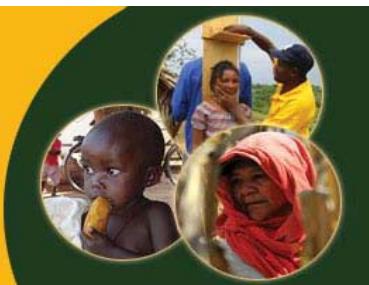




LEVERAGING AGRICULTURE FOR IMPROVING NUTRITION & HEALTH

International Conference | 10-12 February 2011 | New Delhi, India



Rapporteur Note

Session: Social Levers

Emily J. Levitt

Rapporteur Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition Specialist, FANTA-2 Project,
AED, USA

Chair: **Laura Birx**, Senior Nutrition and Food Security Advisor, USAID

Panelists:

Adriana Veiga Aranha, Professor, Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais, and Special Advisor to the Minister, Zero Hunger Advisory Board, Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger, Brazil

Lisa Dreier, Director, Food Security and Development Initiatives, World Economic Forum, USA

Charlotte Dufour, Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihoods Officer, Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, Italy

T. Vijay Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, and Director, National Rural Livelihoods Mission, India

Xing Li, Economist, Swiss Reinsurance Company, Ltd. Beijing Branch, China

Overview

Five country experiences (Brazil, Afghanistan, Mauritania, China, and India) and one private sector perspective present the many diverse and entrepreneurial ways that people are working to overcome food insecurity around the world. The session highlighted the importance of listening to and working with those directly affected, and that large-scale success is possible when joint ownership of solutions occurs. Presenters also shared about strategic approaches and some tools that may be used to achieve positive change. One important element common to many of the country experiences was creating a shared conceptual framework that could be used across sectors jointly towards the goal of improved food security and nutrition.

Experience from Brazil

President Lula, Brazil's former president, considered the fight against hunger a priority in his administration and made great efforts to overcome it. The "Zero Hunger" program was launched in 2003 to fight extreme poverty—to ensure human right to adequate food; it articulates several programs and

actions including greater synergy among public policies, and promotes Food and Nutrition Security. These policies included income transfers, school feeding, and support to public restaurants and food banks. From 2003-2008 extreme poverty was reduced by 50%, from 17.5% to 8.8% below extreme poverty line. Social mobilization and the promotion of healthy diets were keys to the success achieved in Brazil.

Key lessons learned:

- Economic growth does not ensure proportional reduction in poverty and hunger, in Brazil there has historically been very unequal income inequalities
- Agricultural growth based on agribusiness does not imply hunger reduction
- Agricultural growth can worsen the situation if it leads to imperfect market competition, concentration of land ownership
- Well-built and sustainable political commitment, above parties that relies on large popular approval, is crucial to pass through resistance

Perspectives from the private sector

Business has tremendous and mostly untapped **potential** to help with food security, nutrition and health, and many efforts are underway. The private sector can achieve **impact**; it is innovative and works at large scale. **Collaboration** is key: Business can offer skills and help build capacities; we need to work in partnership with civil society, governments, and other organizations.

At the World Economic Forum, there have been two main ways business can contribute to agriculture, nutrition and health: specific solutions (e.g., fortification, business models) and helping to solve the puzzle, thinking through a holistic approach. Through engaging private sector in 1:1 partnerships or collaborative efforts around a value chain, or productivity of nutritional status of a community or region, businesses can work with others to see how they can combine resources to get solutions. A strategy for partnership is summarized in a “**Roadmap for stakeholders**”. The roadmap was launched at DAVOS, where farmer leaders sat with CEOs and heads of state to define how they can work together to combine capacities in a more effective way. This approach has created a sense of shared responsibility for food security.

Experiences from Afghanistan and Mauritania

Charlotte Dufour described a FAO project in Afghanistan funded by Germany, with MoA in close collaboration with the health sector. FAO worked to mainstream nutrition across policies and programs, and worked with all sectors at all levels. Important to the project's success was feeding back local knowledge and experiences on a very regular basis to policymakers.

Dufour noted that it was important to create a common language and framework for dialogue across sectors. An effective tool for achieving a common language and framework for dialogue is FAO's Problem-Solution tree methodology, which makes visible the necessity of multisectorality, everyone sees their relative role; no persuasion is required. In Afghanistan, FAO was opportunistic, and focused on nutrition education, using the same messages (including guidance on complementary feeding recipes) across a range of community-level platforms including:

- Literacy circles (thousands of them)
- Poultry groups
- Community Health Workers
- School gardens
- Agricultural coops

The Afghan Minister of Agriculture has recently asked Parliament for \$2 million to continue this work funded through the government rather than outside sources.

The Spanish MDG Fund is also supporting a similar effort in Mauritania. This project has set up coordination structures (regional, district, village) for improved food security and nutrition. Joint programming occurs and provides a good opportunity to bring the different sectors together. Dufour emphasized that we need to invest in skills development. This is not sufficiently addressed in current scaling up initiatives. Joint planning, communication, and facilitation are required. Through these types of efforts, people are empowered to improve their nutrition.

Experience from China

Rural poverty has been declining, but absolute poverty in rural areas is still high. There have been changes in dietary patterns, with increased consumption of animal source foods. Income is increasing. In 2009, China saw 7% growth among farmers, a national record. China has worked to stimulate farmers to increase production. The government has instituted market reforms, opening markets for agricultural input and outputs. The government also introduced agricultural insurance across the country, as a Public-Private Partnership to aid farmers with risk management. Lessons learned in China include that adequacy of food output does not mean good nutrition. It is necessary to care about food safety, and production standards. We're showing that a reasonable diet and food safety are important for government concern.

Experience from India

T. Vijay Kumar shared about a statewide poverty eradication program, the "Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty". This program covers all villages in Andhra Pradesh (AP). Through it, 11 million poor women have been organized into self-help groups (950,000 groups). There are 150 women per group. Over 90% of rural poor women are involved in AP. These groups function as credit groups and have regular meetings. A goal of the program has been consumption smoothing and support for collective action.

The groups set up a nutrition center where women get 3 hot cooked meals each day which are nutritionally balanced. Pregnant women come to the center during the first trimester and have this nutrition support through delivery. Lactating mothers can come for one year. Women contribute to cost of the program. There are presently 2,000 centers. The impact of the program has been a rapid decline in the infant mortality rate in AP. Small farmers have also seen improved profits from participating in providing food for the program. Nutrition and health are driving agriculture. The program works with 1 million farmers. Key lessons learned from this program include that it can be successful to invest in the poor, building their institutions. Further, sustainable solutions can emerge when people themselves develop and manage these solutions.

Discussion points:

- It is important to overcome the skepticism of working with the private sector. It is important to **tell the private sector what we want**, and work with them to improve the food system.
 - Private sector partners are looking at Base of the Pyramid models, working with the poor. Do businesses understand and listen to the community? That is a determinant of success. Businesses need to engage with communities as customers, suppliers, and deal with them in a professional dignified manner. Companies which have achieved a real breakthrough, listened to communities and this was a real essential factor of success, when they understood what customer/business partner needed.
- It is important to educate policymakers, too, not just 'nutrition education' but '**nutrition literacy**'
- We need to approach this work as "**investing in the poor** and **working with them** as agents of change" vs. a charity approach
- A common challenge faced in national programs is **staff turnover**; it is important to institutionalize training so that skills and knowledge are not housed only in externally-funded projects.
- We have a common enemy—poor diets
 - **Everybody eats, we have to work together.**
- Brazil: We had one concept and brought the key stakeholders together every few years; WFP's Purchase for Progress approach inspired Brazil's work—buy from small farmers, sell to government
- India: Many people said you can't have agriculture without chemicals.
 - We disproved them. **Farmers when challenged came up with solutions.**