

**ASSURING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN AFRICA BY 2020:
Prioritizing Action, Strengthening Actors, and Facilitating Partnerships**
April 1–3, 2004, Kampala, Uganda

SUMMARY NOTE

- Plenary Panel:** **Improving Implementation: What Can Lessons from Successes and Failures Teach Us?**
- Panelist:** *Hans-Joachim Preuss*, Secretary General, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe, Germany
- Title:** **Implementation of Food and Nutrition Security Programs: Experiences of Deutsche Welthungerhilfe/German Agro Action**
- Date:** April 2, 2004

From Policies to Households

Food and nutrition security at global and national levels is highly related with agricultural and economic policies. Given the present emphasis attributed to global governance politicians, donors, and researchers in industrialized and developing countries are more interested in international and national food markets and trade, economic, and agricultural policies and so on. However, at the community- and household-level food and nutrition security has its roots in a complex of factors like poverty, cultural habits and traditions, gender inequality, education, time availability, nutritional knowledge, care practices, the physical environment, etc. Usually, those involved in activities at one end of this spectrum rarely are aware of what is happening at the other. Policies at **macro** level, which seem to be developmentally sound cannot be fully implemented at due to a number of reasons unknown to its makers. Implementation at **meso** (e.g., community) and **micro** (households, families, individuals), thus, is critical for the success of whatever policy.

Conceptual Framework

Food and nutrition security is achieved, if adequate food is available and accessible for and satisfactorily utilized by all individuals at all times to achieve good nutrition for a healthy and happy life. This concept incorporates the categories **availability** of adequate food for the public, **access** to food what is given when households and individuals within those households have sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods and, last but not least, the **utilization** of food, which is influenced by the ability of a human body to ingest and to metabolize culturally adapted food.

The nutritional status of an individual (cf. Figure 1) depends, thus on his or her (i) **food intake** and (ii) **health status**. For the first result to achieve, **food availability** through production, purchase or donation and the **caring capabilities** of the respective household are crucial; the latter depends on the existence of **health services** and **environmental determinants**, e.g. housing and other environmental conditions.

Moreover, the actual situation of the communities and individuals must be taken care of. Figure 2 shows the continuum of different stages of food and nutrition security, which requires a differentiated mix of interventions. On the left, e.g. after a natural or man-made disaster, services and infrastructures are not available making the free provision of commodities a prerequisite for the survival of vulnerable people. Subsequently, self-help measures that build the basis for future development can be started. At the end of the spectrum, the classical technical cooperation's instruments can be put in place. This diagram is a simplified model, which reflects the situation for one specific target group only. As a matter of fact, the given situation affects different groups of a community in a very different way: one group still relies on food aid or food-for-work programs while others already benefit from credit schemes.

These relationships must be considered when implementing food and nutrition security programmes at meso and micro level.

GAA's Experiences from Food and Nutrition Security Programs

Our evaluation reports constitute the empirical basis for this review of major experiences. It is clear, that we argue from the point of view of a nongovernmental organization.

External help vs. self-help capacities of communities

It is interesting to note that neither international development agencies nor national development bodies believe in self-help capacities of local people. The wealth of knowledge and the potential of mutual solidarity of community-based organisations are often neglected. It is not argued here that external services are useless; however, they tend to provide more than is needed or they do not provide the right assistance.

1. Local people have to contribute physically and financially to the success of programs in a substantial manner. Interventions should be concentrated on those communities who are good performers.
2. Assessment of local capacities is crucial not only for quantifying external support but to find out the right intervention. Participation of beneficiaries is more helpful than good intentions.

Government vs. private services

Donor agencies, international NGOs, and governments show a tendency to take over all necessary responsibilities for development. Fertilizer supply, credit schemes, market operations, etc. can be run by private services if attractive terms and demand is given over several years. Extension and health services can be provided by nongovernmental organizations more effectively and efficiently than government bodies. However, a set of rules and regulations is imperative to guarantee that objectives are met.

3. External funds should be used to attract private business or nongovernmental organizations to satisfy the new demand. Government activities should be limited to supervision and coordination on the basis of a clear set of rules and regulations.

Donor competition vs. co-ordination of efforts

Frequently, several actors operate in a given region addressing different target groups or communities with different instruments. They often do not know what the others are doing; moreover, they are not interested to know more because they are so busy with their day-to-day project management.

4. Coordination of efforts of various actors cannot be done by a paramount institution. But they have to prove that they establish interfaces with other organisations or a coordination body enabling them to better harmonise their interventions. It is helpful, however, when a decentralized administration sets clear targets for a given region.

Fast delivery vs. community-based development

As the focus is shifting more towards fast delivery — given the high external pressure on governments but in part on nongovernmental actors too — community-based development which is slow and by no means in line with budgetary provisions is given less emphasis. Hence, the danger that quantitative targets are hit but sustainability requiring ownership and maintenance after completion is compromised.

5. More flexibility is needed to address the specific requirements of food and nutrition security programmes. Experiences show that decentralized governmental bodies are even more rigidly controlled than central ministries. Once again, private actors will perform better.

Short-term funding vs. long-term orientation of food and nutrition security

The life span of most food and nutrition security programmes is not longer than three to six years. This has helped to overcome the most severe consequences of structural malnutrition or food insecurity, but it was not long enough to institutionalize activities within the communities or households. That national government have to take over when external-funding ends is only wishful thinking.

6. As food and nutrition security programmes might be less costly as previously calculated it should be possible to allow them a longer lifetime in order to institutionalize activities within the communities and households.

Conclusion

Experiences at meso and micro levels of food and nutrition security programmes show that private business and non-governmental organisations - provided that a legal framework and supervision from government is guaranteed - can do a good job. Government bodies and private actors are to complement each other. Moreover, both have to respect the principle of subsidiarity: what people and communities can do by themselves must not be provided from outside.

Fig. 1: Nutrition Security at Household Level

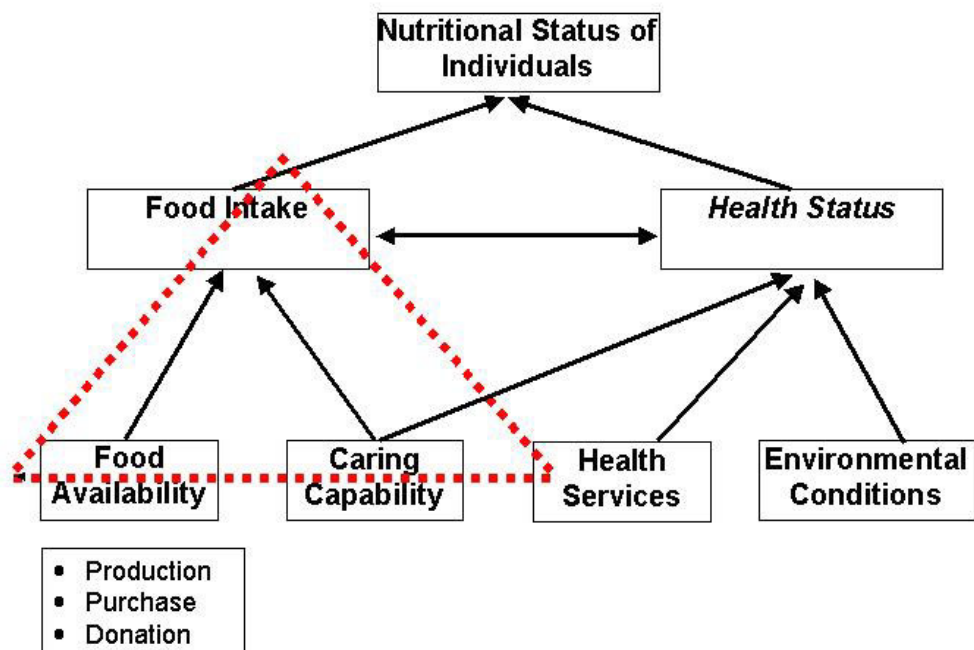
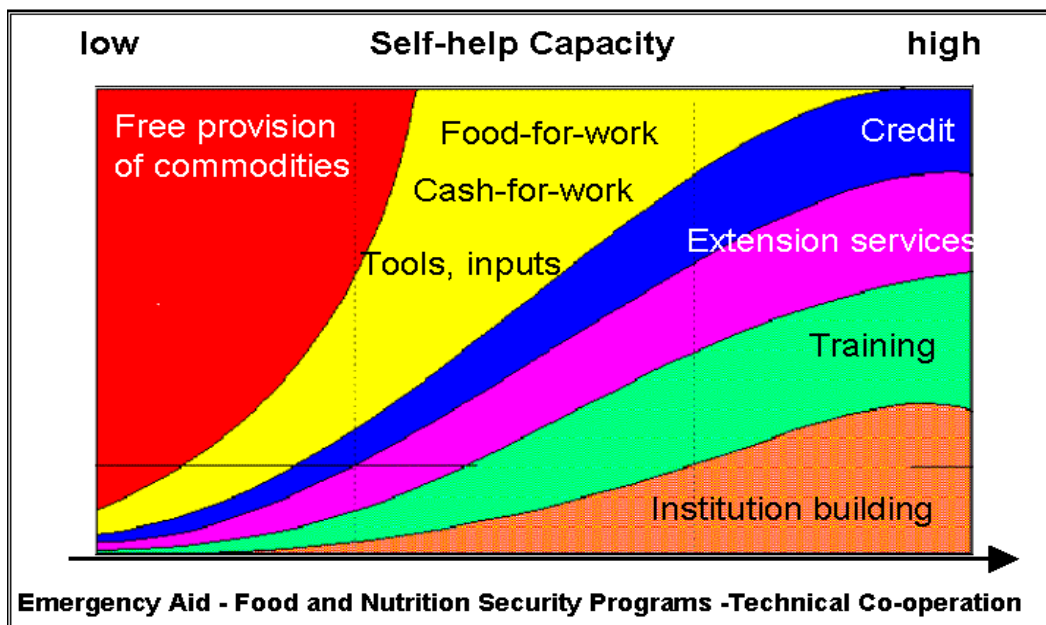


Fig. 2: Stages of Food and Nutrition Security



Note: This note has not been edited. The views expressed in this summary note are those of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by or representative of IFPRI or of the cosponsoring or supporting organizations.