



**Integrated Rural Development: Implementation and Best Practices--
ECOSOC Consultation March 24, 2003**

**Tools, Approaches and the Role of Actors in Africare's Rural
Development Activities**

By

**Judy C. Bryson
Senior Technical Advisor
Food Security**

You have all heard of the truism “Give a Man a Fish and You Feed Him For a Day; Teach a Man to Fish and You Feed Him for A Lifetime.” This saying has always bothered me, not only because I have dedicated a good part of my career to enhancing the development impact of food assistance. There were other aspects wrong also such as the gender insensitivity: it is a man who is fed and a man who is taught. And then there is the presumption that simply knowing how to fish will be enough with no environmental assessment to assure that the development organization isn't promoting over fishing. So, I have modified the maxim into one I consider more appropriate.

As you can see from this first slide, when you give a man a fish, you feed his family for one meal, but not very well. Instead you can take a more integrated approach. Provide a man a food for work ration while he builds a fishpond. Involve his wife in a credit with education program including business and nutrition training. Together they can create a business that provides a better way of life for their entire family.

Although this is a somewhat light-hearted introduction to today's topic, it touches on several serious points. Most important is that we must find dynamic ways to address the problems of hunger, poverty and disease, or we will have only limited success in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As this slide from the FAO report on the *State of Food Insecurity in the World, 2001* indicates, it will be a very steep climb to

move from the annual reduction of 6 million hungry people in the period 1991-1998 to the reduction by 22 million per year in the period 2001-2015. This rate of improvement is needed if the goal of cutting hunger in half is to be achieved. This is particularly true in Africa where the HIV/AIDS pandemic is decimating the adult labor force while simultaneously increasing the costs and burdens of caring for those living with the disease. We must also find ways that take an integrated approach to addressing the problems so that more is achieved with the limited resources available. Last, but certainly not least, we must identify those approaches that are most successful in enhancing the capacity and resources that the populations already possess. These approaches are most likely to yield the greatest and most sustainable results.

The organization I work for, Africare, is as its name suggests focused exclusively on Africa. Before turning to the main body of my presentation, I will provide a brief overview of Africare for those of you who may be unfamiliar with the organization. This slide describes the noteworthy accomplishments of Africare in the 33 years since our founding in 1970. Over that period, our programs have transferred \$400 million to Africans, primarily for rural development programs. Our budgets in recent years are on the order of \$35 million. Africare was founded by African-Americans and Africans; currently more than 90% of Africare's staff are African serving in 26 countries on the continent. This map shows the current and past locations of Africare programs.

Africa is facing many severe challenges. HIV/AIDS is exacting a severe toll, and children remain prey to illness and mortality from diseases largely conquered in much of the rest of the world. Hunger is a daily reality for many; at present 25% of the 800 million undernourished people live in Africa. This situation is worsened by HIV/AIDS which is decimating the labor supply and increasing the costs and burdens of caring for an increasing number of persons living with the disease. The vast numbers of people currently at risk of starvation in Southern Africa and the Horn is due partly to weather. However, it is due also to the inability of the societies to withstand such shocks given the large number of adults who have been lost to or weakened by HIV/AIDS. With improved diets, especially protein and micro-nutrients, people with the disease could live longer healthier lives and have the strength to take anti-AIDS drugs as they become available.

So, what can be done? It is important to begin with a diagnosis of the situation in each area as conditions vary within and between countries. This Food Security/Food Insecurity Framework, which I have included in the handout, is an example of a model that can help to identify the most important factors creating problems in any given situation. Such models are available for many of the areas included in the Millennium Development Goals; for example, the UNICEF model of child malnutrition. As data on the different risks are filled in, it is possible to begin to identify the priority areas for programs. It is most important to undertake this exercise together with the communities concerned.

Africare undertook a strategic planning exercise in the context of our leadership transition from C. Payne Lucas, one of the original founders who served as President for 31 years.

Mr. Lucas has retired and was replaced by Julius E. Coles. The strategic planning exercise identified two priority program areas where Africare will work, Food Security and Agricultural Productivity on one hand and Health and HIV/AIDS on the other. Community Capacity Enhancement to take the leadership role in addressing the challenges faced was placed at the center of the actions to be undertaken. This diagram portrays the linkages that occur between these three areas of activity in many of Africare's programs.

Community Capacity Enhancement recognizes that substantial capacity and resources already exist within communities to address the challenges they face in improving their quality of life. Usually there are community groups already established that can take a leadership role, once they have diagnosed the nature of the problems and are presented with potential solutions. A variety of information collection exercises are used, including Participatory Rural Appraisal and Learning Exercises (PRAL), anthropometric measures of children, focus groups and quantitative surveys. One of the most powerful exercises used by Africare is the Food Security Mapping Exercise, which identifies the percentages of food secure, food insecure and severely food insecure in the community and the annual pattern of food consumption. Once the community has identified the percentages in each group, a calendar is established which identifies how many months each group can eat until they have satisfied their hunger, how many months they spend with limited restriction of consumption (transition), how many months must they restrict and severely restrict their consumption. This calendar provides both a visual tool portraying how grim the situation is in most of the communities where we work and the annual pattern.

When such exercises are carried out, the question invariably arises from the community on what can be done to change the situation? Here, Africare works to strengthen the existing community organizational structures and encourages the identification of volunteers to be trained in providing services to the rest of the community. Such volunteers and the committees that are organized to direct and support them form the backbone of Africare's work at the community level.

As the Food Security/Food Insecurity Framework illustrates, Food Security Results from Food Availability, Food Access and Food Utilization. The linkage flows from left to right and from Food Utilization to Food Security. Africare has learned that we must address all three if Food Security is to be assured. There is considerable evidence that agricultural productivity on its own does not result in improved nutritional status of children at least in the near term.

At the same time, while some progress can be made in child malnutrition by improving weaning practices and health knowledge such as diarrhea management, substantial continual progress requires increased agricultural productivity. Africare's field staff is heavily weighted to extension agents and technical staff (including program management). Our personnel develop relationships with local Ministries of Agriculture and national and international research institutes to identify productive technologies and improved practices to address the problems identified by communities. Farm Field Schools and other techniques such as demonstration fields or demonstration livestock

herds are used to introduce these technologies to the communities. Possibilities for sustainability are increased by efforts such as that in Uganda where climbing bean seeds developed by the National Agricultural Research Organization were introduced. Local farmers with the capacity to multiply seeds were also identified. Several of these have achieved certification by the Uganda Seed Growers Association and are now providing a source of improved seeds to the neighbors which was not previously available.

Volunteers are also working in programs to address malnutrition, health problems and HIV/AIDS. These volunteers may learn how to carry out village based growth monitoring of children, as well as nutritional messages on improved breast feeding and weaning practices. In establishing these activities, Africare uses traditional methods of communication such as theater troupes, story telling and singing. For example, the songs created by village nutrition volunteers in Guinea provide explicit information on putting the child to the breast immediately after birth, exclusive breast feeding to six months, and the foods to be added month by month as the baby is weaned. These songs are sung in the villages for all to hear, grandmothers, husbands, mothers and young boys and girls.

Wherever Africare works, it does so at the invitation of the host government and close relationships are established with government ministries at the national and local levels. Involvement of government officials in the training of village volunteers assures their support and participation in such activities as “Hearth” programs. Data from growth monitoring programs are used to identify moderately malnourished children and a program is established to recuperate the children in the villages. This has the added benefit that the mothers of the children learn how to feed them to assure their continued good health. The Ministry of Health oversees the effort and often provides resources such as de-worming tablets for the children and Vitamin A doses that increase the effectiveness of the activities. The nutritional activities I am discussing may be part of a child survival activity or they may form part of a food security program.

In addition to other programs Africare is carrying out in the area of HIV/AIDS, our organization has recently established an HIV/AIDS Service Corps. It is modeled on the United States Peace Corps and is made up of Africans who want to make a difference in addressing the pandemic that is devastating their continent. A stipend of \$50 per month is provided and materials to assist in their work of HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention and care.

The impact of all these efforts using the community capacity strengthening approach are most heartening. The final slides provide examples of the results Africare has achieved, using these approaches.