

**FSN FORUM DISCUSSION
LOOKING AT THINGS DIFFERENTLY WHILE ADDRESSING FOOD SECURITY
AND NUTRITION ISSUES
FROM THE 2ND FEBRUARY TO 24TH MARCH 09**

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Duration:	2.02.2009 to 24.03.2009
Facilitator:	Andrew MacMillan
Number of participants:	19
Number of Contributions:	26

II. INTRODUCTION OF THE TOPIC

Dear all,

My name is Andrew MacMillan. I am an agricultural economist, specialized in tropical agriculture. I retired from FAO at the end of 2005, after 35 years in the Organization. My final job in FAO was to serve as Director of the Field Operations Division, which included the Service responsible for the management of the Special Programme for Food Security.

I have noted that one of the most exciting things about the new **Obama administration** is that it **looks at so many issues from an entirely different perspective.**

Thus, instead of seeing funding of programmes to make America greener as an unaffordable fiscal burden, and worrying about their negative impact on the country's industrial output and its competitiveness, they recognize that they present a great opportunity for viable investment, for creating extra employment and for reducing dependence on external sources of energy - as well as, of course, cutting noxious emissions and curbing the country's impact on the extent and rate of climate change.

I gather that they have also recognised that, in seeking to fight the recession by stimulating consumer spending, transfers to the poor (e.g. food stamps) will have a much more immediate effect on the demand for goods than tax cuts for the rich (who may simply save rather than spend the money). At the same time these transfers reduce the extent of hardship suffered by the poor, that tends to grow during economic down-turn, and hopefully improve their health and potential productivity.

They have, therefore, **identified "win-win" opportunities** for inclusion in their economic stimulus package.

Many of us are concerned that the global financial crisis and recession will be used as an excuse for governments to back out of the commitments that they have been making to improve food

security through supporting agricultural expansion and the creation of social protection programmes, as set out in the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA), prepared by the High Level Task Force. Perhaps we should take a leaf out of the Obama book, and **demonstrate**, as I know we can, that **there are many opportunities for viable investment in agricultural expansion** - and that it makes sense to include **social protection programmes as central elements in any stimulus package** in countries trying to kick-start their way out of recession.

Indeed, one of the attractions of the twin-track approach to improving food and nutrition security, advocated by FAO, is that, by translating the food needs of the poor into demand, it stimulates markets for farm products. **Should we not be making more of this potential "win-win" opportunity** - which also improves people's health, lets them live life to the full and respects human rights?

We have got to build a **strong constituency of public support** for the **eradication of hunger and malnutrition**, just as the Obama administration is doing in the US. As part of this process, it would be great if **FSN members were to share their practical experiences of "win-win" opportunities that would help to convince a skeptical world that getting rid of hunger and malnutrition is not charity but is in everyone's interest.**

Andrew

MODERATOR NOTE

"Twin Track" approach to hunger reduction advocated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN

The twin-track approach combines the promotion of quick-response agricultural growth, led by small farmers, with targeted programmes to ensure that hungry people who have neither the capacity to produce their own food nor the means to buy it can have access to adequate supplies. The two tracks are mutually reinforcing, since programmes to enhance direct and immediate access to food offer new outlets for expanded production. Countries that have followed this approach are seeing the benefits.

For more information, please check: the paper:

ANTI-HUNGER PROGRAMME, A twin-track approach to hunger reduction: priorities for national and international action

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Rome, November 2003

http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=679&nocache=1

III. LIST OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Contribution by George Kent, University of Hawai'i, USA

FSN colleagues –

I welcome Andrew Macmillan's invitation to look at the hunger issue from fresh perspectives. He pointed out that in fighting the current economic recession, "transfers to the poor (e.g. food stamps) will have a much more immediate effect on the demand for goods than tax cuts for the

rich (who may simply save rather than spend the money).”

Andrew also pointed out, “there are many opportunities for viable investment in agricultural expansion - and that it makes sense to include social protection programmes as central elements in any stimulus package in countries trying to kick-start their way out of recession.” This is based on thinking in the “twin-track approach” that FAO has been advocating.

Let me suggest **another change in perspective** that complements this. Andrew, like me, has spent much of his time thinking about the hunger problem from a global perspective. Maybe it would be useful to now give more attention to how these ideas can be understood and applied **at the local level**.

I am prompted to think in this way because in a few days I will be going to American Samoa to give a talk about how this tiny island territory of the United States could increase its food security.

The FAO report cited by the FSN Forum moderator says:

A **twin-track approach** is required, **combining the promotion of quick-response agricultural growth, led by small farmers, with targeted programmes to ensure that hungry people** who have neither the capacity to produce their own food nor the means to buy it can **have access to adequate supplies**. The two tracks are mutually reinforcing.

Executive Summary <http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/j0563e/j0563e00.htm>

During my visit I will point out that **this way of thinking can be applied at the local level**. American Samoa has a large number of subsistence workers who can't find employment. There is untapped potential to provide livelihoods for local people by **reducing food imports and instead promoting food production and processing for local markets**. Moreover, as American Samoa's Department of Agriculture has recognized, it might be possible to increase food exports, particular for niche markets, such as the export of processed foods to Samoans living outside American Samoa.

That is the supply track. It 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.

If this localized twin-track approach is managed well, over the long run it could increase American Samoa's capacity to provide for itself.

I see this as part of what we might call a **cellular approach to dealing with world hunger**. Instead of focusing on what can be done at the global level, maybe we should **give more attention to the smaller units** that make up the world, not only nation-states but also their constituent parts **such as states, provinces, cities, and communities**. What would it take to assure the end of hunger in each of them? If we find a way to assure the health of every cell and every organ of the global body, based on how they are managed from within and also from the outside, we will have solved the world hunger problem.

It is a mistake to always look upward for remedies for the hunger problem. We also need to look inward. To find people who are really motivated to end hunger, look to the hungry themselves. Given decent opportunities, people will not allow themselves or their families to go hungry. **There is no shortage of food in the world; there is a shortage of opportunities**. People who have decent opportunities to produce food or earn money to purchase food find ways to provide for themselves and their families.

The main thing the rest of us can do is to make sure all people have decent opportunities. **The twin-track approach is one way to enlarge people's opportunities** to provide, not only for themselves, but also for their neighbors.

Aloha,
George

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Professor George Kent
Department of Political Science
University of Hawai'i
USA

Contribution by Joseph Opio-Odongo, Kampala, Uganda

Forum colleagues,

Andrew has touched on an important, but very difficult subject. It relates to the plea already made by some forum members that we consider enhancing multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary approaches to resolving the hunger and malnutrition challenges. Essentially, it is about being creative in dealing with these challenges. Hence, we need to **address the issues that limit our abilities to optimally deploy available variety of expertise in supporting nutrition**.

I would want to argue that because we **are generally victims of our disciplinary socialization**, we tend to **shy away from thinking, writing and acting differently**. Existing disciplinary norms and incentive systems tend to confine us within our "silos". This form of trained incapacity therefore limits our capabilities in differentiating the world before us. It makes us less open and poor listeners to alternative and sometimes competing viewpoints on the challenge at hand. Fundamentally, it tends to restrain us from cross-disciplinary engagement, let alone genuine engagement with the poor and hungry; thereby limiting the possibilities of discerning and integrating the various facets of hunger and malnutrition challenge. These limitations, it would argue, make it difficult for us to deliberately seek creative solutions to the hunger and malnutrition challenge. Those of us who have crossed disciplinary boundaries in either our training or work or both may have some experiences to share in this regard.

These limitations are to some extent linked to factors (acquired, inherited or imposed) that influence our predisposition and capacity to think and act differently, particularly in a creative fashion. Simply put, these factors shape our abilities to differentiate the world before us and to ultimately interlink facets of the variegated world deriving creative solutions to the challenges at hand. Research has shown that the interactions among these factors make us researchers and practitioners exhibit four dominant endowments. There may be those of us who are better at differentiating the world and integrating its elements in a creative way (**integrators**). Others may be better at defining the nature of the problem (**problem identifiers**), or at solving the problem once the problem has been clearly defined by others (**problem solvers**). There are also those who are better at the precise application of a menu of solutions to the predetermined problem (**technicians**). These profiles are of course more of ideal types. In practice the differences among the four profiles are a matter of degree.

However, the **integrators are the fewest among us (approximately 25%) and have the comparative strength of providing strong leadership that enables the other categories to perform effectively** in multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary approaches to resolving challenges. This is not to argue that the integrators are the most important among us, but rather that knowledge of these profiles is useful in composing effective multi-sectoral and multi-sectoral teams. The Obama profile as alluded to by Andrew perhaps approximates that of an integrator, whose recent success may be attributed to the quality of his visionary leadership and

coordination skills that enabled others to stay the course and uphold the dream.

That perhaps has also been **the force behind success stories** across the world of poorly funded research groups that end up generating innovations beyond public expectations; largely because of strong leadership that sustains a vision motivates the team at work and ensures effective coordination. To some extent, strong visionary leadership and effective team work accounted for the successes registered by the **Mwanamujimu (the healthy child) nutrition clinic in Makerere University, Uganda**. 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.

(See http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-26285963_ITM)

Regards,

Joseph Opio-Odongo
Kampala, Uganda

Moderator note: Please see below some excerpts from the article *Mwanamugimu Clinic Has Great Nutritional Advice*, recommended above by Joseph. This article is available in full on the Access My Library website by requesting a "temporary library card" at http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-26285963_ITM).

(From New Vision (Uganda): AAGM)
Byline: Catherine Ruhweza

The visit to the Mwana Mujimu clinic at old Mulago, last week was very rewarding. There is a whole new world of things to learn about weaning and preparing baby's food. The staff there are welcoming and ready to teach parents about nutrition for free.

The challenge most us working mothers face is that we do not have time to feed our children, let alone prepare meals for them. We even do not know how much they eat.

Sister Margaret Kaggwa, a training officer at Mwanamugimu clinic, says most working parents make the mistake of thinking that if they buy every type of food that their children need and store it in the house then their children should automatically be healthy and strong.

"That is not true," she says. "Food preparation and combination as well as meal timing is very important." She says feeding a child and preparing their meals should not be entirely up to the housemaid. She says parents should feed their children at least once or twice.

And where mothers are very busy, fathers should participate in feeding the baby. This is not about equal rights. This is not a gender-based argument. It is about having a strong and health baby. It is also about monitoring the feeding habits of the child, to know how much he or she eats and what the baby enjoys.

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Contribution by Jacques du Guerny from Italy

Developing countries have a **colossal capital of potential talent in rural areas** which has been largely **untapped** for sustainable development. The kids who, in

industrialised countries, become agronomists, engineers, doctors, etc become subsistence farmers, agricultural labourers in their rural areas in developing countries... Relying on governments and the formal education system has not demonstrated very convincing results to say the least. Adapting Farmer Field Schools, Life Schools, IPM approaches and the Junior Field and Farmer Schools could teach the children to make the most of their context, blending the environment/farming systems with local and scientific knowledge. As Joseph Opio-Odongo says one has to transcend (using it of course) specialized knowledge to use 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.

Jacques du Guerny

Contribution by Charlotte Dufour, from France

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for inviting us to think differently and share creative ideas.

The main lesson I have learnt recently in Afghanistan (and during a short visit to Laos) is that it is **impossible (or irresponsible) to look at food security separately from sustainable natural resource management** (i.e. 'sustainable livelihoods'). We face the challenge of not only ensuring food security for people today, but of ensuring the food security of their children and grandchildren. In the face of climate change, desertification, decreased soil productivity, deforestation, etc. the challenge of ensuring food security for tomorrow is even bigger than for today. Add to that the fact that starving people will naturally prioritize feeding their kids over saving the trees, and the challenge is even bigger.

The problem is that our **entire economic system, based on growth**, and measured purely with GDP / GNP, is not designed to promote **food security or sustainable resource management**. With economic growth as the main measure of development (despite the invention of the Human Development Index), politicians are rarely -if at all- held accountable for results (or absence of results) on either front.

In that context, I was extremely happy to see **Obama** proposing a new twist, by suggesting investments **in environmental preservation / renewable energies as a way of fuelling economic regeneration**, and by making public support to the private sector conditional to companies promoting environmentally-friendly technologies. I am very uncomfortable with 'classical' recipes currently put forward by most governments, e.g. channelling precious taxpayers' money to save the car industry (without imposing investments in 'green cars') and focusing policies on promotion of consumption. Those are at odds with the oral commitments regarding reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the protection of our environment.

I therefore hope Obama and his administration (and others around the world) will **go further and really seek to build a new economic model** that can more genuinely address the environmental and economic challenges we face globally.

I wish to share with you the thoughts of a French environment specialist, Jean-Marc Jancovici, whom I heard on the radio the other day talking about his new book (written with an economist, Alain Grandjean), called: C'est maintenant! 3 ans pour sauver la planète – “Act Now! Three years to save the planet” (it's only available in French, but will hopefully be translated). The book includes a **criticism of the GDP as the main indicator of the economy**. If I remember well, he argued that when the GDP was established, around 2 centuries ago (or so), there were seemingly unlimited natural resources, and the main limiting factor was labour. We are now in a completely opposite situation: rapidly depleting natural resources and a rapidly increasing labour force plagued by unemployment (not to mention a growing mass of consumers using more than their share of natural resources). But **GDP measures only the final product, and does not factor in at all the resources (renewable or non-renewable) that are used to produce that output**. He therefore advocates for more adapted indicators to be developed (and used) that account for the environmental inputs and outputs. You can find a more detailed (and more accurate!) description of his argument on the following website:

http://www.manicore.com/anglais/documentation_a/greenhouse/decrease.html

(May the economists among us excuse my amateur presentation of these issues. Corrections / suggestions welcome!)

Building on what we have previously discussed regarding the need for multi-sectoral work to tackle food insecurity and malnutrition, I increasingly believe that we, food security & nutrition ‘specialists’/advocates have much to gain in:

- **working with economists** on the development and use of more adequate models and indicators of ‘progress’ against which governments, international organizations and private firms should be held accountable;
- joining forces with the **environment lobby** in our fight for sustainable food security.

Hopefully, together we can turn the **vicious cycle** binding food insecurity and degradation of the natural resource base into a **virtuous cycle** where food security and sustainable natural resource management mutually reinforce each other.

IFPRI's work on food security and climate change is particularly interesting in that regard:

<http://www.ifpri.org/themes/climatechange/climatechange.asp>. In a joint IFPRI/FAO publication, Marc Cohen et al propose a “**revitalized twin track approach**” which includes improved natural resource management as a means of improving production and productivity:

<http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/cp/cohen2008climate/cohenetal2008climate.pdf>

I look forward to reading ideas and thoughts from forum members on these issues.

All the best,
Charlotte

Contribution by Gangadhara Swamy, from India

Dear All,

As we all know development is an elephant which is described by blind people, based on their own experiences. Now we have pooled all their views to make it real.

- 1) We have to strengthen their own existing practices instead of proposing a new idea/ technology as much as possible
- 2) When there is a new livelihood opportunity coming due to new policies or to global changes, we should analyse what would be its impacts on traditional occupations and existing supply chain
- 3) Our focus always should be towards creating more opportunities for common people with basic needs, not towards making few people as so rich at cost of marginalised ones.
- 4) We have to strengthen traditional culture/ beliefs, which helps in communal harmony, community development, natural resource management,

Finally based it always better to go through DFID nine square Mandal concept of livelihood development i.e, 1) Base 2) Space and 3) Roof.

With regards ,

B.P.Gangadhara Swamy
Program Coordinator-Livelihood and Microfinance
CCF-INDIA
ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA

Contribution by Purna Chandra Wasti, from the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control, National Nutrition Program, Nepal

Dear Andrew,

It's an interesting thing that Obama has a unique way of dealing things. I don't know whether he has been fed enough from the professionals like us or he has a spontaneously cultivated idea (I mean during his involvement in the social and political movement) and vision.

We can have many examples which we can take into a serious consideration. For example Lula's (Brazil) commitment to Zero Hunger Program.

We as professionals of this sector should play the role of advocacy to the politicians. Unless there is a commitment from the political side, there will be a very small hope that things can be moved.

I think there is a tendency (I have my own experience) of formation of cocoon of own discipline. To overcome this the greater the interaction among the professionals/activists of different disciplines including the political activists the higher the chance of moving things around.

Anyway, admiring the idea of Obama, we all should build the alliance to move the things around.

Otherwise, the real priorities (hunger and malnutrition) become the priorities of just the people who are nutritionists and other related professionals, not the real priority of the nation (the priority of the political leaders).

Contribution by Judith Appleton, from the United Kingdom

From the sublime to the ridiculous ?

Thanks Charlotte for your wide-ranging linking, and to Jacques for reminding us to look beyond our usual contacts and partners.

On the latter, and possibly in vain, or ridiculous, I am setting off southwards from Nouakchott on Monday to look for useful grandmothers. Seriously, the mothers we nutritionists keep badgering are not the only ones looking after the children whose measurements provide nutritional indicators for development programmes. Their own mothers and mothers-in-law, as well as siblings and the rest of the community in which the measurable children are embedded, all have relevant life experience and opinions on how to improve their lives. And it's time we asked and talked to them too. Jacques, have you got a **system or approach for identifying and including key informants in development work** that you'd like to share with us?

Judith Appleton

Contribution by Andrew MacMillan, facilitator of the discussion

I have deliberately delayed following up, as facilitator, on the contributions made by Joseph Opio-Odongo and George Kent on my introductory note, in the hope that other FSN forum participants might join in the debate.

Joseph reflects on the need for creativity, vision and leadership, and comes up with the very nice expression of our propensity to become “victims of our disciplinary socialization”. Somehow, if we are to be effective in eradicating hunger and malnutrition, we need to draw on specialized knowledge and skills, but also build bridges between the areas of specialization to come up with effective programmes. This has been very evident in the recent exchanges in the Forum in relation to the role of nutritionists in food security work. The **need to build bridges and partnerships does not relate only, however, to individuals, but also to institutions**. For instance, the FAO-led World Food Summit process – and the goals adopted – have consistently focused only on the reduction of under-nourishment (or “hunger”) because this fits with the Organization’s mandate. However, at the field level the problems of undernourishment and many other forms of malnutrition are intricately bound to each other and are usually evident within the same communities and families – and many of the solutions are similar. Yet, often Ministries of Agriculture assume the lead in programmes for “food security” and Ministries of Health are responsible for improving “nutrition” – and Ministries of Social Security (that might run social protection programmes to enable poor families to access the food that they need, in terms of both quantity and quality, for a healthy life) may not even number amongst the institutions involved.

George reflects on the “twin-track” approach to food security, in which the distinction is made between measures to expand food production/availability and those that improve people’s ability to access the food that they need for a healthy life. The term “twin track” tends to make one think of railway lines – but of course these only allow a train to move forward fast if they run in parallel, which is possible because of the sleepers that connect one line to the other. As the thinking on the “twin track” approach to food security and nutrition has developed since it was referred to in the Anti-Hunger programme (mentioned by George), increasing attention has been given to possible areas of synergy between the two tracks. These were illustrated in SOFI 2004,

and have been elaborated on further by Pingali et al (please see the chart and link to the report below). As George points out in relation to American Samoa, one person's need for food can be translated into expanded local demand for small-scale producers and, in turn, generate expanded employment opportunities. It all seems too obvious, but, too often, we fail to recognize such potential complementarities and to explore how to construct an institutional environment in which they can be made to work.

The report of the Hunger Task Force Halving Hunger

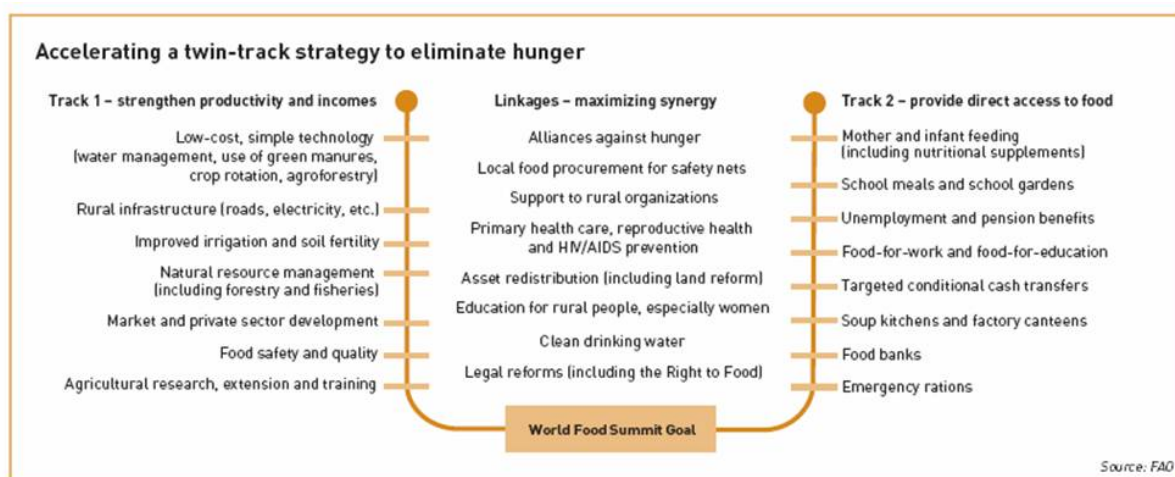
(http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/tf_hunger.htm): It can be done points to some of these potential synergies. It places particular emphasis (p. 196 et seq) on an expansion of “homegrown school-based feeding programmes” as a way of both improving child nutrition (and school attendance and educational 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. The concept is attractive, and fits very well with George's thinking on “cellular” approaches to achieving global food security from the local level upwards. However, it is not easy as one might expect to translate the idea into an institutional reality, as anyone who has tried to pursue the concept will know! 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.

Hopefully, Joseph will stimulate the discussion by drawing our attention to more **examples**, like Mwanamujimi, where success has come from bridging disciplinary and institutional divides; and George will report on how he and his colleagues in America Samoa have pursued the concept of cellular approaches to improved food security and nutrition and the local level through the **creation of “opportunities”**.

Andrew

Moderator Note:

Below is the chart on page 32 of SOFI 2004. The full SOFI 2004 is available in pdf format at: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/007/y5650e/y5650e00.pdf>



Contribution by Kevin Gallagher, from FAO Sierra Leone

I would like to add to this discussion, perhaps adding to what Obama has added to the global agenda.

On the point raised by Andrew MacMillan, it is clear that **food security requires taking steps forward** (or up the ladder to use another visualization). The global crisis of high prices or economic slow down, the annual cycles of hunger seasons and the daily cycles of not enough calories to work a full day, all keep people walking in place without any forward motion or even being force back (or down). **Safety nets** are essential to help people feel that when they do work hard they will get ahead, and when times are bad, they will not loose their investment. Safety nets, used or not, provide a level of confidence that today's work will get me forward and I will not be pushed back. In my personal situation, safety nets were important – first as a child with milk programmes in school and food stamps at home when parents were out of a job, and as an adult when trying to study while having a pregnant wife. In both cases, safety nets allowed forward motion and to keep with long term plans despite the hardships. I strongly agree that **safety nets are essential as a kind of insurance that today's hard work will not suddenly be for naught.**

On a second Obama point, he pushes for community organizing in the Chicago tradition of Saul Alinsky. Food security indeed is also a very local phenomenon and one that cries out for **local action by communities that seem themselves as core** to the development process and not beneficiaries alone. A recent mini-review of Farmer Field School (FFS) run by government and NGOs in Sierra Leone showed that FFS that were known to be “less-than-successful” were fundamentally different than successful FFS. The main difference? Successful FFS looked to themselves for development and saw outside programmes as helpful. Not successful programmes looked to the outside for support and felt they never were given enough.

My own conclusion is that **communities and individuals indeed need to look to themselves for advancing, that safety nets and other programmes must avoid creating dependency but is critical** to those persons and communities moving forward to be able to keep moving forward.

Best regards,

Kevin Gallagher
FAO Representative
Sierra Leone

Contribution by the FSN Moderator

Below is a relevant excerpt from page 32 of The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004 (SOFI 2004), which was referred to by Andrew MacMillan in his last message. The excerpt looks at the twin track approach and actions that will have the most immediate impact on food security.

The full SOFI 2004 is available in PDF format at:
<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/007/y5650e/y5650e00.pdf>

The time that is left to reach the World Food Summit (WFS) goal is getting short. The distance to be travelled remains long. It is time to step up the pace, to start acting aggressively on what we know can and must be done.

Although progress has lagged so far, the WFS target is both attainable and affordable. We have ample evidence that **rapid progress can be made by applying a twin-track strategy that attacks both the causes and the consequences of extreme poverty and hunger (see diagram).**

Track one includes interventions to improve food availability and incomes for the poor by

enhancing their productive activities. Track two features targeted programmes that give the most needy families direct and immediate access to food.

To meet the WFS goal, we must now translate the twin-track approach into large-scale programmes that can be adopted in countries where hunger is widespread and resources are extremely limited.

This means that within the twin-track framework we must give priority over the next ten years to actions that will have the most immediate impact on the food security of millions of vulnerable people. Where resources are scarce, we must focus on low-cost approaches that empower small-scale farmers to raise production in ways that will enhance food consumption for their families and communities. At the same time, we must rapidly expand targeted safety nets.

Improve the productivity, nutrition and livelihoods of the poor

The vast majority of the world's hungry people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture both for their incomes and their food. Even modest gains in output by very large numbers of small farmers, when translated into improved diets, would have a major impact in reducing rural hunger and poverty.

Improving the productivity of small farmers has a ripple effect that spreads benefits throughout poor rural communities.

When small farmers have more money to spend, they tend to spend it locally on labour-intensive goods and services that come from the rural non-farm sector, boosting the incomes of the rural population as a whole, including landless labourers who make up a large proportion of the hungry and poor in many countries.

Strengthen safety nets and transfer programmes

With the need so urgent and the time so short, the quickest way to reduce hunger may often be to provide direct assistance to the neediest households to ensure that they can put food on their tables. In order to make a large and enduring dent in hunger, we must scale up safety net and cash transfer programmes and make sure that they target the most vulnerable groups, including pregnant and nursing mothers, infants and small children, school children, unemployed urban youth and the elderly, disabled and sick, including people living with HIV/AIDS. Safety nets can also be woven with strands that contribute to developmental goals. Food banks and school feeding programmes can often be designed to boost incomes, improve food security and stimulate development in vulnerable rural communities by buying food locally from small-scale farmers.

Similarly, programmes that provide food to people who attend education and training programmes can improve both their nutritional status and their employment prospects.

Diagram

Please refer to the diagram on page 32 of The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004 (SOFI 2004) available at: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/007/y5650e/y5650e00.pdf>

Contribution by George Kent

FSN friends --

I have just returned this morning from the conference on food security in American Samoa that I mentioned in earlier messages on this list. I am not yet ready to write it up, but you can get a

quick sense of the discussion from a front-page report in yesterday's local newspaper in Pago Pago. See <http://www.samoanewsonline.com/viewstory.php?storyid=4033&edition=1235037600>

Of course America Samoa has some unique features, just as every other place in the world is unique in some ways. Nevertheless, the argument for **increasing control, or self reliance** (as distinguished from self sufficiency) probably applies in many other places as well.

Aloha, George

Contribution by Vani Sethi, from the Urban Health Resource Centre (UHRC), India

Dear Judith,

Hi, I am from India. In my work in rural Agra district Uttar Pradesh, **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. You can find a summary of this work at http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=700&nocache=1. I would be happy to share presentations, summaries and reports of this work, if you are interested.

Best Regards,

Vani

Contribution by Jacques du Guerny

Dear Judith,

I have been thinking about your request for a **system approach to include key informants in development work**. This is an important issue. Ideally, perhaps one should keep a panel, like is done for some opinion polls. Certainly, the elderly are an excellent group because they perceive changes over time and can catch emerging issues and trends. Giving them prominence would also improve their declining status.

This is why, you should perhaps consider looking towards or combining with 'early warning systems' with village level whistle blowers. Why? Because rural areas in developing countries are changing and it is important for development work to catch these changes as soon as possible to intervene positively or negatively on them. In fact, if the communities are made aware of them and of their consequences they can search for their own solutions.

You might be interested in a short manual: A Manual for Early Warning Rapid Response Systems for HIV/AIDS from 2004:

http://www.hivdevelopment.org/Publications_english/Manual%20for%20Early%20Warning%20Rapid%20Response.htm.

Regards,

Jacques du Guerny

Contribution by Andrew MacMillan

Friends,

I am not sure whether, as facilitator, I can add very much to this discussion.

Charlotte's concern with the weight given to GDP as a measure of economic growth is very well taken. GDP fails to take into proper account the hidden costs of what we produce – especially the true cost of non-renewable raw materials and the cost of pollution and other environmental damage caused by production, consumption waste patterns, and, as a result, tends to inflate the real value of “growth”. The obsession with GDP as a measure of growth also tends to distract attention from the critical issue of who benefits from growth – the issue of income distribution that is so closely correlated with the ability to access adequate food.

The **Human Development Index (HDI)** helps to focus attention on the on the “real” state of development of a country, but perhaps it does not go far enough. A very useful critique of the HDI has been made by Ana Afonso Gallegos in her PhD thesis, and she suggests modifications, of great relevance to the FSN Forum, through including a food security and nutrition indicator in the computation of a revised index. It would be good if the Moderator could invite her to share her proposals with Forum members.

Both **Gangadhara Swamy and George Kent** have stressed the **importance of creating opportunities for people to improve their livelihoods**, with George making the point to the opportunities that exist in a small island country for gainful employment in food production aimed at reducing undue dependency on food imports – clearly a “win-win” opportunity.

Kevin Gallagher draws on his own personal experience of having had **access to safety nets** at the various stages of his youth when he most needed them, but warns against creating excessive dependencies. I have known people talk about safety “**trampolines**”: this strikes me as a suitable term because it conveys the idea of “bouncing back” from a crisis.

I think that all Forum members who have worked extensively in rural communities will agree with Jacques de Guerny about the vast reserves of latent energy ability that can be released through participatory learning processes such as farmer field schools (FFS). Perhaps George might wish to encourage his rural friends in American Samoa to learn from other countries as to how FFS can play a role in the “cellular” development processes that he is envisaging. Maybe he might encourage them to pay a visit to Kevin to learn how in the past 5 years 80,000 Sierra Leonean small-scale farmers have graduated from FFS.

Both **Vani Sethi and Judith Appleton** place their faith in the good sense of **grandmothers** when it comes to caring the **child health and nutrition**. In many countries in which there is a high incidence of HIV/AIDS that has killed off many working age people, grandmothers are playing a fantastic role in caring for grandchildren, many of whom are orphans.

In his intervention, **Puma Chandra Wasti** stresses how we have to persuade the politicians to **take hunger eradication seriously**. One argument that we can put to them, is that getting rid of hunger brings in the votes. Some observers suggest that Lula was re-elected for a second term as President of Brazil, largely because of his commitment to end hunger and the inclusion of 11 million poor families as the beneficiaries of the safety net component of his Zero Hunger Programme. Hopefully other politicians will take note.

My own view is that, unless government leaders follow Lula's example of committing himself to end hunger in his country and holding himself accountable for results, there will be little reduction in the number of people who suffer from hunger and malnutrition. I have set out these views in a **draft proposal for a Global Convention on the Eradication of Hunger and Severe Malnutrition**, on which I would welcome comments and suggestions (the paper is available at http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=708).

Andrew

Contribution by Alberto Zezza

Related resource on the Forum's site: "**Composite Indices of Human Well-Being: Past, Present, and Future**":

http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=300

This paper surveys the various composite well-being indices that have been inter-country assessments over the last 40 or so years, including the well-known Human Development Index (HDI).

Contribution by Edward Mutandwa

Dear all,

I have been following the discussion on the possibility of promulgating the Global Convention on hunger and malnutrition, whose main thrust is to reduce the incidence of hunger and malnutrition that is endemic mostly in developing countries and more dire in Sub-Saharan Africa. A multi-sectoral and multi-faceted goal oriented program will be required particularly at national government level. If this proposal is to work and proffer new approaches to food security, in my opinion I think it would be fundamental to have a **critical overview of why other similar attempts have consistently failed in the past**. Lack of commitment and ignorance by the society (as noted by Andrew) about the breadth and depth of the food insecurity-hunger nexus certainly explains why past efforts have failed. But I would want to believe that there are other deep seated problems as to why this problem still surfaces.

This initiative is certainly welcome but **what elements must be embraced in this new program to ensure that it achieves its anticipated objectives?**

Edward Mutandwa
RDA, Rwanda

Contribution by Ana Afonso, University Polytechnic of Madrid, Spain

Taking into account food and nutrition dimension in the measurement and assessment of human development

Ana Afonso

Universidad Politécnica de Madrid

at http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=711

Abstract

Human Development Index (HDI) has become a very useful tool for measuring development and making inter-country comparisons. The observation of its trajectory and evolution by country arouses the curiosity of students of development and invites them to question the underlying causes of the behaviour of the index. In order to provide answers to such questions the Human Development Report complements the HDI by offering varied, valuable and relevant statistical information related with every dimensions of human development. From its very beginning, experts have debated about the strengths and weaknesses of the report and have acknowledged a need to include new indicators in the measurement of human development. It is in this context that Mahbub ul Haq, the creator of the Human Development Reports said: "Here we have a broad framework; if you want something to be included in this list, which may deserve a table in the Human Development Report tell us what, and explain why it must figure in this accounting. We will listen". As a response to this demand, this paper proposes the inclusion of food and

nutritional dimension in the measurement of human development, as well-being can only be achieved when there is not food insecurity.

Some excerpts

A new Indicator of Food and Nutrition Situation (ISAN) is proposed... The ISAN has been designed as a mean of three sub-indexes that respectively measure three dimensions of food and nutrition security – quantity, quality and biological utilization)

.....

Access to enough food energy in adequate proportions of macronutrients is measured through I1 sub-index that is developed from the combination of two variables: Dietary Energy Supply (DES) per capita and the proportion of DES of carbohydrates, proteins and fat.

Access to needed food is determined through I2 sub-index that measures diversity dimension combining two variables: number of food groups providing at least 90 per cent of energy and share of the contribution of the main group. Variables used to evaluate the sanitary dimension obtaining I3 sub index are proportion of population with access to safe water and proportion of population with access to sanitation.

The relevance of ISAN lies in the fact that it brings together considerations of dietary energy supply and the quality of nutrition. It also breaks new ground by bringing in a water/sanitation dimension. The validity of ISAN rests on the selection of the variables involved and the criteria used to combine them into a single index, which requires scientific knowledge of the factors conditioning nutritional status. ISAN fulfils the conditions of good indicators, in particular: it proposes targets to reach and measures the degree of attainment of such targets; it is sensitive to changes and changes happened in any variable are measurable in the short term and are reflected in the index; it has temporal and spatial specificity as there are data of the variables that conform the index for a large number of countries; it is efficient in terms of cost benefit as can be readily applied at low cost because its variables require the use of data that is already available on FAO and UNDP websites. In addition, the estimate of malnutrition in the world using ISAN is very consistent with previous estimates.

.....

This paper does not propose that ISAN should replace the publication of the other food security indicators, but argues that it should be treated as a complement to the information already being published. It also argues that ISAN should be presented in a table in the Human Development Report in order to complement the statistical information with which to assess human development achievements at country level. The inclusion of ISAN as a forth dimension of HDI could also be considered....

Contribution by Jacques Vercueil, from France

Hello to all,

I am entering this discussion a few weeks after the start, and found much value in what has been contributed so far. At the same time I fear that discussion may dry out if it remains at the level of principles and general issues. **Why not share among us concrete cases** - American Samoa is one at hand, if George feels like explaining the picture or directing us to info source - with a proposal of what is the problem - not what people suffer from, but that there is no known way out or up, or that the known road to the better cannot be travelled - and from this our thinking about operationalizing the twin track can find a jumping board. Not with the hope to solve AmSam problem, of course, but to use it as a brain stimulator!

[Apologies: I am a retired person (from FAO's Agricultural Development Economics Division- ESA), I work and travel no more, I cannot contribute any case (or from so old memories, I would not cash much on that...) therefore I am not able to follow my good advice!]

Also: we are in a crisis - **let's make use of the crisis!** Many critical changes have happened in the context of past severe crises : war (the UN system was an offspring of WWII), or depression, or food crisis (IFAD, FAO's Committee on Food Security, the CGIAR system after the 1972-74 price hike), etc. With enterprises closing down, soaring unemployment, increasing hunger, volatile food prices, falling stock markets, credit crunches, financial abuses, climate change etc. more world leaders (including ones little prone to new or progressive thinking) show signs that they feel this is becoming dangerous. Once it is accepted that change must come, changes are easier to introduce. Difficult for me to believe that some "dirty" concepts such as (degrees of) protectionism, (degrees of) taxation, (degrees of) state control and intervention, will not be used when the damages of excess deregulation are so deep and pervasive.

One such issue has to do with **Property right**. Property right is taken, inter alia in international negotiations, as the sacred cow: never dare touch nor talk of touching! It is however a terrible obstacle to social and human progress in many instances. The reason of course is that one moves from a "fundamental" human right (grosso modo, to be assured that the means of living at your disposal cannot be captured by another person or entity without your consent) into eventually a shocking privilege (shocking, when there is not enough for all!) – the unrestricted right for a person or entity who has more than enough, to have more and more unlimitedly. Inbetween is a very wide area where the property right is a critical economic institution, without which economic progress thwarts, and it makes it a very delicate and sensitive issue to deal with. But it should not be forgotten that if this sacred cow is not profanated (mildly, hopefully), the right to food for instance (the right for people not to be prevented from endeavouring to earn a living for themselves and dependents) may be sacrificed on the altar of the right to become ever richer.

J. Vercueil

Contribution by George Kent, University of Hawai'i, USA

FSN friends --

Edward Mutandwa said:

"A multi-sectoral and multi-faceted goal oriented program will be required particularly at national government level. If this proposal is to work and proffer new approaches to food security, in my opinion I think it would be fundamental to have a critical overview of why other similar attempts have consistently failed in the past. Lack of commitment and ignorance by the society (as noted by Andrew) about the breadth and depth of the food insecurity-hunger nexus certainly explains why past efforts have failed. But I would want to believe that there are other deep seated problems as to why this problem still surfaces."

I believe that **frequent failure of national and international programs to combat extreme malnutrition** is not due to any technical factors, but rather it is due to the simple fact that the **motivation has been inadequate**. Those who have the power are not the ones who have the problem, so resources and the planning efforts are always inadequate.

There is still no serious global plan for ending hunger, serious in the sense that it could really be expected to achieve the goal. I don't know of any serious national level plans. If there are any, I would like to see them.

I think it is a mistake to always look upward for solutions to the hunger problem. To find people who are really motivated to end hunger, look to the hungry themselves. I think we should give more attention to the idea of community-based remedies to the problem. In strong communities, people don't go hungry.

Aloha, George

Contribution by George Kent

I recently called for increased emphasis on local self-reliance and the building of strong local communities, prompted in part by the fact that I was recently asked to give my views on how food security could be strengthened in American Samoa. Jacques Vercueil responded by saying:

" Why not share among us concrete cases - American Samoa is one at hand, if George feels like explaining the picture or directing us to info source - with a proposal of what is the problem - not what people suffer from, but that there is no known way out or up, or that the known road to the better cannot be travelled - and from this our thinking about operationalizing the twin track can find a jumping board. Not with the hope to solve AmSam problem, of course, but to use it as a brain stimulator!"

There is a press report on the talk I gave in Pago Pago, available at <http://www.samoanewsonline.com/viewstory.php?storyid=4033&edition=1235037600>

Also, I will attach here a broad overview of food security issues in US-affiliated Pacific Island territories (this paper is available at http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=729&nocache=1). In reading this, it may be useful to consider that these are not exceptional places. In a sense, every town and village is an island.

Finally, I have a draft essay on community-based nutrition security at <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~kent/eh0090COMMUNITY.doc>

To an extent it repeats comments in the Pacific islands paper.

I would welcome discussion on any of these things.

Aloha,
George

Contribution by El Fadil Ahmed Ismail, Food Research Centre, Khartoum North, Sudan

In March 2007, an international conference on rural finance research was held in Rome under the slogan: Moving Results into Policies and Practice. And I am quite sure that, few of the outcomes of that conference were trickled down to practice in the southern hemisphere and most of the documents circulated among participants were kept with participants, at their high echelon level, and never went down to the **cellular** level, the level professor Kent was talking about. I hope that I am wrong in this harsh conclusion, but this might reflect the real world situation (after each gathering) about our perception to the problems and to our capacity to react to it as well. Indeed, we really need to **think differently to see where do we stand, where we are going, how long the trip of change will take and how much it cost to induce that change?**

The global political environment is now changing from extreme rightist perspectives to the world to a new Obama's era; that is a change in/of attitudes and looking at things differently. However, the ability to successfully uncover perspectives is an important ingredient of **systems** that aim to effectively address needs such as "why do we need to think differently?"

There are many motivations why people sharing original insights or knowledge on a particular issue have different views, while others reflect -echo- on an issue that is currently popular in the news media, and still others share stories that happened in their personal life.

Mrs Huyen, the moderator, brought me into scenery to respond in this important issue" looking at

things differently" and I am afraid, what I have written here at midnight (for fear of power to cut off) might not be useful or to the level to be shared with others. But what I do believe in is, sharing our experiences, whatever humble they seem to be, might be useful to uncover additional perspectives of the poverty, hunger and malnutrition problem. In this instance, I shall tell three different stories that reflect our status quo condition of thinking.

At times, our focus targets very "minute" issues (not necessarily 'specific'), and then drastically broadened to uncontrollable limit, and sometimes we concentrate at multi-dimensional issues that make us **lose track** on the over all picture or solution of our problems. In my opinion, it is a **problem of specialization** which makes us see what we are used to see and walk on the same road we are used to go everyday. We rarely think of looking at a thing differently, because this incurs extra effort, time, and cost; or may even be at the worst, to keep on wrong tracks for "hidden" interests.

The **first story** I passed through long time ago while I was reading an introduction of a text book on agricultural extension in early 80's. It tells about an American farmer who wants to grow hens in his farm. He bought ten hens, dug 10 holes and put the legs, watered them and in a couple of days he passed by to see how far they have grown up. Simply, he found them dead. He then said, "Well, hens may not be grown like this" and he decided to try for the next time. He brought another 10 and this time he put the head of each in a whole and in the day after he was surprised to find them also dead. After the second trial he decided not to do on his own but consult an extension-agent through the phone. After describing the situation to the extension-man, the latter paused for a while thinking about the possible causes to recommend him a suitable solution. After few seconds the extension agent said, "I think the problem is in the soil, probably lacking some mineral nutrients like nitrogen or phosphorous!

The **second story** dated to mid nineties while I was doing my Ph D at Hohenheim University in Germany. An American visiting professor (in agric. economics) was holding a speech to a number of German professors and students at the university lecture room on the priority of research in West Africa. The professor said: "Before taking off to Germany I was talking to my wife, who is a sociologist, on the research agenda he is going to undertake in the coming five years". "My wife then smiled and said "I wonder, why do you spend time and money on obvious things which do not require all that, this just needs decision"!

The **third story** happened to me with a Kenyan fellow while drafting my final Ph D work using (386) computer in early 1996. I was using WordPerfect DOS software in writing while he was doing well with word in windows. One day he asked me to shift to windows for it has many advanced features and I insisted to continue using the thing I used to know **for I have no time to spend a couple of weeks to learn a new software package; time is scarce I cried**. He then burst into laughter and said "You are like a farmer who uses an old ax to cut trees while his neighbour is using a saw machine"; Ismail, you keep saying "I am busy all the day, I do not have time to sharpen my ax!"

The moral of the stories and the way forward to looking differently.

My view point here is the **misconception** (mis-conceptualization) **of our problems** which definitely leads to misperception by different audience, including our poor farmers. Odongo, was right in saying "...These limitations are to some extent linked to factors (acquired, inherited or imposed) that influence our predisposition and capacity to think and act differently, particularly in a creative fashion". On my side I do recall what we were taught at the university class that, a seed can not give better off than its genetic constituent "potential" what so ever fertilizers added or seedbed optimally prepared or adequate water made available for it. It only gives the maximum potential it genetically has, if these prerequisites are adequately met. The problem which stands here is not limited to our intellectual capacity as "educates", but also to our performance and conduct. For instance, many "educates" usually behave as typical "technocrats" (sometimes with half-knowledge) who 'are/were blessed' to guide the poor to the desired paradise simply by philosophizing the "unclear" to appear as "clear" and vice versa the

"clear" to be very "confusing" to the poor farmers who want deeds and not talks.

Looking differently is just like uncover different perspectives on a given issue. For **obvious things we do not need to dig up into more research and waste time and money**. But **who will tell us that this is obvious**. For instance, an unspecialized layman can some times give insights into problems that bother scientists, just because he is looking at it differently from others and use common sense; without making colouration that is usually accompanied by self-interest. To help uncover perspectives, **use unspecialized people to give insights into the problem**; just like brining people from industry or engineers to contribute to Hunger and malnutrition from their engineering perspectives. Indeed, the use of internal sources of information (like the one available by FAO & the documentary library) does not generate different views on the topic of hunger and food insecurity as it becomes clear from the previous discussions of Andrew MacMillan. Unique relevant options are found by both of the perspectives (Prof. Kent and Odongo, the Ugandan fellow). As such the **combination of people from different disciplines or a mixture of various levels (Red, Blue, Pink and White collars)** might be more useful to FAO, and similar forums.

Regards

Dr. El Fadil Ahmed Ismail

Food Research Centre, Khartoum North SUDAN

Contribution by El Fadil Ahmed Ismail

Again, if we **stop talking or even doing new research on things which are already obvious**, and clear, we could have saved time and money to move results into practice. But the question is **how?**

In this respect I shall retrieve from previous discussions what I do agree with:

- It is a mistake to always look upward for remedies for the hunger problem and ignore the inward look (Kent).
- If we deny the negative part of selfishness, there would be no shortage of food in the world; rather, there would just be a shortage of opportunities that can be reallocated in a more fair, equitable and justifiable fashion. In other words opportunists are usually not fair in sharing resources equitably; they tend to keep their own interests on the expense of majority's interests; a new debate on Pareto optimality condition.
- As Prof. Kent said, "We have ample evidence that rapid progress can be made by applying a twin-track strategy that attacks both the causes and the consequences of extreme poverty and hunger". If we agree on this, then what is missing is just leadership with integrated vision and capacity to identify and solve problems. As Odongo earlier said "...There are technicians who are better at the precise application of a menu of solutions to the predetermined problems", just let us move forward by creating good leadership which comes through good governance that overall means transparency, integrity, accountability and responsibility.

Find below some **suggestions** that may look differently from the usual ones we find in reports:

Can we improve the situation of poverty and food security just by looking differently? Or is it a matter of introducing new perspectives to the problem?

In a new global approach, one of the means to sharpen our tools to better face hunger and poverty is thinking of commercializing the institutions mandated to combat them, the FAO and the sisters. The idea is simply, 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. Based on this obvious and simple fact, FAO agric. development strategy should emphasize on the need to commercialize its activities. Thus, can we think of providing successful examples on commercializing the FAO? In other word, 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 simply to eliminate or minimize political influences and interventions against farmers' interests.

Being a blue-collar lay man, I provide the first chick and I am sure others can modify or detail this proposal to embrace the processes, the challenges, the implications, and the prospects. Of course, appropriate human and technical skills available by FAO combined with appropriate and continuous training by recipients can best be achieved through profit seeking entity rather than a Bureaucratic agency like FAO.

Issue (questions) that require further debate:

- Besides using the external vs. internal sources, can we incorporate perspectives from other UN organizations, other disciplines or branches of sciences other than the ones we already know? and
- What are effective ways to combine perspectives from different sources?
- To what extent could the previous discussions on this issue "thinking differently" change the current situation?

Regards,

Dr. El Fadil Ahmed Ismail
Food Research Centre, Khartoum North SUDAN

Contribution by Jean Balié, FAO's Agricultural Development Economics Division (ESA)

Dear colleagues of the forum,

As we are talking about things to be looked at differently, we may also want to talk about **things that could be done differently**. In that respect, there is an increasing recognition that we need to improve or up-scale the way we address food security through policy. Indeed, analyzing and understanding food security as a policy issue cross-cutting several sectors and having multiple dimensions requires technical and policy skills, of course, but also requires **political and social analytical capacities to better describe the reality of how policy decisions affecting food security are made, enforced, and monitored**. This means there is a need to add in the analytical framework for food security and particularly the twin-track that is been used in several countries another dimension referring to the human related aspects of policy making. There is actually a need for a renewed paradigm for food security analysis building on the twin-track and **including governance and institutional dimensions for food security**. Such a new "track" or dimension would help move from the "what to do" to the "how to do" to make changes happen and register significant results on food security.

I see two ways to better address this need in relation to food security policies: **better shape the process of assistance and better adapt the profile of the expertise**.

Regarding the **process** without entering into many details, doing things differently would mean for example to **align the policy assistance process with the national policy context**. This means that policy assistance work starts before the actual provision of assistance to help FAO, for example, 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. Providers of policy assistance need to realize that 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.

Regarding the **expertise**, the **profiles** of those who are providing assistance should be selected so that not only **technical soundness** is secured but also other key ingredients such as the **ability to analyze and understand the institutional set-up** within which the policy will be designed and implemented.

On this particular point, I want to share some experiences regarding the way FAO has been providing policy assistance to countries. Something that seems to be changing is the growing recognition of the importance of the so called “**soft skills**” in providing policy advice. In a recent FAO publication these skills are defined as competences required for specific but essential aspects of policy work referring to political economy, political science, sociology, negotiation, facilitation and communication. Building on the experience accumulated through the FAO Netherlands Partnership Programme on the provision of assistance for food security and nutrition, one major conclusion regards the need in the design of the policy assistance project to build **well composed multidisciplinary team** that can cover a wide spectrum of **soft, technical and analytical skills**. Indeed, it is very often impossible to find all the required skills in one expert and it is also unlikely that all these skills will be required at the same moment in the policy assistance process. Therefore it is good practice to think in terms of **team** that needs to be composed of **complementary profiles** and made of individuals that can be mobilized when specific skills are required to address specific situations.

Jean Balié
Economist, ESA
Coordinator FMPP-Food Security
www.fao.org/tc/tca/negotiation
www.fao.org/es/esa

Contribution by Andrew MacMillan

The discussion began slowly but its speed has picked up in the last few weeks. I do not intend to try to summarise all the points made but simply to share some reflections on some of the observations that have been made, in terms that some members of the forum might find unduly blunt but which I hope might encourage them to swing into action!

1. The global food management system is in a mess: ample food is being produced for all the world's population, but:
 - a. The environmental costs in terms of natural resource degradation are huge, not accounted for in prices, and are limiting prospects for future generations to feed themselves
 - b. One in 7 people do not have enough to eat, over half the 9 million under-five year old deaths that occur each year are largely attributable to prenatal and infant under-nutrition, and some 40% of the world's population suffer from one form of malnutrition or another, including the malnutrition of eating too much.
2. That there is such an unfortunate situation may be attributable to a lethal combination of indifference and incompetence.
3. Some indifference is deliberate through the calculated use of power to restrict food availability. Most indifference, however, is due to a general lack of knowledge and understanding of the scale of the food problem and of the vast suffering that it causes. A widely held view in the

international community that hunger would disappear as a result of poverty reduction has not been helpful. Some indifference may be because of a fatalistic perception that nothing can be done to improve the situation. As long as there is general indifference about hunger and malnutrition, the motivation for governments to take action are limited.

4. Incompetence is rife at all levels – local, national and global. One of the most distressing problems, however, is squabbling and rivalry between institutions – both inter-governmental and non-governmental - at the international level. Instead of combining resources and programmes to offer integrated solutions to the problems, they tend to be dismissive of initiatives and actions taken by others and to push only for recognition of their particular programmes. As a consequence, much energy and money that could be devoted to reducing hunger and malnutrition is expended in seemingly endless debates and in competing for scarce resources, with little benefiting those in need..

5. The result is a massive under-commitment, at all levels, to get to grips with one of the most serious and needless problems affecting humanity.

6. In spite of this, there seems to be a growing consensus that, while actions have to be tailor-made to national situations, successful programmes need to simultaneously address both production and access dimensions of the problem in mutually reinforcing ways. Few people now dispute the important role that small-scale farmers can play in expanding food output, and there seems to be a growing recognition of the need for targeted social protection programmes. There is a large measure of agreement on the need for nutrition and hygiene education and to improve access to clean water and safe sanitation. These kinds of programmes have been described in broadly similar ways in both the Anti-Hunger Programme and the Report of the UN Hunger Task Force, and are also picked up in the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food.

7. Where the consensus starts to fall apart is in the details, for instance on the technological approaches of small-scale farm development, the role of supplements in improving the quality of nutrition, the extent to which land reform is part of the solution. The danger is that heated debate on the details throws a spanner in the works and stops any action at all, even on uncontested elements of programmes.

8. One of the messages coming out of the current discussion is that sound programmes are best built at the local level, reinforcing community self-reliance and using available resources better. Many examples of successful local level institutional innovation have been cited, including Food Policy Councils and Farmer Field Schools.

9. In spite of the near-consensus about the essential core elements of successful programmes, the majority of the growing number of countries that have embarked on national food security programmes have tended to address only the production dimension, often through using ever heavier doses of externally supplied inputs, usually with encouragement from the international community. It is, however, most unlikely that they will make fast progress in the reduction of hunger, as there is a very weak link between expanded farm output, even when this comes from small-scale farmers, and improved nutrition amongst non-farming families even within the same communities.

10. If the numbers of chronically hungry people are to come down quickly, much more attention will need to be given to improving the capacity of poor families to access the food that they need for a healthy life. Indeed, in many countries, social protection programmes should probably be the dominant components of food security and nutrition interventions. Policy measures, leading to more equitable income and asset distribution, can also have a major impact. And at the international level, trade-related issues also need to be tackled.

11. Results in countries such as Brazil that have aimed for a fast reduction in hunger and malnutrition show that twin-track approaches, especially when applied within a human rights framework, a supportive policy environment and with strong civil society engagement, can achieve huge progress in a short time.

12. In this setting, I suppose as members of the FSN Forum, we should be asking ourselves what we and those with whom we work and live can each do to improve the situation. Perhaps we could:

- a. Use every opportunity to promote the fundamental idea that it is unjust – and unnecessary – that any human should be hungry or seriously malnourished.
- b. 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.
- c. Share knowledge of successful experiences, nationwide and local, and try to understand the reasons for success.
- d. 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.
- e. 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.
- f. 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.
- g. 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.

If we work in these general directions, we can, I believe, start to make a difference, and help to overcome the mess!

Andrew MacMillan

Contribution by Abdul Raziq, from Pakistan

I am Abdul Raziq, an animal scientist working on the issues of livestock breeds and their keepers rights.

There is no doubt that sufficient food is produced globally but improper distribution and waste at different level makes fighting hunger impossible. Food should be treated as the basic need of human being, not only a commodity just for sale. Sufficient food is available in the market but the masses face hunger because of the unavailability of money.

Once i wrote an article which was mostly based on the information available on the net. I organized the information and i think that if we think about the issue of hunger and malnutrition from another angle, there might be some solutions for the problem.

I once again present the article for discussion in the FSN forum:
http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=796&nocache=1.

Let's think differently

Best regards

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Dr. Abdul Raziq

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