

SUMMARY OF THE FSN FORUM DISCUSSION No. 30
**LOOKING AT THINGS DIFFERENTLY WHILE ADDRESSING FOOD SECURITY
AND NUTRITION ISSUES**
FROM 2 FEBRUARY TO 24 MARCH 2009

Proceedings available at
http://km.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/PROCEEDINGS_LookingThingsDifferently.doc

I. ISSUES RAISED

In the context of the present global financial crisis and recession, Andrew MacMillan invited participants to share insights and experiences on fresh perspectives and approaches in addressing food security and nutrition (FSN). In particular, he suggested members to identify win-win opportunities for investing in the fight against hunger and malnutrition, e.g. for investment in agricultural expansion or the creation of social protection programmes.

He also invited members to comment on the draft proposal for a Global Convention on the Eradication of Hunger and Severe Malnutrition (at http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=708).

Other issues which emerged during the discussion: GDP remains the main measure of economic growth, but it is an inadequate measure in term of FSN, in particular for reflecting natural resource management, as well as income distribution. GDP measures only the final product, and does not look at the resources (renewable or non-renewable) that are used to produce that output. GDP also tends to distract attention from the critical issue of income distribution that is closely correlated with the ability to access adequate food.

II. SUGGESTED PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES IN ADDRESSING FSN

- **Enhancing multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary approaches by:**
 - **Crossing disciplinary boundaries:** one tends to be confined within one's discipline and its norms and thereby be less open to alternatives and less creative in seeking solutions. This constitutes an obstacle to cross-disciplinary engagement, and genuine engagement with the poor and hungry (J. Opio-Odongo).
 - **Composing effective multi-sectoral teams composing of different profiles/disciplines/levels:** combine four dominant profiles, concretely (1) integrators, those who are better at differentiating the world and integrating its elements in a creative way; (2) **problem identifiers**, those who are better at defining the nature of the problem; (3) **problem solvers**, those who are better at solving the problem once the problem has been clearly defined by others and (4) **technicians**, who are better at the precise application of a menu of solutions to the predetermined problem (J. Opio-Odongo). A combination of people from different disciplines or a mixture of various levels can help give different insights into the problem and how to solve it (E. F. Ismail, J. Balie). The team should have **strong leadership and vision:** the integrators have the comparative strength of providing strong leadership that enables the other categories to perform effectively in multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary approaches (J. Opio-Odongo).
 - **Building bridges and partnerships** not only among to individuals (team/programme level), but also among institutions (e.g. among Ministries dealing with different aspects of FSN) (A. MacMillan)

- **Addressing food security unseparately from sustainable natural resource management.** The economic system, based on growth and measured purely with GDP / GNP, is not designed to promote food security or sustainable resource management. Therefore, it's advisable to (C. Dufour) :
 - **working with economists** on the development and use of models and indicators of economic 'progress' that take into account environmental aspect, against which governments, international organizations and private firms are held accountable;
 - joining forces with the **environment lobby**.
 - applying a "**revitalized twin track approach**" which includes improved natural resource management as a means of improving production and productivity (proposed by Marc Cohen et al, in the IFPRI/FAO paper " Impact of climate change on nutrition" (see the References section)
 - Building alliances among the professionals/activists of different disciplines including the political activists, in order to improve political involvement and commitment to ending hunger (P. C. Wasti)
- **Create opportunities for the poor/communities to find solutions for themselves by themselves, by:**
 - **Adopt a cellular approach while dealing with world hunger:** instead of focusing on what can be done at the global level, more attention should be given to the smaller units (nation-states, states, provinces, cities, and communities...). Applying the current approaches at the local level can, over the long run, improve local capacity to provide for the poor (G. Kent). Community-based remedies can be more effective, as the hungry has more motivation than the powerful to solve hunger.
 - Communities and individuals need to look to themselves for advancing. Safety nets and other programmes must avoid creating dependency but are critical to those persons and communities moving forward to be able to keep moving forward (K. Gallagher)
 - Combine 'early warning systems' with village level whistle blowers. It is important for development work to catch the changes in rural areas as soon as possible to intervene positively or negatively on them. If the communities are made aware of them and of their consequences they can search for their own solutions (J. du Guerny).
 - Help ensure people's livelihoods, by: (1) strengthening traditional culture/ beliefs, which helps communal harmony, community development and natural resources management; (2) carefully consider the impacts of a new livelihood opportunity on traditional occupations and existing supply chain and (3) use DFID nine square Mandal concept of livelihood development (<http://www.poverty-wellbeing.net/media/sla/img/mod2-2-full.png>) (G. Swamy)
 - Make the best of the great capital of potential talent in rural areas, which has been largely untapped, by:
 - Adapting Farmer Field Schools, Life Schools, IPM approaches and the Junior Field and Farmer Schools to teach the children to make the most of their context, blending the environment/farming systems with local and scientific knowledge (J. du Guerny).

- Using the diversity of talent, both in the technical assistance and in the receiving communities. This means not just participation, but integrating ages, gender, social groups...leading eventually to empowerment (J. du Guerny).
- **Mobilise non-traditional partners in development work** (e.g. work with grand-mothers on child nutrition) (J. Appleton, V. Sethi, J. du Guerny). A system approach could be used to include key informants (e.g. keeping a panel, similar to what is done for some opinion polls) (J du Guerny).
- **Make use of the crisis to introduce changes:** once it is accepted that change must come, changes are easier to introduce (J. Verceuil)
- Tackle FSN with a human right/property right/ right to food perspective (J. Verceuil)
- **Things that can be done differently to improve FSN policy assistance (J. Balie):**
 - **Better shape the process of policy assistance by aligning the policy assistance process with the national policy context.** Policy assistance work should start before the actual provision of assistance, to help fully understand and capture the policy and institutional context. Such a function would focus on observing and assessing policy making at the national level including the identification of key players and institutions involved in food security, the assessment of the policy and institutional debate, and the dynamics among institutions in relation to a specific policy issue. Resources should be invested prior to intervention to identify and take into account these facts and factors that could otherwise be ignored and become potential blocking elements in the policy process.
 - **Improve food security analysis by adding governance and institutional dimensions to analytical frameworks for food security**, in particular the twin-track framework. This can help better describe the reality of how policy decisions affecting food security are made, enforced, and monitored.
 - **Better adapt the profiles of those who are providing assistance by** building well composed multidisciplinary team that cover a wide spectrum of soft, technical and analytical skills.
- **Commercializing the institutions mandated to combat hunger:** neither FAO nor others can individually or collectively supply all the resources needed for scaling up agricultural services in developing countries in the absence of strong parastatal institutions having the vision and capable of carrying out the mission to achieve objectives. If FAO is to be disintegrated into profit seeking agencies/companies or corporations, can this push global agricultural production/productivity? (Simply by organizing contracts or agreements with countries/ institutions/ farmers on agreed upon profit-loss basis. This is to eliminate or minimize political influences and interventions against farmers' interests (E. F. Ismail)
- Put more weight on the Human Development Index (HDI) and other indicators, instead of GDP, while measuring growth. HDI helps to focus attention on the on the “real” state of development of a country. A revised index has been proposed, which includes a food security and nutrition indicator (A. MacMillan, A. A. Gallegos)
- Concerning the Global Convention on the Eradication of Hunger and Severe Malnutrition (proposed by A. MacMillan), it’s useful to make a critical overview of why other similar

attempts have consistently failed in the past. It will help find elements which must be embraced in this new program to ensure that it achieves its objectives (E. Mutandwa)

III. POTENTIAL WIN-WIN OPPORTUNITIES AND CASES OF INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

- Potential win-win opportunities for investing in reducing hunger and malnutrition
 - **Opportunities for American Samoa:** People’s need for food can be translated into expanded local demand for small-scale producers and, in turn, generate expanded employment opportunities. Concretely, there is potential to provide livelihoods/employment for local people by **reducing food imports, promoting food production and processing for local markets**. It might also be possible to increase food exports, such as the export of processed foods to Samoans living outside American Samoa.
This supply track could be strengthened by **augmenting the demand track**: Publicly supported programs for the poor, schools, hospitals, and prisons could all arrange contracts to purchase more of their provisions from local food production and processing businesses. People who receive benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamps) or the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (the WIC program) could be encouraged or required to use more locally produced foods (G. Kent)
 - Expansion of “**homegrown school-based feeding programmes**”: it could be a way of both improving child nutrition (and school attendance and educational performance), and of stimulating expanded local production of food by small-scale farmers who would benefit in a new source of reliable demand for their products. For this, the idea needs to be translated into an institutional reality: important decisions have to be taken on the respective roles and responsibilities of Ministries of Education, Health and Agriculture; new budget lines have to be put in place; arrangements for decentralized local procurement of appropriate foods defined, and a dependable monitoring system put in place (A. MacMillan)
- **Cases of innovative approaches:**
 - The ***Mwanamujimu (the healthy child) nutrition clinic in Makerere University, Uganda*** (J. Opio-Odongo) : The clinic provides an example of a successful multi-disciplinary team that developed and successfully applied effective strategies and methods of dealing with child malnutrition in the 1960s. In the 1980s, the clinic also provided leadership in initiating the development of the country’s nutrition policy. It continues to offer good practices that have attracted global interest. Strong visionary leadership and effective team work accounted largely for its successes.
(See http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-26285963_ITM)
 - **Working with grand-mothers for addressing child malnutrition** (V. Sethi): in rural Agra district Uttar Pradesh, India, grandmothers (mothers-in-law) were identified as key positive influencer of positive behaviours in positive deviant families. Such grandmothers were collectivized, trained and mentored to take collective responsibility to improve infant health in their villages. It was a 4 year long trial and is still on. A summary of this work is available at http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=700&nocache=1.

IV. PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Use every opportunity to promote the fundamental idea that it is unjust – and unnecessary – that any human should be hungry or seriously malnourished.
- Raise public confidence that hunger and severe malnutrition really can be eradicated and, in doing so, there will be an end to much premature death and suffering, and huge benefits for all of mankind.
- Share knowledge of successful experiences, nationwide and local, and try to understand the reasons for success.
- Engage with others to create a growing constituency of public support for much larger scale action by governments towards eradication of hunger and malnutrition, and hold governments and other players accountable for results.
- Continue building bridges across our different areas of specialization and between institutions, recognizing that when we combine forces and adopt more integrated approaches, we are likely to be more effective.
- Deliberately refrain from spending a lot of energy on combating others who are offering solutions with which we may not agree, and, instead, look for the common ground and engage in dialogue with the aim of arriving at mutually acceptable strategies.
- Spend less time talking about the problems and engage with others in practical action – even in our own communities, whether we live in developing or developed countries (few of which are without hungry and malnourished people). This can include strengthening local arrangements to ensure that everyone in the community is able to eat healthily, raising concerns about others, and advocating stronger political action.

V. REFERENCES

- IFPRI's work on food security and climate change (C. Dufour)
<http://www.ifpri.org/themes/climatechange/climatechange.asp>
- Impact of climate change and bioenergy on nutrition
<http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/cp/cohen2008climate/cohenetal2008climate.pdf>
- ANTI-HUNGER PROGRAMME, A twin-track approach to hunger reduction: priorities for national and international action
http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=679&nocache=1
- Taking into account food and nutrition dimension in the measurement and assessment of human development (A. Afonso)
http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=711
- Draft proposal for a Global Convention on the Eradication of Hunger and Severe Malnutrition (A. MacMillan)
http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=708
- Food And Nutrition Security In The United States-Affiliated Pacific Islands (G. Kent)
http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=729&nocache=1
- Draft essay on community-based nutrition security (G. Kent)
<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~kent/eh0090COMMUNITY.doc>

- Composite Indices of Human Well-Being: Past, Present, and Future" (A. Zezza)
http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=300
- The State of Food Insecurity 2004, p. 32
<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/007/y5650e/y5650e00.pdf>