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FORMER WORLD VISION PRESIDENT: KIDS – NOT CLIMATE – WORLD'S BIGGEST CRISIS

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By Kindsi Lora



Impacting the world as global citizens comes down to three things: "Don't forget the girls, don't forget the kids, and never give up hope," said Dean Hirsch, former president of World Vision International.

Addressing an audience of 18 Northwest University students and faculty Thursday afternoon, Hirsch shared personal stories and answered questions about World Vision's involvement in global affairs. Every story showed how the welfare of people is the most prominent global issue.

Hirsch recalled gently correcting United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon shortly after he succeeded Kofi Annan seven years ago. Hirsch said he told Ki-moon that he had managed to misdiagnose the biggest problem on the planet.

"You made your speech to the UN a couple days ago and you are wrong," Hirsch told the South Korean during an office meeting. "You said climate change is the biggest global issue we have. It isn't. The biggest global issue we have are the people in the world.

"The systemic root problem [is] poverty," Hirsch said to Ki-moon. "If you're going to just have climate change and drive more people into poverty, you are wrong."

Hirsch served as international president of World Vision from 1996 to 2010. He has been to 159 countries – including seven trips to North Korea. The self-described "follower of Christ" has spent time in Uganda during an Ebola outbreak and ministered to homeless teens in Mongolia.

In Outer Mongolia, Hirsch removed manhole covers to go down into the heating pipes to talk to children who had run away from abusive homes.

When Hirsch spoke with these kids, they would say "Look, we want to go to school," Hirsch recounted. "We don't want our parents to fight. We don't want them drinking. We want a job. We want to get married. We want to have kids."

World Vision did what it could to get kids back with their families or find alternatives. "Then we had a cocktail reception for all the embassies," Hirsch said. "Not one diplomat, including the UN ambassador, not one of them had ever gone under the streets to talk to these kids.

"Now something is wrong with humanity when we let kids sleep under the street and we won't go and talk to them and hear their stories. Everyone's got a story," Hirsch said. "And we have a responsibility as global citizens... to make a difference."

Hirsch concluded by encouraging all in attendance to "go hard after God and be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ."

