

Education and Advocacy Report Progress Since the 50th Annual Conference

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June, 2015**

At the AIARD 50th Anniversary meeting, association members discussed the importance of working in collaboration with other organizations on education and advocacy related to global food security issues, especially issues related to long-term investments such as research, extension and human and institutional capacity building.

AIARD's Capitol Hill Forum was once the only major annual policy briefing on international agriculture and rural development, but the landscape has become very crowded – especially since the global food crisis and subsequent concerted advocacy by AIARD and many other groups led to Feed the Future and other important global agricultural development investments. The most recent Capitol Hill Forums struggled to achieve robust attendance, especially by Capitol Hill staff, the intended audience.

Several opportunities for collaboration on advocacy emerged in 2014-15:

The Global Food Security Act

Over the past year, AIARD has been an active advocate for the passage of the Global Food Security Act. To date the bill has not passed both houses of Congress, but it is once again being considered. AIARD has supported the bill in collaboration with Interaction, APLU, and many other groups, as the current version has been developed and advanced.

Capitol Hill Reception

AIARD, APLU, the Chicago Council, and Kansas State University collaborated on a very successful Capitol Hill reception, showcasing programs being conducted by the the Feed the Future Innovation Labs. The reception was held on September 17, 2014 in the Dirksen Senate Office Building. It featured displays about the goals, activities, and accomplishments of all of the labs, which now involve over 60 universities, according to Rob Bertram, USAID Chief Scientist. Several AIARD members were in attendance to "carry the flag" and other attendees included a good representation of House and Senate staff, universities, agency personnel, NGOs, consultants, and foundations. Participants actively engaged with representatives from the Innovation Labs, who shared information about their programs.

AIARD will continue to collaborate with APLU and other partners as opportunities emerge in the future to achieve better visibility on Capitol Hill for the importance of continuous investment in research, human capital development, and other long-term investments in international agriculture and rural development.

PUSH Letter and UN Event

AIARD university members collaborated on securing sign-ons for the Presidents United to Solve Hunger (PUSH) Initiative. In total, we were successful in securing signatures of over 60 heads of US and global higher education institutions in a very short time period. AIARD was happy to assist Auburn University, which led this initiative, and to work in partnership with the Alliance to End Hunger, APLU, FAO, and others on this important project.

University leaders and students gathered in New York, in the United Nations' historic ECOSOC Chamber, on Tuesday, December 9, for a ceremonial signing of the Presidents' Commitment to Food and Nutrition Security document. The event included a Hunger Forum, where international leaders from all sectors discussed the critical role of universities in solving hunger. The student energy was especially keen. "The intellectual expertise of institutions of higher education is greatly needed to solve the problem of food insecurity," said Amina Mohammed, special advisor to the UN Secretary General. "This partnership is critical."

This event marked the first time universities around the world shared a collective focus on ending food insecurity. It was also the first time students and university leaders were united in the effort with international organizations, NGOs and student groups. Members of the consortium will gather again in on June 17, 2015 to discuss progress and next steps and AIARD will be actively involved.

This event showed that by working together, in partnership with many others, we can make more rapid progress in hunger alleviation.

Advocacy for the World Bank Contribution to the CGIAR

In 2009, in L'Aquila, Italy, world leaders agreed to pursue a Food Security Initiative that would prevent a reoccurrence of the crises engendered by the soaring food prices of 2007-2008 and better prepare for a food-secure future. The World Bank took immediate and instrumental leadership and has continued its support of this area of work.

This past summer, however, the Bank released a report as part of a major reorganization indicating that it would be gradually phasing out the \$50 mil. in support of the CGIAR that had been provided for years through its Grants Fund. This phase out would take place over a three year period. This announcement came on the heels of a major and difficult reorganization of the CGIAR that had been initiated by the Bank.

AIARD members and a group of distinguished leaders met with the U.S. Executive Director's office staff, as well the Dean of all country Executive Directors at the Bank in June of last year. While Bank staff noted that alternative sources of funding would be investigated, no viable solution has been found to date.

AIARD is working with APLU, the Alliance to End Hunger, and other groups, to advocate broadly for the continuing World Bank contribution of \$50 million in sustainable funding for the CGIAR. With the many challenges facing global agriculture, this important source of funding simply cannot be lost.