



Independent Dialogue Recommendations to the U.N. Food Systems Pre-Summit

Compiled by the [10th Class of Mickey Leland International Hunger Fellows](#)

Major Focus

The focus of our Dialogue was to elevate the voices of those who are most directly impacted by development and humanitarian initiatives. It was open to development and humanitarian implementers, local leaders, and community members, as well as field and extension officers, national and local governments, and companies interested in providing contextual perspectives for how humanitarian and development strategies impact communities. Our purpose was to encourage a diverse and expansive pool of voices to help improve the representation and empowerment of local leadership in influencing SDG action. Therefore, the Dialogue was an exploration of food systems in the development and humanitarian context and was intentionally open to discussions about all five Action Tracks and the levers of change to allow people to bring their own interests and individual roles within the food system to the table.

Main Findings

- 1) Build agency of local leadership and strengthen local food systems through the promotion of indigenous crops and traditional forms of agriculture
- 2) Complement traditional agriculture techniques with conservation and climate-smart agriculture techniques that are accessible to all local communities.
- 3) Ensure smallholder farmers have access to quality inputs and resources to grow for their own consumption and sell at prices that allow them to live adequately
- 4) Empower women and youth to be directly engaged with agriculture value chains and improve market access for both income generation and nutrition outcomes
- 5) Ensure that foreign assistance truly supports communities in becoming resilient and self-sufficient rather than perpetually dependent on aid

Discussion Topic Outcomes

The outcomes detailed here will include participants' views on actions that are urgently needed, who should take these actions, ways in which progress could be assessed, and challenges that might be anticipated as actions are implemented.

Action Track 1 and 3

Action Tracks 1 and 3 were combined due to shared interest among participants and the intersection of both topic areas. Primary topics of discussion were centered on the ability to ensure that safe and nutritious food is accessible to all. The group also addressed the importance of using sustainable agriculture practices (nature positive food production) recognizing the importance of land preservation within agriculture activities to maintain sustainable food systems from farm to table.

- Politics disrupt best practices approaches to ending hunger and inequities- leads to trade-offs, such as focusing on scaling up production, using non-organic fertilizers that harm soil health, and large-scale producers instead of smallholder farmers
- Water scarcity is an attributing cause to hunger
- Project initiatives need to scale up innovative practices, such as the use of wastewater and fecal sludge in the growing system, which could assist in the affordability of fertilizer; could also learn from other regions with water scarcity
- Include the community, as they are the ones impacted by hunger and directly impacted by climate change- community should be educated on climate change so they can advocate and provide accountability.
- Replenish indigenous crops and recognize the value of traditional methods of agriculture
- Incentivize and recognize farmers for using conservation agriculture practices
- Determine if the work of humanitarian / development agencies are perpetuating cycles of dependency
- Empower women and youth, especially when it comes to livestock ownership to improve nutrition outcomes and where youth can serve in the value chain
- Direct food relief should not be used as a long-term solution, we need to be looking at empowerment models that encourage local self-reliance

Action Track 2

Action Track 2 discussions focused on the importance of shifting to healthy and sustainable consumption patterns and how that relates to food waste, food and agriculture commodity shipment and packaging. Highlighting the importance of not only mindful consumption but also how locally accessible foods are an important component of mitigating hunger. Increased import and consumption of pre-packaged foods calls into question the quality and nutritional value of those foods, demonstrating that healthy foods are not always accessible to everyone.

- Promote more locally sourced foods by compressing and decentralizing food supply chains. Consumers are concerned about the quality of food (in terms of vitamins and nutrients) being donated and distributed through local food pantries in the US
- Support small shareholder farmers through “growth of healthy corner farmers” on 1/10 of an acre plot to create food oases in food deserts in the US; step beyond the idea of healthy corner stores selling more fruits and vegetables to grounding production in the community (healthy corner farmers rather than healthy corner stores); use of hydroponic farms for production
- Support marginalized groups. In Nigeria, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) farmers have limited access to farmland, so home gardens and home animal raising is key to surviving off-season produce price spikes, when the community is dependent on transported foods.
- Use of Tom Brown, a nutritious porridge made of millet, corn, sorghum, soya, and groundnuts, to feed malnourished children with locally sourced food in Nigeria
- Encourage the development of Mobile food markets in the US can reduce numbers of those living in food deserts, but the need must be mapped out first
- Develop interventions that support farmers and consumers in mitigating food waste. Concerned by the wasted food production in Nigeria fueled by transportation, store, and preservation problems- for tomatoes, for instance, the population faces seasonal price spikes because there is no way to preserve the tomatoes; logistics are the key in avoiding off-season produce price spikes.
- Childhood traumas/adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), often influence whether people eat healthily or desire fast foods and often correlates with diet-related disease, given the role of stress-related cortisol in cravings for high-fat foods

Action Track 4

Action Track 4 discussion group focused on the importance to advance equitable livelihoods and the need to provide voice and agency to indigenous people and marginalized communities. Participants expressed that Western development initiatives are often prescriptive and do not always consider the various barriers small shareholder farmers face when accessing agriculture resources and how that impacts community wide hunger.

- Develop policies that support smaller, local farmers in accessing quality seeds/support and markets- It should be ensured that small holder farmers have access to the right resources both to consume as well as sell to their communities
- Protect farmers from low prices and exploitation, farmers get discouraged because of low prices and exploitation- having access to quality inputs at fair costs would allow them to also sell at appropriate prices (affordable for consumers, profitable for sellers)
- Encourage and promote local crop cultivation and consumption, high value crops are prioritized at the expense of other crops due to market forces
- Prevent Western countries from dictating what lower income countries receive through food aid, disturbs the market system; bulk buying and reliance on WFP exploits local farmers.
- Build farmer base networks for community farmers. In Uganda, there is a need to organize farmers into unions so that individuals are not selling individually but as farmer unions who can collectively bargain for better prices
- Encourage Youth Farming programs. In Uganda, young people avoid agriculture because they consider it not profitable and are selling land to move to cities. Connect youth with older generations to show that you can have a farm and an office job - and that profit is possible; use Social Behavior Change Communication with peer-to-peer conversations that can show success stories and impact of small shareholder farmers
- Promote the use of technology in agriculture to demonstrate that it is possible to make a profit by saving time and cost and makes it more attractive to the youth
- Encourage community farming initiatives, within the US, youth is not involved in farming unless they grew up doing it as part of a family business - certain neighborhoods should start household cultivation. Each member of the community would have 1 type of plant (herb, fruit, vegetable) and then the community members would trade to sustain themselves
- Increase government support for local food systems. Government agencies need to promote and support the strengthening of local food systems. COVID 19 has highlighted the importance of local food systems and encouraged households to grow their own foods
- Encouraging food sovereignty and the food as a right and not just a commodity

Action Track 5

Action Track 5 group discussion focused on building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses and the relevance of food security within emergency contexts. Group participants expressed the need to

- Acknowledge the complexities in how individuals interact with food systems and deal with food insecurity- there is heterogeneity of vulnerability. Different approaches must be taken to address hunger at different levels i.e community, household, and individual
- Provide farmers with education on managing risk where it be weather, conflict, currency fluctuations, etc- to make systems more resilient there needs to be more understanding of what the risks are and their impacts in the short, medium, and long term.
- Use education as foundation to create real change at the local level especially in conflict areas
- Approach nutrition from the perspective of balanced nutrition and diverse diets with fruits and vegetable rather than basic caloric intake
- Protracted crisis and conflict change food systems fundamentally, but we treat them as temporary; development is possible in areas experiencing protracted conflict, but local leadership is critical
- Adapt weather-related risk management systems to conflict and have financial services that can work where there is a lot of uncertainty.
- Establish early warning systems for other types of uncertainty beyond famine and weather challenges

Contact Information

For more information on these recommendations, contact Leland Hunger Fellow **Bryan Pride** at bryanpride23@gmail.com