

(Translation)

**Hungary Red Cross Press Office**

**Press Statement**

*For immediate release*

**Unique seed program launched to combat rural poverty**

Jászkiser, March 19, 2011. The Hungarian Red Cross is distributing 8000 seed packets in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok counties in March. The 16 million Ft program is being financed by the American House Foundation.

For the first time the Hungarian Red Cross is starting a large scale seed program in the country's two poorest regions with the cooperation of the American House Foundation. The objective of the program which begins in March is to encourage poor families living in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok counties to start growing their own vegetables.

In the background of the initiative is the 2010 „opportunity equalizing” program within whose framework the local government of Jászkisér provided seed to 100 families.

Based on the success of last year's Jászkisér seed program the Hungarian Red Cross in cooperation with the American House Foundation and the Americans for Hungarians Foundation are realizing a similar program with the participation of 8000 families.

During the period of the program the participants can grow onions, greenbeans, beans, corn, cucumber, squash, radishes, parsley, carrots, and lettuce in their gardens from March to September.

Hungarian Red Cross employees and volunteers are distributing the seed to poor families in a total of 91 towns and villages. All program participants must agree to cultivate a 40 sqm garden, obtain the implements necessary to plant and maintain the gardens, and grow the vegetables for their own families.

The Red Cross is paying particular attention to those families that do not possess the necessary experience but are eager to participate in the program. These families are being helped by agricultural volunteers and Hungarian Red Cross

representatives to successfully complete the program in the interest of providing a good example to the next generation.

Richard Field, the chairman of the American House Foundation believes self-reliance and improvement of garden culture strengthens rural families. Speaking from the experience of the United States, the businessman, who resides in Hungary, believes that the eradication of poverty and resolution of poverty related issues is not exclusively the responsibility of the State. NGOs and donors committed to helping the poor play an important role.

He believes the newly launched kitchen garden program will induce many families living in the countryside to resume the practice of keeping their own gardens which helps ameliorate poverty. For this reason he decided to help those living in Hungary improve their lot via a long term program that is American financed.

This is not the first time the American House Foundation has enlisted the help of the Hungarian Red Cross. The humanitarian organization has the largest country-wide network and can reach every county and nearly every settlement. Györgyi Polacsek, the social affairs director for the Hungarian Red Cross, believes this model to be the first step in a long term program.

According to the social affairs director of the humanitarian organization that turns 130 this year „The Hungarian Red Cross pays particularly close attention to programs providing long term solutions to the problems of the poor. The kitchen garden program is the kind of initiative other investors can join as well as local governments to develop together with the Hungarian Red Cross a comprehensive program for eradicating rural poverty.” Györgyi Polacsek mentioned that another American organization, Americans for Hungarians Foundation, had joined the program, thereby making it possible for the best 2000 gardening families to each receive 10 peeps next spring.

The American House Foundation presently provides food to nine Budapest schools and 500 families living in Boros-Abaúj-Zemplén and Jász-Nagykunszolnok counties and opened a men's homeless shelter in Csepel last December.

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