

FOOD SECURITY: A WAY OF ACHIEVING MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS (MDGs)

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ABSTRACT

Food Security has always been an issue in many developing Countries and this has become a major global concern. In many countries, health problems related to dietary excess are an ever increasing threat, while, malnutrition and food borne diarrhea are become double burden.. This paper intends to evaluate Food Security as a key to achieving Millennium Developmental Goals. It also intends to create awareness of the need for food security in every household. This will make people to be well informed and enable them make wise decisions on how to be food secured. Food security means availability, affordability and utilization of food by the population. Food security is the condition in which everyone has access to sufficient and affordable food; it can relate to a single household or to the global population. Food security is built on three pillars: Food availability, Food access and Food use. The causes of food insecurity was also studied. These include poverty, health and conflict, population and urbanization, trade, to mention but a few. The six principles of community food security were also considered. The nutritional implications of food security were dealt with. They include: malnutrition, hunger, starvation etc. Food aid and other ways were also discussed as a means of achieving food security.

Keywords; Food, Malnutrition

INTRODUCTION

The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing "when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life". Commonly, the concept of food security is defined as including both physical and economic access to food that meets people's dietary needs as well as their food preferences.

Food security is built on three pillars:

- Food availability: sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis.
- Food access: having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet.
- Food use: appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care, as well as adequate water and sanitation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A household is considered Food Secure when its occupants do not live in hunger or fear of starvation. World-wide, around 852 million people are chronically hungry due to extreme poverty, while up to 2 billion people lack food security intermittently due to varying degrees of poverty (FAO 2003). A direct relationship exists between consumption levels and poverty. Families with the financial resources to escape extreme poverty rarely suffer from chronic hunger; while poor families not only suffer the most from chronic hunger, but are also the segment of the population most at risk during food shortages and famine.

FOOD INSECURITY

The stages of Food Insecurity range from Food Security situation to full-scale famine. "Famine and hunger are both rooted in food insecurity. Food insecurity can be categorized as either chronic or transitory. Chronic food insecurity translates into a high degree of vulnerability to famine and hunger; ensuring food security presupposes elimination of that vulnerability. [Chronic] hunger is not famine. It is similar to undernourishment and is related to poverty, existing mainly in poor countries." Countries in Africa and South Asia are also to blame for their prolonged lack of investment in rural economies which account for about 75% of world hunger. For example, African governments are yet to meet their 2003 Maputo Declaration commitment which called for 10% of national budgets to be dedicated to agriculture by 2008. Rural economies have therefore failed to grow. Poor farmers, often holding uncertain land tenure and lacking capital, plant for a mix of subsistence and surplus for market, a model chronically vulnerable to fluctuating prices or unfavorable weather. The majority of developing countries have food deficits, a serious problem for those lacking foreign currency to purchase expensive imports. Whilst overall population growth

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creates pressure on food security, it is a relatively minor factor. Since 1961 world production of food has trebled whilst the population has doubled. Feeding more than half of the world's grain production to animals is the more significant indicator. Another human weakness - for violent conflict - invariably leads to extreme food insecurity. The 2007 Global Hunger Index reports that "almost all" of its worst ranking countries have been involved in violent conflict in the last decade. Collapsed economies such as North Korea and Zimbabwe also generate food crises.

Achieving food security

"The number of people without enough food to eat on a regular basis remains stubbornly high, at over 800 million, and is not falling significantly. Over 60% of the world's undernourished people live in Asia, and a quarter in Africa. The proportion of people who are hungry, however, is greater in Africa (33%) than Asia (16%). The latest FAO figures indicate that there are 22 countries, 16 of which are in Africa, in which the undernourishment prevalence rate is over 35%."

In its "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003", FAO states that: 'In general the countries that succeeded in reducing hunger were characterized by more rapid economic growth and specifically more rapid growth in their agricultural sectors. They also exhibited slower population growth, lower levels of HIV, and higher ranking in the Human Development Index.

As such, according to FAO, addressing agriculture and population growth is vital to achieving food security. USAID proposes several key steps to increasing agricultural productivity, which is in turn key to increasing rural income and reducing food insecurity. They include:

- Boosting agricultural science and technology. Current agricultural yields are insufficient to feed the growing populations. Eventually, the rising agricultural productivity drives economic growth.
- Enhancing human capital through education and improved health.
- Securing property rights and access to finance.
- Conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms and democracy and governance based on principles of accountability and transparency in public institutions and the rule of law are basic to reducing vulnerable members of society.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The UN Millennium Development Goals are one of the initiatives aimed at achieving food security in the world. In its list of goals, the first Millennium Development Goal states that the UN "is to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty", and that "agricultural productivity is likely to play a key role in this if it is to be reached on time". The right to food, as one specific aspect of a worthy standard of living, is a fundamental human right. To live a healthy and productive life, however, the right to food must include a reliable supply of food. This concept is known as food security. The food insecure individual or household does not consume a sufficient quantity (or quality) of food to survive; or, if there is sufficient food, the individual does not have the good health to use it properly. Food insecurity is measured by low consumption and high malnutrition and mortality rates. Malnutrition erodes human capital, reduces resilience to shocks and reduces productivity (impaired physical and mental capacity). These causes, in turn, are influenced by a host of other things including land, labor and yield, income and roads, health practices and access to potable water not to mention political, economic and social factors. While there have been some improvements in food security over the past 30 years, they have not been universal. For example, in South and West Asia, the food insecure population shrunk by half between 1971 and 2000. But in Sub-Saharan Africa the food insecure population doubled during the same period [International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 2001]. Other statistics provide further evidence of the problem. Approximately 160 million children under the age of five are malnourished (IFPRI, 2001). Micronutrient deficiencies remain widespread, with two billion people suffering from iron-deficient anemia, two billion people at risk of iodine deficiency disorders and 250 million children affected by vitamin A deficiency (IFPRI, 2001).

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's medium term strategy for poverty reduction is set out in its National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and each of the 36 States has a subsidiary version of the strategy. Poor coordination of development plans within the Federal government together with incompetent delivery of services at State and local government levels have greatly hampered progress towards the MDGs. An unusual government post of Special Adviser to the President on Millennium Development Goals has been established to address these administrative bottlenecks and to be accountable for directing proceeds of debt

to MDG sectors. The holder of the post, Mrs Amina Ibrahim, has estimated that the cost of achieving Goals in Nigeria exceeds \$5 billion pa, a figure far above current resources.

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