

FSN FORUM DISCUSSION No. 41  
**LOOKING BACK TO EFFECTIVE RURAL PRACTICES ... DID WE MISS  
SOMETHING?**  
FROM 31 AUGUST TO 21 SEPTEMBER 2009

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Forum Colleagues,

My name is Walter Mwasaa I am a relief aid worker with specific interest in food security in Sub-Saharan Africa, having worked in Somalia and currently in Sierra Leone.

I am often challenged by the widespread food shortages and livelihood insecurity in rural areas. Talking to the local populations in Sierra Leone, Somalia and Kenya, there are often recalls of times gone by when the same communities were able to provide enough for themselves.

I am doing a research project Kenya on changing livelihoods looking back at how the changes in food production and people's way of earning incomes have evolved with a special interest in what could have been carried forward to ensure self-sufficiency.

It is certain that communities are practising modern systems of production that are geared to producing more food and improved living standards. I am however at a loss in looking at how many communities are still unable to produce sufficient food. Policies and structural systems are partly responsible for the situation.

Since the end of the World War various attempts to assist poor countries have been put in place but success has been variable and in some cases retrogression with development efforts has resulted harming the very fragile communities it had hoped to aid.

Robert Chambers ("Whose reality counts? Putting the last first") among other questions challenges us to "put the last first" and attempts to ensure that our assistance is seen and focussed on those that we assist.

This said I am inviting members to contribute to the subject: **Looking back ... did we miss something?**

**1. Are there practices that rural communities had that have been discarded that would have assisted in achieving a greater effect on poverty and hunger?**

**2. Is there evidence of communities blending 'traditional' production and livelihood systems with modern practise that has shown some success?**

**3. Any literature on the subject will also be much appreciated.**

Many thanks in advance for your inputs.

Walter Mwasaa  
CARE International