

Zeroing Hunger as a Public Concern: Where Rests Developing Countries Priorities?

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Commentary

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Abstract

The bout with hunger can be won by 2030 in developing countries when priorities are set right. The priorities of developing countries must be shifted from the quick fixes of hunger programs without a review to enhancing all existing local and regional food systems, coupled with an appraised local or national food defense plan, and a minimum nutritional benchmark of local diets based on a local or regional foods and nutrition data base systems. All these systems must be coordinated to yield a national food systems plan for action.

To make our prize fight with hunger successful and more sustainable, these systems and plans must be reviewed and updated timely.

Keywords: Hunger; Prize Fight; Food Defense Plan; Food Systems; Data Base; Nutritional

Introduction

Hunger has been a big hero of the world in more than a millennia. More particular, where every 1 in 9 persons are reported to be malnourished [1]. As a result of this, the sustainable development goals 2 (SDG-2) wants to eliminate hunger in the world by 2030 [2].

The hungry suffer in silent and this threatens and discomforts everyone in the developing world especially the women, the unborn, babies, children, disabled, adolescent, the poor and the affluent and even household animals.

There have been efforts by development partners to tackle this problem on the African continent with appropriate programs such as vitamin A fortification, iron

supplementation and fortification, iodine fortification, ready to use therapeutic foods solutions [3], nutrition education in schools, school feeding programs [4,5] complementary foods and supplementary foods solutions.

Further, the challenge to zero hunger was defined to mean: 100% access to adequate food for all year round, zero stunted children less than 2 years, all food systems are sustainable, 100% increase in the smallholder productivity and income, and the zero loss or waste of food [2].

Despite an undersized impact of these interventions, hunger shines in these developing countries as a result of food systems breach or in most cases the existence of weak food system regimes. Most people in Africa derive foods from small holder farmers in the informal sectors of

their economies, who supply their produce to specific local food markets. These foods as produced by these small holder farmers are stored, processed and sold in a weak local and regional food system regimes on the continent often characterized with some unsatisfactory levels of hazards be its physical, biological and chemical.

The sustainability of efforts to zero hunger, a public concern is with initiatives such as a robust and principled food system plans that first measure and monitor a satisfactory hazard guidelines across the African continent than the quick fixes of some programs that are been undertaken across the developing countries especially without regard to a review of those sickening local and regional food systems in which these various programs are to be functional in e.g. the school feeding program, where sourced ingredients from the local markets are prone to risks of chemical hazards such as aflatoxins in maize and peanut, potential chemical residue of those sourced ingredients and Sudan IV dye in palm oil, are not monitored for example but are used to prepare dishes to feed students.

This commentary analyses the priorities of those 'unseen hands' that hinder efforts to dramatically zero hunger on the African continent. Further, I seek to highlight that with a robust food system plans that is inclusive, directs, coordinates, educate, measure, monitor and is nutrition responsive is the best principled module to ensure a safer and healthy foods for all to the household level on the Africa continent.

A Short Celebration of a Hunger Intervention: A Look At Ghana's School Feeding Program

The concept of school feeding program was well hailed in 2005 when it was first introduced in Ghana. The objectives of the program across most developing countries were to reduce hunger and malnutrition, increase school enrolment, attendance and retention, and to boost local food production in deprived communities [4,6].

The program especially the Ghana School feeding program was to influence a reduction in post-harvest losses, to promote increased production and to enhance food sovereignty [6]. The soundless resolutions of the 'unseen hands' on food and nutrition matters tend to look for the short term praises as deduced from the speed with which the program was piloted, implemented and expanded across Ghana without an option to an appraised national food defense plan, a robust national or regional

food systems strategies and a minimum nutritional benchmark of local diets based on a local or regional foods and nutrition data base systems as a backbone to the program that ensures the safety and nutritional wellness of the local foods.

Although, the intervention was to fight hunger with a hot meal at school where the pupils spend about 8 to 9 hours, no mechanism exist to verify and maintain the hotness of foods served to pupils. Again, what about hunger among the general population, where pupils spend at least 12 hours of their time? What mechanisms exist to support those? In effect, addressing food and nutrition issues in developing countries need holistic approaches as analyzed.

I support the thought that school feeding program on its own tackles the signs of hunger in the short term but not the root causes [7]. However, the program can complicate hunger in Ghana in the long term if the quality issues are not mitigated with a robust and an encompassing food system plans. The question been asked is what is the quality of ingredients used in preparing foods and the food served with respect to its physical attributes, satisfactory levels of chemical and microbiological attributes, sensory and nutritional attributes? Again, what systems justify these qualities of the produce along the value chain? Further, how safe and nutritious are these foods that are served to the school children across Ghana. These issues are well within the remit of a robust national or regional food system plan that monitor the quality attributes of raw materials for the program.

Where Rest Our Priorities to Zero Hunger?

The FAO defines, food system as encompassing all the stages of keeping us fed: growing, harvesting, packing, processing, transforming, marketing, consuming and disposing of food [8,9].

For developing countries to achieve a zero hunger, their definition of food system must be one that is principled so my take is that a 'principled food system implies using appropriate structures and methods to grow crops, raise animals, add value to these respective produce, such that the structures and methods guarantees maximum safety and wellness of the produce as a healthy food'.

Although the challenge to zero hunger is in five (5) priorities that are 100% access to adequate food for all

year round, zero stunted children less than 2 years, all food systems are sustainable, 100% increase in the smallholder productivity and income, and the zero loss or waste of food [2]. The topmost priority by developing countries must be the issue of developing a principled food system.

It is that one thing if gotten right will address fundamentally the root issues of hunger on the continent. The first, second, third and fifth priorities cannot be achieved without a robust local, regional and a national food system that ensure that foods of various origins and transformations are safe and healthy. What will be the point if an increase of 100% in adequate food all year round and those foods are not safe? So the answer to developing countries challenges to zero hunger is a call to reviewing existing food systems at all levels of governance and to implement measures that strengthens the system on account of safety and wellness or rather to initiate a new robust food system. Further, who benefit if smallholders' productivity is increase 100 percent and their food products are found to be unsafe? This occurs in most developing countries because efforts made to increase smallholder's productivity act in disregard to the sickening food system environment that is severely challenged. Again, we waste food in the developing world unknowingly due to uncoordinated, weak and unprincipled food systems.

Most developing countries food systems issues due to lack of principles are dominated with adulteration issues, aflatoxins, microbiological issues, lack of food and nutrition education among consumers, weak surveillance issues, and lack of well trained personnel, food fraud, and repackaging of expired food products, Sudan dye in palms oils, climate change issues, among others.

Our foremost priority to zero hunger by 2030 must be achieved with an appropriate and principled national food system strategies that addresses those concerns stated above and must be one that is also inclusive of positive local traditional norms and practices with respect to nutrition and safety.

Author Disclosures

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