

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION: Discussion

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The paper on food security on nutrition raises many very important issues including:

- Food and nutrition as a basic right;
- Impact of malnutrition on development;
- Economic costs of malnutrition;
- Malnutrition and Poverty;
- Food security and HIV/AIDS.

These relationships make it very important for all of us to work hard on bringing equity and social justice in the issues of food security and nutrition.

It is important to remind ourselves that, when the world is producing enough food to feed everybody, more than 800 million people, most of them being in developing countries, do not have enough food to cover their nutritional needs.

My discussion will focus more on the causes of malnutrition, using the conceptual framework of the causes of malnutrition, trying to bring up the areas that might be of interest to EQUINET's priorities and focus:

As EQUINET, we need to address inequities that surround these causes because unless the inequities are addressed, it may be very difficult to increase food security in the region.

The underlying causes:

Inadequate access to food, inadequate care to vulnerable groups (women and children) and inadequate essential services (education, health, water and sanitation) need to be addressed in terms of equity and capacity building. This means we need to address more than food security. Education, water and sanitation have great impact on food security and nutrition. These need to be addressed at different levels, especially community and national levels.

Basic causes:

Inadequate control and management of resources, (human, economic and organizational), inadequate education, economic structures, ideological & political superstructures, and social-cultural structure are usually the most difficult to address. However, they play a very big role in bringing about the underlying causes. These factors, as EQUINET, we need to address them at regional level and national levels. People also need to be empowered to see the inequities and injustice that exists.

The most vulnerable groups:

- Women being one of the most vulnerable groups, they are also the main food producers and processors. They also have big roles in child bearing (pregnancy and lactation)
- Infants and children: As much as we want to address infants, EQUINET should also address the older children who at times do not get as much attention as the infants.
- The sick: People living with HIV/AIDS and also other chronic illnesses
- People living in drought stricken areas, where the problem is not only food security, but also how to improve the quality of the little food available.
- The rural Vs urban population, not only have disparities on the services provided, but also access to information that will facilitate them to make right choices.
- The elderly

Other issues:

- Access to relevant information at all levels
- Food and nutrition consumer rights and protection for both rural and urban.

To address equity and social justice in food security and nutrition, EQUINET will also need to:

- Take inventory and examine existing relevant policies and guidelines at different levels (Global, Regional, National and community)
- Examine operationalization of relevant global guidelines at regional and national levels and national guidelines at community level.
- Take actions that will make relevant guidelines and policies address equity and social justice.
- Identify key entry points, eg. Equity in food and nutrition for:
 - Improving education/school attendance
 - Poverty reduction
 - Reducing diseases (preventive health) etc.