

Leveraging Private Sector Tools and Capabilities to Help Eliminate Global Food and Nutrition Insecurity

Authors: J.B. Cordaro, Global Food and Nutrition Business Advisor, Consultant to Mars, Inc. and Adam Adams, Vice President, Marketing, Health and Nutrition, Mars USA

PROBLEM

Hunger and malnutrition, which impacts over 2 billion women, men, and children, represent the world's most serious global health problem, killing more people annually than HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined. The health consequences of hunger and malnutrition are manifest in widespread infections in people who are highly susceptible to debilitating diseases and premature deaths, trapping future generations in cycles of social and economic despair. The high prevalence of stunting, wasting and underweight children alongside maternal nutritional deficiencies and premature death underscore the devastation of these vicious cycles.

SOLUTIONS

Available, affordable, acceptable and cost-effective innovative solutions exist that can be deployed now. Better nourishment, health and well being of vulnerable populations caught in these vicious cycles can be mitigated by nutrition interventions, such as: (1) fortified food staples and specially formulated food products; (2) initiatives that leverage the agriculture supply chain from increased production to reduced food loss to enhance the delivery of more, better quality, nutritious foods; and (3) interventions that empower women with leadership roles for sustain nutritional and health values.

Individually and/or collectively these initiatives can have significant human and economic positive impacts on helping to eliminate food insecurity and its consequences. With these interventions a more virtuous cycle will evolve that: (1) reduces physically debilitating disease conditions: (2) reduces premature deaths: (3) increases cognitive abilities: (4) improves learning capabilities; (5) enhances the economic, health and welfare of communities; and (6) as a result an overall healthier society will be better prepared for physical activity, education, training, and job opportunities and a better nourished society will be able to accumulate and use discretionary income to stimulate consumer demand to expand national GNPs.

Unique Private Sector Roles

With its technical knowledge and expertise a committed private sector, working with the public sector and other stakeholders, can activate unique opportunities to bundle scientific, technical and managerial capabilities and expertise to leverage appropriate agriculture and nutrition initiatives to address global food and nutrition security. The private sector can deploy a wide range of tools and capabilities to activate solutions for vulnerable populations via market-based social business enterprises.

The importance of the private sector in helping to eliminate hunger and malnutrition continues to be emphasized by bilateral development agencies, international organizations, and recent global meetings including Camp David G-8; Los Cabos, Mexico G-20; Rio + 20 and supported by scores of speeches, reports and papers. NGOs, CSOs, international organizations and other stakeholders are being encouraged to: (1) identify and explore appropriate opportunities to cooperate with business; (2) seek common ground to build trust for global good; and (3) define and facilitate partnerships and alliances to increase food production and deliver nutritious foods to needy people.

Over the last decade the role of business evolved from an emphasis on charity and philanthropy to cause related marketing which operated within their existing core business strategy, profits and growth model. Today's reality is

that business has the expertise and resources to operate in space where other stakeholders cannot and as a result a new paradigm is unfolding. Some businesses are accepting a longer time horizon; i.e., a sustainable market-based approach to pursue social value ventures that address current nutritional needs for future growth opportunities. Professor Muhammad Yunus recognizes, social business must still seek growth and profits to be sustainable but with different time horizons.

Building a Social Business Model

The authors will examine the value proposition developed from their understanding of the market dynamics and describe their journey that was guided by a due diligence Decision-Mapping Process with a path of discovery. The journey has yielded lessons learned and best practices: (1) defined valuable insights as to how to enhance food security, improve nutrition and health, and create positive social and economic impacts; (2) identified and tested the critical scientific, technical managerial and information tools and capabilities of this model; (3) pinpointed the tools and capabilities that can be used to launch platforms for nutrition solutions to reach vulnerable populations on a sustainable basis; (4) assembled the key collateral components required to overcome impediments and obstacles to increase the likelihood of success for a market-based social business; and (5) identified potential partners among the key stakeholders and described the valuable roles that this robust alliance of partnerships can play.

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

Even if we are uncertain of the exact number of food insecure people in the world we should all agree on these concluding points:

- That the number is outrageously and unacceptably high
- That the hunger and malnutrition that impacts too many women, men, and children must be eliminated
- Affordable, acceptable and cost-effective innovative solutions already exist that can be deployed and have significant human and economic impacts on vulnerable populations TODAY!
- That all governments, international organizations, NGOs, CSOs, the private sector and other stakeholders must use their capabilities and expertise to build partnerships that eliminate food insecurity as soon as possible.
- With its knowledge and expertise, a committed private sector, working with the public sector and other stakeholders, can activate unique opportunities through purpose driven partnerships to create Social Business ventures to address global food and nutrition security on a sustainable basis.
- Through these successful partnerships, together we can reduce and hopefully one day eliminate hunger and malnutrition in sustainable and resilient ways.