

THEME 2

NUTRITION



NUTRITION EDUCATION – ESSENTIAL BUT OFTEN NEGLECTED

Topic raiser: Jane Sherman, Education Consultant.

Facilitator: Ellen Muehlhoff, Senior Officer, FAO Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division.

Issue: although essential to the public, nutrition education receives little coverage in publications, research and projects.

Discussion content

Participants analysed the causes of the “neglect” in nutrition education. They identified several gaps and challenges in practice, policies, programmes and research. Many good practices and strategies for raising the profile of nutrition education were shared. The discussion pooled nine reference papers and six good practices.

The discussion inputs were developed into the Forum brief “Nutrition education is essential to the public”.

ISSUES RAISED

How to raise the nutrition education profile

- Integrate nutrition objectives into agricultural and food policies and programmes
- Use the FSN Forum for networking and sharing of resources, research results, educational tools, etc.
- Use the Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) for lobbying about the importance of nutrition education
- Apply an interdisciplinary approach and strengthen national coordination
- Include nutrition education in all levels of education, from primary to university
- Research and prepare a report on the state of the art in nutrition education

What makes nutrition education effective?

As well as providing information, effective nutrition education programmes and activities should:

- incorporate methods for behaviour change
- communicate in ways that motivate
- emphasize improvement rather than perfection
- speak to people in a language they understand
- create supportive nutrition-friendly environments
- include participation of individuals and the community
- use different settings to reach people at different stages of life
- advocate nutrition-friendly public policies
- strengthen local knowledge and emphasize the value of local food and eating patterns

14 contributions from 11 countries. Key contributors include:

- Teresa Calderon, Independent Nutrition Consultant, Bolivia
- Prema Ramachandran, Director, Nutrition Foundation of India
- Judy McLean, Adjunct Professor of Nutrition, University of British Columbia, Canada

Discussion No. 4, from 19 November to 7 December 2007



STAPLE FOODS AS A FUNDAMENTAL SOLUTION TO MALNUTRITION

Topic raiser: Adetunji Olajide Falana, Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria.

Issue: what could be the solution to over-reliance on short- to medium-term strategies of supplementation and fortification? What could be done to promote staple foods?

Discussion content

With eight contributions from five countries, participants identified the main causes of the gaps in addressing malnutrition, in particular the inadequate utilization of staple foods. Several suggestions were made on how to promote staple foods and help to solve malnutrition.

ISSUES RAISED

Reasons why some sources of nutrients/staple foods have remained underutilized in Africa

- Gradual yet profound changes in dietary patterns, partly driven by the modernization process and by the advertising media
- Changing food preferences, resulting from factors other than exotic tastes
 - competition of staple crops with alternative crops that meet producers' food and income needs
 - changing cooking habits prompted by the scarcity of fuelwood
 - a weakening intergenerational transfer of knowledge, skills and values related to production, processing, storage and cooking of staples
- Perennial neglect of staple crops by the crop development programmes of research establishments
- Local stigma and taboos that discourage the consumption of some nutritious alternatives such as insects
- National food and nutrition policies that are not adequately anchored to knowledge of local food preferences, cooking habits, weaning practices and traditional methods of supplementation
- Decline in staple food production caused by poor climatic conditions, urbanization, rural/urban migration, HIV/AIDS impact on agriculture

Suggestions for solving malnutrition and promoting staple foods

- Developing intervention strategies based on a review of serious energy deficiencies in particular areas, the patterns of supply of staple foods and the concurrent factors that shape the consumption patterns/habits
- Participatory decision and implementation processes with the participation of all stakeholders, particularly of the concerned community
- Using wild plants for food by helping communities to identify and adapt wild species for human consumption through research and processing
- Using strategies for modifying local food systems, such as home gardens to increase food production
- Dietary diversification by promoting consumption of local underutilized food
- Promoting the production of staple foods by
 - creating markets in rural areas
 - building infrastructures to help farmers produce more
 - subsidizing the prices of fertilizers
 - using compost manure
 - making loans available to farmers
 - improving and increasing yields through biofortification
 - adopting favourable policies



MATERIAL ON COMPLEMENTARY FOOD RECIPES AND COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS

Topic raiser: Silke Pietzsch, Action Against Hunger, United States of America.

Purpose: collect new and alternative cooking recipes and material for cooking demonstrations particularly on vegetables and fruits in Africa.

Discussion content

With six contributions from four countries, participants shared several country-specific recipes, manuals and guidelines, as well as relevant information sources. The discussion pooled 11 references.

Discussion No. 24, from 3 to 24 September 2008





PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST: NUTRITION, A KEY TO INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING FOR POVERTY REDUCTION?

Topic raiser and facilitator: Charlotte Dufour, Independent Consultant in Food Security and Nutrition.

Issue: why is it so difficult to integrate nutrition in development policies and programmes and what needs to be done?

Discussion content

Participants shared insights and successful approaches, activities and tools on the integration of nutrition in agriculture and livelihoods programmes and multisectoral programming. As well as a comprehensive analysis of the issue and several recommendations, the discussion pooled nine cases and ten reference papers.

ISSUES RAISED

Major measures to enhance the profile of nutrition

- Enhancing commitment through “non-policy actions”
- Developing economic arguments for improving nutrition and reducing poverty
- Improving the use of information for advocacy

Keys to successful nutrition programmes

- Programmes should be participatory/community-based/community-driven
- Assessment of the complex causes of malnutrition and the context is needed, including structural vulnerabilities, understanding livelihoods strategies, coping strategies and their impact on the severity of food insecurity and malnutrition, etc.
- Assessment of local organizational needs and capacities and support for local organizations is fundamental
- Multisectoral interventions: access to balanced diets, knowledge and resources for good caring and feeding practices, safe environment, drinking-water, health care, etc.
- Integrate learning in project management (e.g. Triple A approach: Assessment, Analysis, Action)
- Involvement of women and youth
- Assistance to families in diversifying their options to access diverse foods and increase their income, e.g. through the introduction of new crops and food species in the local farming system
- Plan interventions adapted to the needs of the landless
- Adapt marketing strategies to ensure farmers’ interest and sustainability
- Integrate educational components and behaviour change (e.g. nutrition, health and hygiene, as well as literacy and numeric skills)
- Encouragement of public-private participation

What individuals working for nutrition/nutrition advocates should do

- Raise global awareness about the extent of nutritional problems worldwide and their cross-sectoral nature, thus enabling more people to work for nutrition in all sectors
- Support capacity building in public nutrition to enhance the ability of all actors to address undernutrition
- Demystify nutrition among other professionals to encourage them to work for nutrition
- Facilitate coordination and create bridges between sectors, and between community, provincial and national levels
- Carry out policy reviews and advise governments on policies that impact positively on nutrition making loans available to farmers
- improving and increasing yields through biofortification
- adopting favourable policies

44 contributions from 20 countries. Key contributors include:

- Urban Jonsson, The Owls Internal Consultancy Group, Sweden, former UNICEF Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa
- Judith Appleton, Food and Nutrition Specialist, United Kingdom
- Joseph Opio-Odongo, Director, Sustainable Development Services (SDS), Uganda
- Cristina Lopriore, Nutritionist, FAO, Italy



DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING FOOD SAFETY MECHANISMS

Topic raiser: Harun K.M. Yusuf and Lalita Bhattacharjee, Nutritionists, National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme, Bangladesh.

Purpose: collect country experiences in developing and implementing food safety mechanisms.

Discussion content

With 21 contributions from 12 countries, participants shared national experiences concerning:

- legislation on food hygiene and implementation of HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) systems
- implementation of monitoring and information-sharing mechanisms
- strengthening consumer awareness and consumer education
- management of street food vending.

National food safety mechanisms and regulations

Participants shared information on food safety legislation and mechanisms in nine countries: Armenia, Cameroon, Denmark, Ghana, India, Nepal, Nigeria, South Africa and the Syrian Arab Republic.

General suggestions

- Discussions on food safety mechanisms should consider ways to apply human rights to adequate food, since food safety is essential to ensuring adequate nutrition
- It is essential to have a well drawn up and comprehensive Food Safety Policy that evokes national commitment and ownership of those implementing the policy in the various sectors
- An effective way to improve food safety is to provide consumers with a system to recognize safe food items easily, such as the successful NAFDAC (National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control) registration number on packaged food items in Nigeria or the Smiley scheme in Denmark
- Strengthen/introduce personal and community hygienic practices through education, adult literacy missions and via interventions by NGOs and the media
- Accurate data on foodborne illnesses and consumer complaints are important indicators of food safety
- Good agriculture practices should be enforced – the issue of pesticide and drug residues in food requires a joint effort by both the agriculture and the food safety and quality sector



Discussion No. 39, from 30 June to 23 July 2009