

Review of: "A Policy Dialogue for Nutrition of Women and Adolescent Girls: Sustainable Development Goals Matters Arising"

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Undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and anaemia damage adolescent girls' and women's immune systems, lower their capacity to learn, lower their earning potential, and limit their possibilities in life. They also raise the risk of potentially fatal problems during pregnancy and childbirth. These elements play a part in the gender inequality.

The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 17 or Global Goal 17) is about "partnerships to achieve the goals". SDG 17 refers to the need for non-hegemonic and just sectoral and cross-national cooperation to achieve all goals by 2030. This is a call for countries to coordinate their policies. In order to achieve the SDG 2 aim of Zero Hunger by 2030 and to end hunger, malnutrition, and poverty, women must be empowered and the gender gap in agriculture and food systems must be closed. In terms of global and regional food insecurity, women are marginally more vulnerable than men. Women's undernutrition is a global public health issue that is severely neglected and closely associated with poverty.

Eating a nutritious, well-balanced diet is the best defence against malnutrition. One should consume a range of foods from the major dietary groups, such as an abundance of fruits and vegetables, and lots of starchy meals, like bread, rice, and potatoes. Lack of food is the main cause of malnutrition in the poorer and developing countries. However, in developed countries, the cause may be more varied. For example, those with a high calorie diet deficient in vital vitamins and minerals are also considered malnourished.

Millions of women and teenage girls worldwide suffer from malnutrition, which is characterised as ill health brought on by shortages in calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals combining with infections and other unfavourable health and social circumstances. Despite the fact that the impacts of hunger on this population have been recognised for many years, women and adolescent girls continue to face particular nutritional issues that have not seen much discernible progress in recent years. The cornerstone of everyone's health is proper diet, but it's particularly crucial for women. Because nutritional deficiencies affect not only a woman's own health, but also the health of her children. Children born to undernourished mothers are more likely to be cognitively impaired, have shorter statures, and have lowered immune systems, which puts them at risk for sickness and death all their lives.

Fighting female malnutrition has numerous benefits because well-nourished women are better able to sustain their families, earn a living, and give birth to healthy children—all of which enhance national economies. The health and nutritional status of the entire family can be impacted by the nutritional knowledge—or lack thereof—of women, who are frequently in charge of growing and preparing food for their families. Promoting gender equality is crucial, and part of it

involves granting women greater authority over resources and decision-making. Improving women's nutritional status also contributes to achieving the three MDGs, which are widely recognized as a framework for measuring countries' development levels.

In the present communication, the authors emphasize on a multisectoral approach to address malnutrition among adolescent girls and women in Rwanda. The paper is well written. The study discusses the importance of improving women's nutrition and suggests policy actions to achieve positive change. However, the policy document should incorporate some specific value-addition measures aimed at a broader global audience:

- How nutrition is affecting women and adolescent girls in Rwanda? Additional information may be included regarding maternal nutritional deficiencies and the state of integration of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions.
- How maternal nutrition is affecting newborns and children? Additional background information can also be added regarding infant birth weight, infant mortality, iron deficiency and anaemia status, iodine deficiency, vitamin A deficiency, etc.
- How do women's nutrition affect the national economy? Some additional data can be included on the effects of malnutrition, which reduces human productivity and negatively impacts a country's GDP. How can the country reduce health care costs, improve mental performance, and increase adult productivity by improving the nutritional status of adolescent girls and women?
- Preventing malnutrition requires a political commitment. Public health systems prevent and treat micronutrient deficiencies, encourage households to meet the nutritional needs of women and adolescent girls throughout their lives, and ensure that they have access to quality health services, clean water, and adequate sanitation. Policy makers also need to address women's lower social status and ensure girls have access to education, including information about nutrition. Such policies can help raise women's age at first birth, an important determinant of maternal health and child survival, and encourage women to time their births.
- Addressing the needs of girls and women throughout their lives (the 'life cycle approach') can improve women's nutritional status. A clear understanding of the nutritional needs of girls and women throughout their lives and strategies to support appropriate nutrition during infancy, childhood, adolescence, pregnancy, and the postpartum period needs to be better highlighted.
- Nutritional education and food-based approaches to achieving adequate calorie and nutrient intake are important considerations. It is important to educate communities about the nutritional value of local, seasonal foods and diversity in household diets. Agricultural policies that promote the production of nutrient-dense local crops and technologies that enhance the nutritional value of food crops, fish, and livestock are important as are the provision of clean water and improved sanitation to reduce intestinal parasite infection that can worsen existing malnutrition.
- Poor and unhealthy diets and the resulting malnutrition are major drivers of non-communicable diseases around the world. All generations including the women and teenage girls must therefore be empowered with access and knowledge to make healthier, nature-positive dietary choices.
- In areas where most mothers suffer from malnutrition, feeding high-energy foods during birth breaks can result in higher birth weights for subsequent children. Increasing the time between births is also thought to be beneficial, as it helps a

woman's body rebuild its fat and micronutrient stores, leading to improved maternal health and improved pregnancy outcomes.

- Policy makers can contribute to improving the nutrition of women and children by addressing women's low status in society. Gender inequalities are often greatest among the poor, especially with regard to household investments in health and education. Addressing gender inequality can improve the health of themselves and their families by ensuring that women get the nutrition they need, ultimately contributing to the development of society.
- Increased women's control over household resources, including a greater contribution to the production of essential crops for home use and sale by the family. Providing microfinance programs that provide small loans for women's businesses is another way to empower women and improve their ability to support themselves and their families.
- There is a need for track indicators related to women's nutrition. Data on women's nutritional status can be a powerful tool to inform communities and government about the nature, extent, and impact of women's malnutrition. However, data must be collected, analysed, and disseminated on a regular basis. Policy makers need to ensure that data are collected on the prevalence of birth weight, the number of low birth weight babies and girls, and the prevalence of anaemia among adolescent girls and women of childbearing age. Policy makers can also hold governments and programme managers accountable for improving outcomes. Because nutrition is influenced by many complex factors, governments and programmes are more likely to be successful in combating malnutrition if they approach the problem from multiple perspectives. The impact of programs and policies in the areas of health, agriculture, food security, water and sanitation must be considered holistically.
- There is also a need to re-assess existing food and nutrition-related health and agriculture policy of the country and develop cross-sectoral implementation strategies on food security, nutrition, and health. Further, there is need of continuous policy advocacy activities to educate functionaries across different sectors. Developing food composition databases is vital for effective advocacy tools and critical for cross-sectoral policy and programme development.
