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April 29, 2008

Letter to the editor in response to “The new face of hunger” in the Economist, April 19, 2008

Sir – “The new face of hunger” (April 19) asks why farmers in the developing world are not responding to the world food crisis by increasing supply. One of the most significant reasons for this phenomenon was not mentioned—entrenched, systemic gender discrimination. Women farm the majority of food in the developing world (in Sub-Saharan Africa, they produce around 80% of the food) yet are stymied at every turn. Laws and traditions often prohibit them from owning land; receiving agricultural extension services; accessing credit; and obtaining appropriate technology. If women’s access to agricultural inputs and supports was on par with men, there is little doubt that agricultural output would increase dramatically.

Jill Lester
President & CEO
The Hunger Project