

Harry Bader: Welcome to USAID's Global Innovation Week. I am excited by the events that are going to be today and tomorrow and by your attendance as we move innovation forward within the development enterprise.

[00:00:30] I am pleased to, and I find it a profound honor, to introduce the 18th administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, Ambassador Mark Green.

Mark has lived a life dedicated to public service. He has been a congressman from the great State of Wisconsin, a US ambassador to Tanzania and president of the International Republican Institute.

[00:01:00] In each role, Administrator Green has worked hard to spread the American spirit of helping those in need and, most importantly, to focus on helping people build the capacity to chart the course of their own future and, in doing so, Mark has been and continues to be a consummate steward of the public trust invested in him by the American people.

Therefore, with great pleasure, I ask you to join me in welcoming USAID Administrator, Ambassador Mark Green.

Mark Green: Thank you, Harry, for that kind introduction, and good morning, everyone.

[00:01:30] I am honored to kick off Global Innovation Week. On behalf of the United States Agency for International Development, welcome.

We welcome you. We welcome your ideas. In fact, over the next couple of days, I hope that you're going to challenge us, challenge our assumptions, challenge the way that we go about our work, so let me give you a little bit of background the way I look at development.

[00:02:00] In 1988, my wife, Sue, and I taught high school, secondary school, in a little village in Western Kenya. Now, in that entire village, there was but one telephone, and the telephone was attached to a wooden box in the school office and it had a crank on it and, if you wanted to make a long distance call, you had to turn the crank, you'd pick up the receiver and you'd say something like, "Operator, give me 662 Kisumu," and you'd put it down and you'd go sit outside under the mango tree and, eventually, the phone would ring, and you'd pick it up, and the operator would say, "Your call has gone through."

[00:02:30] Just a dozen years later, I visited that same village. I was walking along the mud path and I ran across a young boy, and I said, "Do you know [Niva,00:02:50], Niva [Amutavi 00:02:52], one of my former students?" He said, "Yes," and I said, "Can you go and get him for me?" and, of course, he pulled out his mobile phone and he called him.

[00:03:00] Five or six years later, I was ambassador in East Africa, and my African staff were

using their mobile phones to conduct business, to pay their bills, to make calls everywhere in the world.

[00:03:30] That's the lens through which I see innovation and the importance of innovation. Innovation is making the impossible possible, the unsolvable solvable and, of course, nowhere is this more true than in the area of international development where technology and new thinking are enabling us to reinvent how we go about fulfilling our mission.

In the area of global health, for example, on the islands of Zanzibar, the islands that I used to serve at, test results from deadly diseases are sent in from remote locations by text message.

[00:04:00] In Senegal, as the sun goes down, thousands and thousands of young mothers receive automated text messages asking them whether they and their children are sleeping under mosquito nets.

[00:04:30] Not just global health. In Ethiopia, if you go around the countryside, you'll see electronic billboards all over. Those billboards give you the latest price for coffee in the capital. This information empowers small farmers when they go to negotiate over the price for their coffee with the middleman who might, otherwise, might be able to, shall we say, abuse the fact that they live remotely from Addis Ababa.

[00:05:00] In West Africa, we're supporting a tropical weather forecasting company called Ignitia that sends daily and seasonal forecasts via text message. It's forecasting model benefits 320,000 users across West Africa, increasing their awareness of rain and drought cycles during the growing seasons.

In Jordan, in the area of democracy and governance, thanks to an American NGO, there's a simple mobile phone application called Baldytak, which is "your municipality" in Arabic, and Baldytak enables citizen groups to get feedback from citizens real-time on local government performance, better connecting everyday Jordanians with their elected officials.

[00:05:30] Now, I think we should have something like that back here. Another story.

In other words, thanks to the creativity, the ingenuity, the ideas of you and your partners, we're able to lift more lives, strengthen more communities and even make dreams come true and, at USAID, we are truly grateful for your partnership.

[00:06:00] However, let me see how shall I put this? As you know, we are ever mindful of our responsibility to the American taxpayers, and so, a little later on today, you're going to get a glorious, tasty, nutritious boxed lunch. As modest as that meal may be, it is still true that there is no such thing as a free lunch, and so, before I step away, I want to call on all of you to help us out with a critical need in the world today.

[00:06:30]

In short, I want to give a preview for you of a new Grand Challenge that we're going to launch early next year. We want to call on you, your skills, your creativity, your

little gray cells to help us better address the world's unprecedented humanitarian crisis, so let me set the stage for you.

[00:07:00] Today, we face the largest displacement of people since World War II. There are more than 66 million people displaced in the world today, asylum seekers, internally displaced and refugees. That's like the entire United Kingdom suddenly going homeless and having no place to go.

[00:07:30] Over 20 million people in Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen face, quite literally, life-threatening hunger. I saw some of this firsthand last month when I visited South Sudan. There are nearly 2 million internally displaced people in South Sudan and another 2 million South Sudanese refugees living in neighboring countries. Half the country's population now requires life-saving food assistance.

[00:08:00] I went to a camp in the region of Wau where thousands of people arrive daily, seeking safety, shelter, food. It's not a camp. It's a city, and it's a city growing awfully fast.

[00:08:30] When a person arrives at Wau, humanitarian workers do their very best to see that he or she is immediately registered, given modest food, water and medical attention. They're assigned housing if they're lucky, a space to camp if they're not so lucky. They receive basic provisions, blankets, tarps, pots, pans.

Now, Wau is actually one of the better places to be an internally displaced person. In more informal camps, people are less fortunate. They often have no regular access to food, clean water, shelter, and they have to make do with what they're able to bring along.

Now, as an American, I am proud to say that the US is literally at the forefront globally of responding to this humanitarian crisis.

[00:09:00] In fact, just last week at the United Nations General Assembly, we announced over \$1 billion in pledges in humanitarian assistance, but as important as that pledge was, at least I think it was, with displacement and conflict growing with each passing day, there are not enough resources to do everything that we should do, that we might want to do, and so that really means that we have to find ways to be better than before, more efficient than before, more effective than before.

[00:09:30]

That's where you would have to come in. We need your help, your ideas, your innovative thinking. We need you to help us help them, and so there are some questions I'm going to toss your way.

[00:10:00] For example, how can we better deliver medicine that needs to be refrigerated in tropical areas? How do we track and identify aid beneficiaries who have lost all material forms of identification? How do we better track humanitarian assistance dollars and measure with precision our impact?

How do we educate children who were born and raised in camps, children who

[00:10:30] suddenly arrived at the front gate in the middle of the school year, in the middle of the school term, oftentimes with language barriers. In the camp, they speak seven, eight, nine different languages.

How do we not only tend to immediate needs, but foster resilience in people and communities so they can withstand future crisis or, better yet, lead normal lives when, God willing, those camp gates come down?

[00:11:00] Those are not easy questions to answer. If they were, I wouldn't be standing here before you this morning, so, in early 2018, USAID will launch a new Humanitarian Assistance Grand Challenge. It will be our 10th Grand Challenge.

[00:11:30] At the core of each Grand Challenge is our belief that, when government works with the private sector and with innovative and entrepreneurial leaders, there's no limit to what it is that we can do. We can come up with better ideas, better solutions, better methods, and I hope our Humanitarian Assistance Grand Challenge will help us better tackle some of the daunting challenges that we see right in front of us.

[00:12:00] As I finish up, I want to thank everyone who helped to make this meeting happen. As I've said since I first arrived at USAID just weeks ago, I believe the purpose of foreign assistance is to end the need for its existence. Every one of our development programs should look forward to the day when it can end, and every investment we make, every innovation we apply must move a country closer to that day when it can be truly self-reliant because I believe that's instinctive in all human beings.

[00:12:30] All human beings want to take care of themselves and their families. All human beings want to walk forward towards the dawn.

USAID will build on our engagement with entrepreneurs, innovators, the private sector, faith-based organizations, global partners, even recipient governments to generate ideas and solutions.

[00:13:00] Tonight, this event will bring together 20 of our top CEOs of USAID's implementing partners to share their personal pledges to innovation, and, in advance, I want to thank them for their vision, partnership, their support and their strong commitment to making the world a better place.

I hope this week and our Humanitarian Grand Challenge will inspire ideas. I hope it will challenge you. I hope it'll get the wheels turning.

There is so much that needs to be done, and there is no way that we can get there, any of us, without all of you.

[00:13:30] Thank you for being here. Thanks for what you've done. More importantly, thanks for what you are going to do. Thank you.

