

An open letter to all who provide nutrition information – a vital task

Daniel Edem Kpewou^{a,b*} 

^aNutritionist and Independent Consultant

^bFaculty of Biosciences, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology, Kumasi, Ghana

*Email: edemdamien@gmail.com



Sir,

We humans have reached a point in our existence where under-nutrition and overnutrition (the double burden of malnutrition), both of which are root causes of most non-communicable diseases, are coexisting. About four decades ago, we were battling with underweight, stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiencies, which are manifestations of undernutrition.¹ Today, that story is different, albeit not for the better, as we are witnessing the almost full emergence of overweight and obesity in the same populations that have undernourished people.² Globally, about 113 million people went hungry in 2018. Although lower than the estimated 124 million people in 2017, these figures³ remain unjustifiable. Armed conflicts remain the greatest cause of hunger and food insecurity amidst all other causes. Food insecurity is an immediate cause of undernutrition, which is high in these war-torn countries,⁴ hence the need to immediately find a lasting solution to all armed conflicts globally. To triumph over malnutrition, we need to prepare our minds towards what we want to achieve and be deliberate in our actions. This requires that everybody becomes aware of the causes and consequences of malnutrition and how their actions or otherwise can affect nutrition. It is therefore vital for nutrition advocacy and education to be expanded. To the nutritionists and dietitians of today, let us upgrade our nutrition education activities to impart nutrition information to all who are not in our field and do not have this information. In providing this information, let us hammer home the overall intergenerational effects of all forms of malnutrition. Let us advocate for good nutrition and its determinants such as adequate and accessible health services, sustainable agriculture, water and sanitation, sustainable socioeconomic development and female empowerment among other factors. Let us drum this information in with absolute clarity and truthfulness. Let our messages be sensitive to societal groups, tailoring these messages to meet their comprehension and roles. We must also study very deeply the various tentacles of malnutrition, as we seem to be deficient in knowledge of the issues relating to our problem. The fact is, we have done some, but more work is indeed left to be accomplished. This calls for a more robust diagnosis of this canker through consistent, well-focused research. Globally, the Sustainable Development

Goals⁵ and the UN Decade of Actions on Nutrition (2016–2025)⁶ provide a window of opportunity and a platform for addressing malnutrition through ensuring that true commitments in all aspects are made by all nations and every one of us. We cannot allow the next generation to be plagued with morbidities arising from our actions/inactions today. We can alter the narratives. Yes, we can reduce the number of young children who become stunted or overweight. As the future of the next generation, let us with one accord synergize our energies towards making the next generation stronger, better and freer, through good nutrition. Thank you, even as you play your part today.

Disclosure statement – No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

ORCID

Daniel Edem Kpewou  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6279-2694>

References

1. Abarca-Gómez L, Abdeen ZA, Hamid ZA, et al. Worldwide trends in body-mass index, underweight, overweight, and obesity from 1975 to 2016: a pooled analysis of 2416 population-based measurement studies in 128.9 million children, adolescents, and adults. *Lancet*. 2017;390(10113):2627–2642. doi:10.1016/S01406736(17)32129-3
2. Development Initiatives. 2018. Global nutrition report: shining a light to spur action on nutrition. Bristol, UK: Development Initiatives; 2018. Available from: <https://globalnutritionreport.org/reports/global-nutrition-report-2018/>
3. Food Security Information Network. Global Report on Food Crises 2019; April 2019. Available from: <http://www.fsincop.net/global-network/global-report/en/>
4. von Grebmer K, Bernstein J, Hammond L, et al. Global hunger index: forced migration and hunger. Bonn and Dublin: Welthungerhilfe, and Concern Worldwide; 2018. Available from: <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/pdf/en/2018.pdf>
5. United Nations. “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development”. United Nations Sustainable Development knowledge platform. Available from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
6. United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition. UN decade of actions on nutrition (2016–2025). Available from: <https://www.unscn.org/en/topics/un-decade-of-action-on-nutrition>