beds in this center in Bangladesh and I've seen mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers administering this combination of salt and sugar to a person seriously ill with diarrhea. My visit there was meant to highlight the USAID presence and American support for this pioneering effort.

But while I was there, I met a doctor from Louisiana who had come to study at the center for about six months. And I asked him why he had chosen that center, and he told me that at the time I had this conversation with him, a very large number of children in Louisiana were uninsured children, they were very poor but not poor enough to qualify for the state's level of Medicaid, and their families did not have jobs that provided health insurance, and that he was seeing increasing numbers of children hospitalized who were dangerously ill because of diarrhea. So he had gone all the way across the world, to a country we think of as a less developed country, to learn a cost-effective, simple method for helping save children's lives which he then could bring back to Louisiana. It's that kind of interchange and learning of lessons this conference is meant to promote.

Some of you who know the work of Jim Grant and others of you I'm sure have heard of UNICEF understand how he took simple ideas like this little packet and preached, to many of us it seems as though he would never stop, about how these simple interventions that don't cost a lot of money could really save children's lives. And that's what we're seeing here in the United States. Oral Rehydration Therapy can be a more accessible, more effective, and less costly alternative to hospitalization: It costs just \$7 a day, it can be administered at home, compared to the \$800 a day it costs to administer intravenous drug treatments in American hospitals.

The lessons we can learn go beyond health. They also apply to our challenges from economic self-sufficiency to effective family planning.

Last fall, I visited a poor area of Santiago, Chile, where the schools are open on weekends to accommodate parents' work schedules. And I met a lot of parents who are trying to become more involved in their children's lives and to know what to do, how to take care of their children more effectively. I see in this country similar kinds of parenting programs, some of them borrowing lessons from what we are seeing what works in other countries.

One of the most exciting programs that we have brought home at the national level here as well as locally is what is called microenterprise. That means lending small amounts of money to very poor people for them to start their own businesses, for them to buy certain products that they need to re-sell so that they can try to become more economically self-sufficient.

That is happening here in Baltimore. With microenterprise lending, small loans are given to start very small microbusinesses. I've seen the difference that can make in the lives of people from India to Nicaragua. I have stood in some of the poorest places in the world and have listened as women told me how their lives had changed because somebody had believed in them enough to see them as credit-worthy. When all of a sudden they had some resources which they used to create a business.

As we begin to implement welfare reform, I think one of the most important aspects of our efforts will have to include a very large-scale commitment to microenterprise. Because if we intend to not only help people get off welfare, but to change the

environments and communities in which people have become economically trapped, there has to be more economic activity. If we think that is a challenge, then imagine how it must have seemed to the very first person in the world to devise the idea of microenterprise.

His name is Dr. Muhammad Yunus, he is also from Bangladesh, he was trained in the United States as an economist and when he returned home he looked for ways to try to take the ideas he learned about the economy and put them into practice in his own country. He realized that although the millions and millions of very poor people in Bangladesh had skills, those skills were not considered economic skills. They weren't considered market-worthy. And yet he could see how with a little bit of investment, those skills could create entrepreneurs and businesses that would create economic activity, that would help lift not only individuals but whole communities out of poverty.

I visited one of the villages where the bank that got these started, the Grameen Bank, is working. And I looked at this village; it was a Hindu village that was a village of untouchables. My schedule was such that I could only go to one village, and the people arranging it wanted me very much to go to a Muslim village, as Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim country. But we couldn't work it out and so the Muslim women, and all the borrowers were women, came from their village to the Hindu village where we had a big meeting, where the women stood up and told me how their lives had changed.

One woman had stood up and told me that she borrowed the money to buy a milk cow. With that one milk cow she was able to produce enough milk which she then sold so she could buy another milk cow. And then as a proud owner of two milk cows she was able to take the money that she made and buy a rickshaw for her husband, so that he could begin to try to be a taxi driver in the village where they lived.

I went into a home that had been built because of the Grameen bank's lending policy, and I saw firsthand how the entire village had been transformed and as importantly, how the lives of these women who were borrowers had changed from destitution to inspiration, not only for themselves but importantly for their children and the rest of us.

I visited a similar microenterprise effort at a community-based bank in Managua, Nicaragua, one of the poorest areas of that city that has seen civil war, earthquakes and many different kinds of challenges. At the FINCA Village Bank, "Mothers United," a group of women located in that neighborhood, had borrowed money and had worked with each other by creating a unit of borrowers who supported each other's economic activity. I heard how those very small sums had started businesses that were sewing and selling clothes or baking bread and pastries, selling auto parts door to door, mosquito netting. The kinds of things that were needed in the community but would otherwise, perhaps, not be available.

And finally, on my visit to Santiago, Chile, I met a seamstress who told me that for years she could barely make a living. She had an old, beat up sewing machine that was always breaking down. With a small loan she got a brand new, fast-speed sewing machine, and she told me "I felt like I had been released like a bird from a cage." She got that

sewing machine and began to kiss it over and over again because she knew what a difference it would make in her life.

We have seen in our travels so many instances of how USAID, with a little bit of money, has been able to spawn a great deal of local support and community effort and has been able to, with technical assistance, train people in the local areas to carry on the work. So as we look at the lessons that have been learned from our work overseas, I'm convinced that many of those lessons can be learned and applied here.

One of the most important areas is in family planning and prenatal care for children. And particularly for at-risk children and their mothers because we still have a very high rate of infant mortality and maternal mortality around the world. And in some of our inner cities our rates of infant mortality are as high as some third world countries.

In Indonesia I saw how the whole community had come together to support families in their choice of family planning and in the care of their children. In Brazil I met very courageous health officers who had committed themselves to family planning efforts because the hospital where I visited with them has an admission rate that is 50 percent of the women giving birth and 50 percent women who are appearing at the hospital after self-induced abortion with serious physical problems. And those health officers knew that sensible family planning access had always been available to the rich women in Brazil, but not available to poor women.

Certainly many of the problems that we see around the world are exacerbated by incredible population pressures, and one of the things that I would hope is that when our Congress looks at USAID's work, they would understand how important family planning is internationally. That American assistance to try to help countries deal with their population pressures is in America's interest economically, environmentally, politically and every other way I can think of.

So these are the kinds of issues that we have brought home with us and this is what this conference is all about. There are many more examples that will be discussed at this conference, from the hospital that I saw in Manila where one day-old babies are being taught to drink from cups because they cannot be taught to breastfeed, so they cut down on infection from bottles that can't be sterilized in slums, to the kind of work that I saw in Central and Eastern Europe that are teaching people what democracy really is, what a free press is. All of it is part of America's commitment to take our own ideals and give other people the chance to learn how to live democratic, free enterprise lives in this complicated, new challenging world.

Now in the grand scheme of things America's investments in social development abroad are minuscule. But the differences that they have made in our global economy, in world peace and prosperity and the lives of men, women and children are immeasurable.

America's ideals and interests cannot be worse than the political, economic and social... (inaudible). As this conference demonstrates, our engagement represents

opportunities for ourselves at home, not just obligations abroad. I would hope that every American who hears about this conference will understand that it is a two-way street. The money being invested in social development abroad is being brought home in the sense that we are learning what works and applying to solve our own problems here.

These lessons, I believe, are valuable and will more than pay for themselves. They are proof that this country, the strongest nation on Earth, cares about the smallest child, the littlest problem, because we understand how interconnected we are today. And we understand that ultimately, the kinds of futures those of you who are students at Johns Hopkins now can look forward to will in some measure depend upon what we do to take care of the last and the least among us. What we do to solve our own problems in Baltimore or Boston, and what we do to help solve problems in Bangladesh.

Because as we look toward the 21st century, as we understand how each of us is going to have to work and be educated to fulfill our own potential, we also, I hope, understand that our potential will be enhanced the better educated and the better the economy is in places very far from here, and that at its heart, America's interests lie in making sure that not only our own people but many of the people on this earth go to bed looking forward to waking up in the morning, because they're going to have some control over their own destiny.

So Lessons Without Borders is a way of saying we have learned from what we have done and we want to continue leading the world, and showing the way to how our problems can be solved so that we can build a better future for everyone.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

###