
ENHANCING PEOPLE'S NUTRITIONAL STATUS THROUGH REVITALISATION OF AGRICULTURE AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

Although Agriculture is the mainstay of Kenya's Economy, it is one the poorest in terms of performance as compared to other sectors. Negligence by the government in budgeting is no doubt one of the contributing factors among poverty, which is the underlying cause of hunger & malnutrition and redundancy of this sector. Use of systems approach to address agriculture, getting men into agriculture,

deliberate placement of agro industries in rural areas, revamping extension and linking it to research, and development of infrastructure are some of the strategies that have been suggested in order that people's nutritional status may be enhanced. It is not one factor that will lead to good nutrition but a collection of factors well integrated and advocated by the majority.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Agriculture is the mainstay of Kenya's Economy" is a quote that is over popularized and overrated in so many documents, from government or otherwise, that address the economic performance and way forward of this country.

What was the basis of this statement? This statement made sense at some stage and was based on the assessment of Kenya's economic performance during the first decade following independence - 1964-1973. Although it had been feared that fragmentation of the large previously white owned farms might result in a non-performing agricultural sector, at least from the commercial stand point, the contrary did in fact become the case. Kenya became an example per *excellence* where the agricultural sector was performing well against all odds, depending on small-scale agriculture. Because agriculture was indeed, and continues to be the cornerstone of Kenya's economy, as the sector performed well, so did the rest of the economy(1,2).

Since 1974, however, the reverse has not realized similar results. In other words, at times when the finance and banking sectors did well, agriculture performed dismally. In any case, since 1974, the agricultural sector has continued to stagnate at best or to worsen. What was happening within the agricultural sector that contributed to a GDP averaging 6.6% per annum during the first one decade after independence? To what extent are some of these factors still relevant today?(2,3).

For one, there was the post-independence euphoria, and who would not perform in such an environment! Second, the population was fairly manageable, around seven million at independence and a sizeable proportion of it quite scattered.

Third, colonial systems that had been put in place

lasted a while but as accessibility was facilitated to an increasing population Kenyans, these systems, structures, and institutions started to be over stretched without attendant increase in resources to address increasing demand. Fourth, as demand for facilities increased, their maintenance became an issue until some virtually ground to a halt, for example KMC (Kenya Meat Commission) and more recently the Kenya Cooperative creameries (KCC). The result is a completely disconnected agricultural sector where one cannot trace the food chain from its roots to its logical end(4).

Fifth, backstopping support systems to farmers collapsed, for reasons that range from political to sheer inept management.

Sixth, failure to address the agricultural sector in a well planned sequence, for example addressing the food chain in the case of edible produce, has meant that research output from institutions of research and higher learning have remained on the periphery as their programs and research outputs lack policy structures to link to.

Last but not least, is the extension sector that has become redundant and static because it lacks the tools of trade to perform, and the vision on how to adjust it to make it relevant to an ever changing environment.

2 AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN KENYA: CASE OF DECEIT AND NEGLIGENCE

Over the last three decades, food production in Sub-Saharan Africa has grown 2.1 percent annually but has failed to keep up with the population, which has grown 3.1 percent annually. The gap between food production and population growth has led to widespread malnutrition, hunger, poverty as well as a deteriorating natural base resource base(1,5).

Food dependency is the result of numerous difficulties. The intervention of public authorities in matters of economic management has severely damaged

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agriculture in Kenya. Disregard for the agricultural sector has led to high direct and indirect taxation and underpricing of domestic agricultural commodities; moreover there is a marked bias towards industry, favored by the adoption of general protection measures which has generated a rise in the price of industrial goods such as local farming goods. This coupled with low growers' price and the rising cost of modern technology, has weakened the agricultural sector(3).

Last year's (2000) budget paid little attention to the agricultural sector. In contrast to manufacturing, the agricultural sector was mentioned in passing. This is despite the fact that farming contributes to about 70 percent of gross domestic product and accounts for 80 percent of the total employment³. The poor road network in rural areas, unavailable power supply and high cost of credit to farmers were not addressed. Neither did the Ministers statement express interest in the co-operatives sector, which markets the bulk of the cash crop produce. This follows a traditional trend, more so in the past five years where apart from reminding Kenyans that "agriculture is the backbone of the economy", finance ministers announced few concrete measures to develop the sector. Granted, this was this particular minister's maiden budget speech! As will be seen later in 2001, there has been a major attempt to address this situation.

In 1996, the sector was treated lightly. Minister Musalia Mudavadi only proposed an increase of funding " for all agricultural activities by 7 percent to Kshs. 818 million (10.3 million US dollars). He mentioned the gradual phasing out of subsidized provision of seeds and other inputs, and plans to provide research and extension services on a cost sharing basis.

In 1997, he promised to improve the physical infrastructure, and allocated 7 percent, or Kshs 342 million (4.3 millions) of the development budget to the then Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Development and Marketing. Hon. Mudavadi also made "additional provisions" under the energy sector for the rural electrification mainly in the coffee and other rural factories(3).

In 1998, when the sector recorded a decline of 30 percent with cash and food crops registering substantial declines, the then Finance Minister, Hon. Simeon Nyachae proposed to renew the Law on importation and suspended duty on processed agricultural produce. He also suspended the presumption income tax and gave farmers access to chemical fertilizer and wider range of plastic sheeting for green houses, free of custom duties. He also allocated more funds for road maintenance, based on an agreement with the European Union for matching funds to supplement cess collected from cash crops. Mr. Musalia also spoke of a scheme, which would start in early 1999 that would provide financial support to small-scale producers, particularly maize and beans.

In 1999, Minister Francis Masakhalia retained the suspended duty on final agricultural imports announced by his predecessor, Hon Simeon Nyachae. He announced the restructuring of the Kenya Tea Development Authority and the amendment of the Dairy Act to restructure the Dairy Board. A study to assess the causes or lack of access to credit by small-scale farmers was announced. The Minister promised support for the development of micro credit institutions.

Despite all this, the Economic Survey of 2001 attributes poor performance in the sector to insufficient rainfall, poor world commodity prices and poor access roads. The prices paid to farmers for coffee, sisal, wheat, seed cotton, and milk declined last year(6).

Three ministers have served the Ministry of Finance in as many years, since 1998: Simeon Nyachae in 1998, Masakhalia in 1999, and in 2000 and 2001, Chris Okemo. All of them have had little or no regard for the agricultural sector in their budgets. Clearly, such a disregard for the agricultural sector has made Kenya increasingly dependent on heavily subsidized foodstuffs from the industrialized countries that compete unfairly with domestic products. The recent case of South Africa's eggs flooding the Kenyan market is fairly typical. Worth mentioning also is the current decline in the sugar industry due to competition from cheap imports. That the Kenyan population indirectly helps to sustain the living standards of farmers in developed countries is in no doubt; for how long will this continue?

4. POVERTY IN KENYA

Poverty, the underlying cause of hunger and malnutrition is a major determinant of chronic household food insecurity in the country. The poor do not have adequate means of entitlements to secure their access to food even when food is available in the local or regional markets(2). The major nutritional problem in the country is that of nutrient deficiency or under nutrition which manifest mainly as protein energy malnutrition (PEM), vitamin A deficiency, iodine disorders and iron deficiency anemia. Protein energy malnutrition is the major problem and ranks highest in importance. It mainly affects children below the age of five years. The malnutrition trends in Kenya are worrying and points to a gradual backslide. Stunting rate figures for 1982, 1994, and 2000 are 37.1, 33.6 and 37.2 % respectively. Worst hit is eastern province which has registered an increase from 39.0 % in 1982 to 44.3 % in the year 2000(7-9).

The Kenya Micro nutrient survey estimated goitre rate at 16%. Only three districts (Taita-Taveta, Uasin Gishu and Kajiado) had no IDD problems. Thirty districts were classified as having mild iodine deficiency with prevalence rate of 5-19 percent. Mild iodine deficiency measured by prevalence rates of 20-29

percent occurred in eight districts, while severe prevalence of more than 30 percent occurred in five districts(10).

Over 50% of the absolute poor are found in the rural areas, confirming that poverty still remains a predominantly rural phenomenon. 10 Clearly, however, there is nothing more dehumanizing than urban poverty. I wish to argue that it is because of rural poverty that able-bodied individuals trek to the urban areas to source livelihoods. The synergy between the two sectors needs to be recognized in programming. One can see that the only way of halting the increasingly fast flow of rural folk to expanding slums in urban centers is to identify what it is they are looking for and try to provide it there. Further, the farmer needs a growing economy that provides jobs to many, who can then purchase farm produce for food. This scenario underscores the synergies involved here. In other words, poverty is being transferred from rural areas to urban areas; as such, whatever strategy Kenya adopts must, inevitably, address these links. I remember the very first paper I wrote on causes of malnutrition in Kenya, and this was about two decades ago. I quoted rural to urban migration as a major concern that needed to be addressed. I believe the District Focus for Rural Development was an attempt by Government to stem the problem, by creating a livable and more attractive environment in the rural areas, improving rural infrastructure by for example, rural electrification, improving and maintaining roads and markets and placing industries and good schools in the rural areas. Other forms of infrastructure improvement such as better communication is the surest way of stemming the unwanted migration of young people to the cities. The youth must be shown an alternative in the rural areas to the towns where they have dreamt to go and enjoy a better life.

Increasing production of food and other crops needs to be done in ways that particularly benefit the rural poor, this requires increasing the productivity of small-scale farmers through stimulating agricultural growth, improving employment opportunities, and expanding food supplies, which involve and benefit the poor and help to alleviate poverty(1,5).

Although about 87% of the poor in Kenya are in rural areas, urban poverty remains undeniably the most dehumanizing form of poverty one could ever experience. The urban sector to a large extent depends on the rural sector for livelihood(9).

Some observers believe that the growth in cities in Africa, and indeed in the developing world as a whole will continue unabated, and therefore, the way to go is to try and urbanize rural areas instead of ruralizing urban centres, with regard to basic facilities and wealth creation. In other words, industrialization of Kenya should be rural-based, agriculture driven, rather than urban-based.

Who has been negatively affected by poverty in Kenya? Everybody except for a small percentage at the

top of the pyramid. Families are unable to afford: healthcare, new houses, fees especially for secondary and college education, and there are just too many unemployed youth, with fourth form certificates and many with training certificates including degree, who have absolutely no way out of the poverty trap. Even for those with training in practical subjects or wishing to pursue agriculture, it is difficult without seed funds and experience to get started. Even then, there are no markets to absorb their produce. It is therefore difficult to attract people into farming. In other words, when the economy is not performing, nothing works. Now there are those getting retrenched as civil service reforms get underway. Where do they go? In any case, such retrenchment breeds poverty beyond the individual level because of the so many other people who depend on the one individual who works.

We describe poverty its terms of livelihood. Abject poverty renders the individual destitute to the point of being unable to enjoy life. Basic welfare provisions such as food, water, shelter and clothing become luxury. We are saying that already over 50% Kenyans have been driven to this level. When we say that over 89% Kenyans are food poor, it also means that they are not adequately nourished. Then how can we develop as a nation? How can we industrialize? Child nutrition data which we have used over the years to gauge progress in national development, reveal a steadily deteriorating situation over the years (Table 1).

Table 1

Trends in chronic Malnutrition (7,8,11)

Province	1982	1994	2000
Nairobi	-	30.2	29.3
Central	33.6	28.7	30.3
Coast	48.6	38.3	38.5
Eastern	39.0	38.5	44.3
Nyanza	43.1	36.4	37.9
North Eastern	-	26.4	34.4
Rift valley	31.4	32.4	37.9
Western	40.5	37.0	39.2
KENYA	37.2	33.6	37.2

HIV/AIDS is a new phenomenon which has found us in a vulnerable state. It is a killer, it is lethal. It is a destroyer - how do we deal with it? Clearly preventive measures, recognition of adverse effects of the disease on rural and family livelihoods and deliberate efforts to mainstream management elements of the disease within our programming are all crucial aspects.

There are many children orphaned, many living with the disease who have special food and nutritional needs and these issues need to be integrated into appropriate programs.

A major departure in this year's budget making process was the attempt by the State to include sector and district spending priorities, as contained in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). A major question is whether there exists adequate political will, besides the urgency to appease the donors to actually implement the proposals put forward by Kenyans.

In the face of this bleak situation, major efforts are required by the government and the international community to bring about reduction in malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Increased food production and access are crucial to achieving major nutritional improvement. More foods should be produced that are rich in all essential nutrients, available in sufficient quantities and accessible to people all year round. This requires the collaboration of people working in agriculture, fishery, forestry, small animal husbandry, industry, marketing, communications, women's participation, home economics and nutrition.

5 SUGGESTIONS OF VIABLE STRATEGIES

1. Use of a systems approach to address agriculture
2. Getting men into agriculture, targeting retirees and the youth
3. Deliberate placement of agro-industries in appropriate rural localities
4. Revamping extension and linking this to research
5. Making infrastructure: roads, water, fuel energy, electric energy as an integral part of the Rural Development Strategy
6. Promotion of under exploited traditional food crops.
7. IEC strategy that takes central government policies down to the people
8. Serious efforts to employ participatory mechanisms that are real and not just talked about.

Let me now say something regarding the viability of each one of the strategies suggested.

5.1 Holistic way to address agriculture

For the so-called "*tigers*" of Asia, the route to industrialization was through agriculture. A hungry people cannot develop. A country that prides itself as being an agricultural country has no pride to display when it begins to rely entirely on imports for its food security. There are no new suggestions I am making here--- the need to address the food situation as a whole food chain is a strategy that works and has been advocated for years for many countries. A whole agricultural system comprises many components; to name just a handful: food crops, non-food cash crops, livestock, aquatic resource, water and vegetation. A sustainable approach must consider this balance. Right from the beginning, food needs to be produced, post-harvest handled, consumed or passed on to markets. With proper extension support systems, farmers will

inevitably produce excess and then the question becomes: what does one do with the excess? It has to be processed and marketed immediately locally or exported.

When one talks of agriculture being the mainstay of an economy, and of a people, surely one means that it sustains livelihoods by providing food for home consumption and sale. The truth is that even as liberalization rears its head into Africa economies, farmers still expect their government to assist them in finding markets for their excess produce and in other aspects where they lack the wherewithal to tackle.

Functioning research institutions, and performing extension services, and modern and vibrant food processing industry, infrastructure and indeed appropriate human resource are all critical in ensuring a food system that invokes pride in its people. A holistic, integrated approach is, therefore, critical in all this. In Kenya, we have tended to do things in a piece-meal fashion.

5.2 Getting men into agriculture

"Gender mainstreaming" which in this country means involving women, has become a nice sounding phrase. Yes, women constitute the majority of players in food production and also the bulk of the poor but to what extent can most of them be described as farmers? Further, women do not exist as single entities - they are part of a social system in which men are an integral part(11,12).

Women in Kenya's rural areas need to be relieved of the many burdens they carry. Recent personal experience has shown that men who retire from employment and go back home, to their farms are able to turn around agricultural production on their farms. There are numerous examples of this in western Kenya. What else is there to do after retirement? Farms which have either stayed fallow or produced little begin to thrive for a number of reasons.

- One rediscovers farming after many years away from home, and therefore, very uniquely and skillfully tills the land and makes something out of it.
- Desire to do the right type of farming by investing in the right inputs and also seeking technical support - some retirees use their retirement benefits for this.
- The time is now to do what one has always wanted to do, to improve the "resting" home.

Observations made on retirees point to more than a possibility that in fact, agriculture in Kenya can be revitalized, and the way to do it is not as complex as we professionals want to make it appear.

Then there are the so many youth who, as a result of fast population growth and the formal employment sectors' lack of absorptive capacity, are virtually lost.

There is wasted or idle energy which needs to be tapped and harnessed for useful engagement. Even in areas where there is plenty of land for tilling, our youth are loitering around and still trying to contact their relatives in urban centres for jobs outside of the immediate community. The level of poverty, and sense of hopelessness, are beyond any caring human being's imagination - what can be done here?

Again, this is in no way, a new recommendation. We must make agriculture lucrative and attractive, and this needs to be paralleled by serious efforts to provide basic amenities in a desirable way. In the past, agriculture was commercialized at the expense of food production. If one takes for example, the case of coffee tea and sugarcane.

5.3 Deliberate placement of agro industries in rural areas

As alluded to earlier, the "tigers" of Asia developed through agro-industry. Whereas 4/5 of this country is either arid or semi-arid, much of the semi-aridity can be turned into productivity, with proper vision, planning and management. It hardly rains in a whole state of Utah in the USA but as far back as 50 years ago, those who went to settle in the state constructed a water reservoir on top of the mountain, to convert snow into water which now the whole state depends on. Another example: do we not all recall what happened to the El Nino water? Only a few months later we are longing for rain and for water. Something is very wrong somewhere. Industrial development depends on technology. Water, power, infrastructure are all necessary technologies to get this moving ahead.

The human resource in rural Kenya is grossly underutilized. It is, therefore in rural areas that industrialization should be initiated because this will, at the same time, create jobs and alleviate poverty, and stem the accelerating rural-to-urban migration.

5.4 Revamping extension and linking this to research

Again there is nothing new here. Kenya's extension service collapsed sometime ago, except where agricultural oriented NGOs operate, where they facilitate movement of government extension personnel. Those personnel are very well trained but often sit in the offices for lack of means of transport to travel to their clients. A further problem has to do with the way they do their work. It is important for them to continuously update their knowledge in order to keep up with the increasingly inquisitive and knowledgeable farmer. They also need to become more facilitative than advisory. Even then, the percentage of the more 8,000-extension personnel who are deployed through this mechanism is insignificant. Most extension staff earn money for which they have not worked. But is the answer to retrench them? This is debatable. Extension services are still required by the farmer.

5.5 Developing infrastructure

Again, it has been known for years that it is futile to develop agriculture without a parallel program on roads improvement. Good roads, like clean water, immediately impact positively on people's level of confidence and ability to extend themselves, because they can easily get from one point A to B, and can move their produce and also get to essential services such as healthcare, water and markets all of which constitute an integral part of development(13). We need to involve the affected communities in roads construction and construction and improvement and let them feel a sense of ownership of these facilities, because then they can use them appropriately and even maintain them. The idle labour found among the youth can be diverted towards this program. Let us stop talking about bad roads and just get on with doing something about them. The issue of maintenance needs to be seriously incorporated since often, roads are constructed and failure to maintain them leads to such serious damage that they are worse off than even before construction. Compounding the situation is usually the fact that the budget line for maintenance is not adequate to do the job. Functional roads, and pathways are important for the poor and are crucial for development. Good roads are also essential for traders, entrepreneurs and business people and for public servants and officers of development agencies who want to access areas where the people live to either deliver services or conduct business.

Communities need to be sensitized about getting involved in road construction and maintenance, and indeed bridge construction. Women and youth groups already involved in development work could be mobilized to get involved in this type of work, and made to see that they could facilitate their efforts to improve livelihood of their family members.

5.6 Promotion of unexploited traditional food crops.

Often, wild foods are considered to be low status food and their consumption as a source of shame. In normal times, only women, children and the poorest families regularly collect and consume wild foods. Relying on wild food plants during periods of shortage does not mean that wild food plants are substitutes of cultivated staple food crops. They, rather, are a supplement. The promotion and cultivation of wild food crops may however, be an alternative to modern and artificial ways of boosting food availability(14-16).

The option to improve food production through exploiting the potential wild food products is naturally sustainable, cheap and locally available alternative to resolving at least part of food shortage problems. At some time, an emphasis on the development of wild food plants will help enhance and maintain the biodiversity. In the coastal region, Coastal Forest Conservation Unit has been working with a number of ethnic groups. Traditionally, this groups have been

users of forest resources, in particular indigenous wild food plants. To date, seventy species of wild food plants have been identified: 50 fruit species, 11 vegetable species, five root/tuber species and four other related species. Wild vegetables use depend on availability, and the distances to available resources are strongly dependant on season(14).

Traditional crops have numerous advantages, especially in terms of house-hold food security, as they are particularly important in the cropping strategies and consumption patterns of poor people. they provide a varied diet, often rich in minerals and vitamins including vitamin A, iron and calcium(14-16).

BENEFITS OF TRADITIONAL FOOD CROPS

Broadening the food base

Some 50,000 vegetable food species are known to exist worldwide; yet humanity uses no more than 200 of them. In view of food scarcity in many developing countries, the proportion is not only insufficient but also ecologically and nutritionally dangerous. These forgotten and neglected food plants should be rediscovered to broaden the food base using significantly more of the available resources.15,16.

Enhancing nutritional status

The nutritional value of diets is enhanced by traditional legumes, oil seeds, fruits and vegetables. They also add taste and flavor to the diet, improve palatability and help to balance proteins, vitamin and mineral intakes. In Africa, traditional food plants supply an estimated 80 percent of vitamin A and more than one third of vitamin C. These therefore contribute to reduction of the effects of vitamin A deficiency such as reduced cognitive and working capacities among children.

Improving household food security

Seasonal food scarcity accentuates the severity and incidences of malnutrition. Many traditional crops are drought resistant, can be grown without expensive inputs and have food storage qualities.

Increasing household and national incomes

Traditional food plants benefit both producer and consumer. The producers- mainly women increase their families' consumption and generate income by selling surplus in local markets. Generally, women use this income for improving the nutrition and welfare of their children.16.

Kenya is forced to import large quantities of food to meet local production shortfalls. At national level, payment for food imports have become an increasingly heavy drain on the scarce foreign exchange resource. Increased production of a range of traditional food crops particularly staples, will increase food supply and thus contribute to reducing food imports(2). Many of the traditional food crops, especially roots and leafy

vegetables also have medicinal value, although more research is needed to determine both quantities and formulation. Nonetheless indigenous knowledge still exists in a functional manner(14-16).

5.7 Dissemination of Government policies

My own rural development work started in earnest in 1992. What I found and is till the case to a large extent is that most rural folk have no idea with regard to what the government has to offer. If *Barazas* are the only place to address government policies, then this is not going to work because most people do not even go to *Barazas*.* The result is that civil servants who choose not to adjust to the new way of doing things because of changing policies just go on with things as usual, because it is like somebody put it "most people fear change even when it portends positive things for them." Most rural folk have little idea on what the government has to offer them, whether for free or at cost. Some civil servants work as if they are doing "*wananchi*"* a favor and this puts the *wananchi* in a situation where they are ignorant of their rights, cannot demand them and the government begins to earn a bad name(13).

We need to devise new ways of disseminating government policies to *wananchi*, and letting it be known to the civil servants that the *wananchi* know their rights.

5.8 Employment of participatory approaches

"*Participation*" is another overrated and overused term. It is overused in writing, and in oral presentation. Few people go ahead to translate it into practice and more have no idea how to go about it. A participatory approach is probably the most difficult undertaking in development, yet, when we examine the benefits of it, one is quick to ask: "is there really any other way? The process is slow, because it requires courage, ingenuity and time to work through the path of development with the beneficiary community, right from assessment and identification of the problem, through analysis of how to tackle the problem, finding resources for intervention activities, monitoring and evaluating and starting the cycle again. However, the cycle will only start all over again if there are positive lessons learnt from the phase one to motivate those involved to continue, and if resources and environment conditions permit. As the process goes on, it is often not as smooth sailing as it sounds; there are hitches and hiccups and so on. Yet, establishing a rapport with the community, working through the whole process with them invokes trust, confidence and a sense of ownership that inevitably leads to a long-lasting sustainability of projects, even when external funding stops(16).

* *Baraza* – Swahili word for community meetings convened by local authorities.

* *mwananchi* – Swahili word for ordinary citizen.

Such a process plants a seed that germinates, grows and bears fruit. Such a process instills a sense of ownership of projects within the communities and restores self-pride and people's belief in themselves and in their ability to help themselves. Nobody truly likes to be a beggar-it is dehumanizing. Nobody should be made to derive joy from handouts---it is degrading. The same way governments object to donors who push them around, they should be sensitive to communities not wishing to be pushed around.

Participatory approaches ensure that issues are discussed with those who are directly affected, in their own environment and that articulation of priorities and identification of resources for intervention involve the affected community.

6. WAY FORWARD

Poverty is not a stand-alone phenomenon. For more than 50% of Kenyans, poverty has become a way of life and this is most unfortunate. What this means, therefore is that whatever development activity we engage in, we must assess their impact by use of livelihood indicators. All stakeholders need to see themselves as walking the same path, heading for the same destination - improved nutrition.

How do we go ahead? Stakeholders, with government playing a crucial co-ordinating and "referee" role need to forge meaningful partnerships. There is need to restore confidence and motivation, to change attitudes within the public service. In the absence of tools of trade to update themselves and to do their work, there are civil servants who are highly demoralized and who continue to treat the farmer as subservient: "you have to look me up", "come to the office", they say. What happened to "extension"?

The NGO community also has its own problems and some of them operate as single isolated entities, undertaking activities which are not sustainable because they will be short-lived and come to an end as soon as the donor funding stops. Also the impact of NGO activities can only be felt nationally if their activities could be scaled up, but is that the intent and is scaling up in all cases? All the same, NGO's provide an excellent opportunity for partnership and for provision of some development models which can be tested. Experience has shown that NGO's work increases chances of sustainability if integrated in national plans in communities where they work, and assures at least partial take-up of activities when the donor support comes to an end. Another great opportunity is provided by the many legally constituted women's and youth groups. Models and examples of what works abound across Kenya. They constitute an excellent conduit to development.

We require a harmonized and integrated approach in development, following a model that is agreed on by all stakeholders. What we have in Kenya are mixed

models, some of which can be very confusing. For example, there are donors who are also implementers, and there are NGO models which work very well on a small scale but are not replicable nor can they be upscaled. Clearly, all need to apply participatory models which involve the "beneficiaries" to plan and undertake activities that affect their own livelihoods. Therefore, a change of approach, a change in attitude, and placing decision making responsibility with the communities are all critical tenets of how things should be done.

7 CONCLUSION

Africa needs to invest in both human and social capital, because this is our comparative advantage globally. It is possible for each individual to take their human capital to great heights but in an environment that provides economic, social and legal support. Engrained in human capital are: education, skills, health, values and leadership.

Social capital consists of mutual trust, true partnership, groups cohesion, sense of shared future and collective action towards a common goal.

The participatory approaches we are advocating need to take cognizant of, and make use of both human and social capitals.

Poverty reduction means a sustained decrease in the number of the poor and the extent of deprivation. This requires that the root causes and structural factors of poverty be addressed. Reducing poverty places focus on people's capabilities to avoid or limit their deprivation. Key aspects of this are: recognizing and developing the potential of the poor, increasing their productive capacity, and reducing barriers limiting their participation in the society. Poverty reduction must therefore focus on improving the social, economic and environmental conditions of the poor and their access to decision making.

A sustainable promise is that any simple human being has instinctive desire to lead a good life. It is not only one factor that will lead to good nutrition, but a collection of factors well integrated and advocated by the majority.

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