

FSN FORUM - DISCUSSION TOPIC NO. 9 IN 2008

**STAPLE FOOD AS A FUNDAMENTAL SOLUTION
TO MALNUTRITION**

Introduction message

I am Adetunji Olajide Falana. I am working with the Federal Ministry of Health, Nutrition Division, Abuja, Nigeria since 2001. The focus of my Division is policy formulation and implementation on nutrition and other health related issues. I am a desk officer on program administration and implementation. I hold a B.Sc in Biochemistry in 1997 and got my Master's in Human Nutrition in 2000 from University of Ibadan. Presently, I am a Ph.D student of the University of Ibadan and my thesis is likely to centre on **Breastmilk and Staple Food Contamination in Niger-Delta: Implication for Child Survival and Policy Formulation in Nigeria.** Niger Delta is a degraded area of Nigeria where people are facing a lot of food insecurity in addition to pollution at the highest level.

Solving malnutrition problem has to be linked with the multi-sectorial and multi-disciplinary nature of Nutrition itself. **However, several nutrition programmes and interventions in developing countries are more centred on either supplementation or fortification with little nutrition education on the important of diet diversification.**

This has led to a **total neglect of energy aspect of the individual needs which can be provided by staple food consumption.** Staple food can also provide substantial amount of other important nutrients needed by the body. The shift from Protein-Energy -Malnutrition has no doubt hampered nutritionist to continue to see staple food as an important subset of their program implementation and interventions. Nutritionist and programmes planners are gradually forgetting the fact that consumption of diversified staple food will contribute at least 70-75% of all nutrients needed by the body in addition to energy. Most nutrition interventions, especially micronutrient deficiency control programmes, are not having remarkable success in developing countries because of the **lack of incorporation of energy aspect.**

Therefore, I would like to know your opinion and insights on the above issues. **What could be the solutions to the over-reliance on Short-to Medium strategies of supplementation and Fortification? What could be done to promote staple food?**

Your contributions will be very helpful to advance and form the basis for my thesis arguments, as well as to the work in my division.

According to me, the earlier the programme implementers recognise the importance of **staple food as a Corner Stone to reducing under-nutrition**, the better. This will encourage the holistic implementation of nutrition interventions. **The over-reliance on short-to medium strategies of supplementation and fortification as a messiah in solving nutrition problems should be discouraged.**

Government in developing countries should stop being a rubber stamp to any intervention introduced by donors or partners simply because the resources are coming from them. It is high time that those in charge of nutrition in government start demanding for holistic interventions that will have meaningful impact on the targeted population. Unless interventions at all levels accord a priority position to energy, and see other strategies as complimentary, malnutrition will remain for a very long time in developing countries.

Best regards,

Adetunji Olajide Falana