

Bond Girl Maria Grazia Cucinotta visits WFP projects in India

Italian actress Maria Grazia Cucinotta, Ambassador Against Hunger for the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), has returned from a field visit to projects that the UN agency is supporting in India, urging the international community to strongly commit to support WFP programmes so as to provide education and food to millions of hungry poor children.

New Delhi, Delhi, November 17, 2007 /[India PRwire](#)/ -- Italian actress Maria Grazia Cucinotta, *Ambassador Against Hunger* for the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), has returned from a field visit to projects that the UN agency is supporting in India, urging the international community to strongly commit to support WFP programmes so as to provide education and food to millions of hungry poor children.

The Italian actress strongly appealed for contributions during the press conference that took place today in New Delhi.

"Working side by side with WFP has taught me that each one can make a difference in the fight against hunger. Food can serve as a magnet to bring children to school and change their life", said Cucinotta, who chose India as her first field visit in her role as WFP Ambassador Against Hunger.

Cucinotta visited WFP-assisted primary schools, mother-and-child health and nutrition centers, and food-for-work activities in the predominantly tribal districts of Jhabua and Dhar in central state of Madhya Pradesh. She was very impressed with the functioning of WFP-supported projects. She learnt first-hand that as a result of the WFP's support to national school feeding programme, the enrolment in the schools have increased substantially, the attendance rates were higher than in other schools and moreover, the children looked healthy.

"While India is making tremendous progress on the economic front, more efforts are needed in the social arena, in terms of better nutrition, education and health services for the poor. The commitment of the Government of India for hunger and poverty alleviation is commendable. I have been impressed by WFP's work in India that focuses on strengthening the national food-based schemes by developing better models, including formulation and local production of micronutrients fortified special foods. Every dollar WFP spends leverages several more dollars from existing schemes. This is what external support and capacity development are needed for in India", said Cucinotta.

Maria Grazia Cucinotta, Oscar nominated in 1994 for the film "Il Postino", has been appointed WFP Ambassador Against Hunger in 2006 after having produced the Italian film "All the Invisible Children", that focus the attention on the millions of children and teenagers whose rights are denied by hunger, exploitation and war. The film was realized by eight top directors: John Woo, Emir Kusturica, Spike Lee and others.

WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency. Last year we gave food to 88 million people in 78 of the world's poorest countries and provided school meals to about 20 million children in 71 countries; almost half of whom were girls. Starting in 1963 and continuing as the largest multilateral conduit for external food assistance to India, WFP has worked with the Government of India to fight against hunger, malnutrition and illiteracy. In 2006, WFP assisted approximately 2.9 million people in India, including 2 million women and children.

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