WN *Development*

World Nutrition **Volume 5, Number 11, November 2014**

Journal of the World Public Health Nutrition Association
Published monthly at www.wphna.org/worldnutrition/

Nutrition
Visions for this century



Brooke Aksnes, Thiago Hérick de Sá, Diana Parra (convenors, contributors)
Isabela Sattamini, Claudio Schuftan (contributors)
Corresponding author: brooke.aksnes@gmail.com

Access June 2014 G77-133 Declaration of Santa Cruz here
Access June 2014 WPHNA response to ICN2 Rome Declaration here
Access July-August Fabio Gomes et al on ICN2 here
Access August 2014 ICN2 draft Framework For Action here
Access August 2014 WPHNA response to ICN2 draft here
Access September 2014 Fabio Gomes et al on ICN2 here
Access September 2014 CSO letter to ICN2 Open Ended Working Group here
Access October 2014 CSO open letter to ICN2 organisers here
Access October 2014 ICN2 Update report here

Editor's note

This and next month colleagues in the *WN* editorial team write about the state of world nutrition and health now, and of their visions for the future. This is in the context of the UN International Conference on Nutrition taking place in Rome this month. Contributors are asked not to get bogged in bureaucracy and instead to discern big pictures. Brooke Aksnes, Thiago Hérick de Sá and Diana Parra, working in Brussels, London, and St Louis, are joined this month by Isabela Sattamini and Claudio Schuftan from Rio de Janeiro and Ho Chi Minh City. Next month we will publish more responses and discern themes in common.

Brooke Aksnes, Thiago Hérick de Sá and Diana Parra write:

The UN International Conference on Nutrition takes place this month. An initiative convened by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization together with the World Health Organization, with other UN agencies involved, it is being held at FAO headquarters in Rome between 19-22 November. Its purpose is to achieve agreement among member states on two documents. These are a mission statement (a Declaration), and a guide to policies and programmes (a Framework for Action).Once adopted by member states, these are meant to operate from now – effectively, from 2016 – into the next period of the first half of this century – say, until 2030. The documents, to be presented to the conference for final discussion, ratification and agreement, will be concerned with farming and food inasmuch as these affect nutrition. So the conference, its products, and outcomes, are very important. Or should be.

In recent issues of WN, various public interest civil society organisations and social movements have commented on drafts of the ICN documents. Most see the documents and apparently the ICN itself as inadequate. Bearing this serious concern in mind, the series of contributions that follow are not about the ICN itself. Rather, they address what the ICN should be about and should be admitting and agreeing, concerning agriculture, nutrition, well-being, health and disease globally, from now on until the middle of this century. If, which at the time of writing seems likely, the ICN agreements are superficial, there will be other opportunities. *The best hope may come from the G77 (now 133) nations,* almost all from the global South.

We have asked contributors to respond to ten questions and enquiries, as listed below. These address population nutrition status, the prevention and control of relevant epidemics, and the general related health and well-being of the human, living and physical world, as seen now in 2014 and looking ahead.

1 What mainly determines population well-being, health, disease?
2 What mainly determines population good nutritional status?
3 How useful are the current nutrition sciences?
4 Are enough governments and official agencies making real progress?
5 Are current dietary guidelines and nutrition education programmes, effective?
6 What types of civil society groups are most responsive to the biggest issues?
7 Name up to three inspiring leaders likely to be active in 2030, with reasons
8 Identify up to three of your greatest fears, with reasons
9 Identify up to three of your greatest hopes, with reasons
10 Make any other relevant remarks as you may wish.

Contributors have been asked to respond to all questions and enquiries. Much of the value of this type of contribution is to be able to compare responses, which we will do in the light of the second set of contributions, to be published next month. One theme is already evident. This is a shared view that the state of and prospects for world health now, are very different from what seemed apparent at the beginning of the century.

Brooke Aksnes





Active local food systems nourish economically, environmentally and physically healthy societies. Local food economies strengthen culture and communities. (Photo, Michigan State University)

What mainly determines population well-being, health, and disease?
Education, health-care services and an overall sense of health empowerment, affect a population's health and well-being. But underlying and deep-rooted cultural customs and beliefs have the power to shape and even dictate how members of a society are able to take charge of their own health. Such also affect the health and well-being of family units and the wider community. Societal belief systems based in determinism, which is to say a general belief that nothing can be changed, or that lack an element of personal control in life outcomes, will produce populations that take less responsibility for their own health. It is the duty of governments and civil society organisations to foster a culture that promotes ownership through provision of quality information. Only when communities as a whole acknowledge their power in directing their own health outcomes, will they be able to capitalise on available resources.

What mainly determines good population nutritional status?
Embracing local food cultures and the conviviality of meals enjoyed in company is fundamental to populations in order to maintain good nutritional status. This means that simple availability of food is not enough. What is needed among other things,

is good foods – seasonal, fresh, locally produced and nutritionally dense – accessible to all. Also needed are governments and professionals at all levels—from national to community--that provide easy-to-understand, culturally relevant and realistic nutritional guidelines. Such guidelines should encourage people both personally and as citizens to limit intake of refined sugars and heavily processed food products, while promoting local cuisines and an intimate relationship with food that starts with its cultivation.

How useful are the current nutritional sciences?
Most branches of nutrition science are useful in their own right and in the context of focused, narrow interventions. But they tend not to deliver widespread, permanent changes in public nutrition status. This is not due to a lack of knowledge in the field; current nutritional sciences could easily provide the capacity to guide culturally relevant, lasting and equitable change in global nutrition. However, this rich knowledge base remains largely untapped as efforts to improve public nutrition must battle against the economic interests of corporations, broken political systems, and unjust distribution of wealth, knowledge and health empowerment.

Are enough governments and official agencies making real progress?
Put frankly: no. While there are a few exceptions, the numbers tell us that globally, obesity and chronic disease rates continue to rise. Most alarmingly, rates of obesity and of diabetes in low- and middle-income countries are rapidly increasing. This surely shows that there is a real problem in the quality of available foods. Governments must take steps to ensure that healthy food is accessible and affordable for all, and most of all for people with the least resources, in order to effectively address public health nutrition issues.

Are current dietary guidelines and nutrition education programmes effective?
Large-scale and popular initiatives like US First Lady Michelle Obama's 'improved' school lunch programme would make it seem that some government agencies are at least making serious efforts to improve public nutrition. But not enough tangible progress is being made. Mere education and provision of 'healthy food' is not sufficient to create widespread change. Systemic policies and programmes are needed. Governments and official agencies must aim first to repair and then strengthen entire food systems in order to achieve real change in public health and nutrition. In the US, my own country, this could begin with abolishing subsidy programmes for over-production of corn (which is converted to the cheap sweetener high fructose corn syrup present in many US food products) instead of simply telling people to avoid added sugars.

What types of civil society groups are most responsive to the big issues?
The groups that stir people to take charge independent of legislation tend to be the most responsive to the overlying issues. These are the organisations that provide information to the public by using social networks, smart-phone applications and other culturally relevant platforms. In seeking to change cultural practices and

perceptions, these groups respond to the 'big issues'. *Food Tank,* dedicated to sustainable food systems for all, is an excellent example of this.

Name up to three inspiring leaders likely to be active to 2030, with reasons
I have chosen Philip Lymbery, chief executive officer of *Compassion in World Farming*, whose mission is animal welfare, and Jonathan Bloom, author of *American Wasteland*, whose commitment is to minimise food waste worldwide. These two have managed to build a public platform on nutrition issues and are effectively reaching 'the masses'. To improve public nutrition worldwide, public figures like Philip Lymbery and Jonathan Bloom are needed to help inspire and catalyse change for the better. It is important not only for public health professionals and those with the "qualifications" to invest in world nutrition, but for every global citizen. We all can lend a hand and contribute what is ours to give.

Identify up to three of your greatest fears, with reasons
First, I fear the destruction of local, self-sufficient food systems in vulnerable communities if the activity of transnational and large international companies is not curbed.This has happened already with the massive exportation of quinoa and the subsequent rise of child malnutrition in the Andes. I also fear the economic and environmental consequences of a global industrial food system rooted in excessive fossil fuel consumption. People in high-income countries and business settings are wasting energy at an alarming rate, which drives up costs and creates climates that cause famine. My third fear is that citizens and governments will fail to realise that the looming issues posed by a growing population and climate change can be very simply and equitably solved.

Identify up to three of your greatest hopes, with reasons
All my hopes can be expressed through the prospect of a global culture of conscious and compassionate consumerism, which is therefore also a movement of citizens. I hope to see concern over need for equitable, sustainable and responsible of food supply systems become mainstreamed. It is only through a society that genuinely seeks nutritional and economic equity for all that professionals and other citizens can change the way transnational corporations work. When enough consumers act as citizens too, and demand more ethically-produced food, suppliers will listen, and foods system will change. An equitable, common-sense food system is essential to improve nutritional, economic, health and environmental conditions worldwide.

Make any other remarks as you may wish
The solutions to global nutrition issues – including associated economic and environmental concerns – are common sense. Unfortunately, these solutions become complicated when conflicting economic, political and consumer interests are put before the well-being of humans. I firmly believe that food systems that operate in a local context and respect human labourers, animals and the environment are universally possible and are the answer to many of the public health issues humanity faces today.

Thiago Hérick de Sá





Lia watering the Vila Nova Esperança community garden. The fight against sick societies that value profit more than people – the cause of all causes – must begin with the people at the grassroots

What mainly determines population well-being, health, and disease?
The respect we pay to our human nature, our local culture, our community and each person in it, and our natural environment. In such ways we nourish population health and well-being. How we organise ourselves politically, to control and regulate power, and to use limited resources. These have always been major questions for any society. The difference now is that personally and professionally, we are challenged to make those decisions at global scale. This means fighting hard against those now running the business from 'up there'. How we are going to fight and how successful we will be, will ultimately determine population well-being, health, and disease from now on and thereafter. The best path is through movements of citizens, collaboratively networked, educated for transformation, and radically committed to change. Most of us do not have a clear view of the 'viable future'. But this is far different from where we are now. We must try to open the window to see outside.

What mainly determines good population nutritional status?
The way we eat, work, travel, play, create, and rest. Also the way we interact with each other, with our and other cultures, and with the built and natural environment. All this is conditioned, but not determined, by who we are, what is in our genes, and how life's experiences influence what we are, from epigenetics to culture. Just focusing on food is not enough, even though this is a very important start.

Are enough governments and official agencies making real progress?
No. There are some national examples, usually in the 'outskirts' of capitalism, such as Bhutan, Bolivia and Uruguay. There are also remarkable initiatives from the Pan

American Health Organization, and some enlightening statements from Margaret Chan, director-general of the World Health Organization. But this is at a time in history when so many governments remain committed to the political and economic forces that are destroying traditional practices and societal well-being. More than among national governments and agencies, I can see some real significant progress at the international level, where most of society's current challenges arise.

How useful are the current nutritional sciences?
Current nutritional and physical activity sciences are important and useful in many aspects, and a good part of what can now be confidently taken as reliable knowledge, now come from them. But they still lack purpose. The balance between producing evidence to explain things, rather to solve things, still far too often stops short of action. I agree with the mission phrase of the *World Nutrition Rio2012* conference, which is 'knowledge-decision-action'. In his 'Culture, language and race,' Paulo Freire says:

> We must not negate practice for the sake of theory. To do so would reduce theory to a pure verbalism or intellectual-ism. By the same token, to negate theory for the sake of practice […] is to run the risk of losing oneself in the disconnectedness of practice. It is for this reason that I never advocate either a theoretic elitism or a practice ungrounded in theory, but the unity between theory and practice. In order to achieve this unity, one must have an epistemological curiosity.

The idea that scientific evidence is more valuable than other forms of knowledge, such as those learned over many centuries traditionally or by indigenous communities, is dangerously mistaken. Such an idea makes nutritional and physical activity sciences less useful in the necessary pursuit of a multi-dimensional whole body of knowledge and wisdom.

Are current dietary guidelines and nutrition education programmes, effective?
Dietary guidelines, as well as physical activity guidelines, are not effective alone. Seen as part of a broader and coordinated set of interventions to tackle the negative effects of the cause of all causes on our daily living practices, they may be. Why, only maybe? We professionals have been spending much more time trying to understand the causes of our problems, than in pursuing solutions for those problems to which we already have good answers.

What types of civil society groups are most responsive to the big issues?
Referring to Paulo Freire again, those that are able to reach people's human vocation to 'be-more', which mean to identify the contradictions of the present time while being capable of creating a 'viable future'. Some of so many examples are social movements such as *La Via Campesina*, Ecclesial Base Communities, *Movimento dos Sem Teto*, the Playing Out Movement, Critical Mass, and the Brazilian *National Articulation of Agroecology.*

Name up to three inspiring leaders likely to be active to 2030, with reasons
Thomas Piketty. Carlos Monteiro, and (see the picture above) Lia. Thomas Piketty has taken many years developing proofs of how greed, the cause of all causes, operates, unveiling many cynical arguments used to justify business-as-usual. We need people with that resilience. Carlos Monteiro is a restless academic, not happy with just producing high quality evidence but also prepared to spread the message and to work to make the world more equitable. He is a fighter. You will not know Lia. She is the personification of a warrior. Leading her very poor community in *Vila Nova Esperança*, which means New Hope Village, in the state of São Paulo, this skinny woman fights against unscrupulous officials and private companies grabbing the land that belongs to the local people, and against garbage trucks dumping rubbish on the people's gardens – more than once, with a gun pointed at her head. How far would you go, to fight for your community and for the environment?

Identify up to three of your greatest fears, with reasons
My main fear is that the brilliant devious capacity of capitalism to recover, usually through creation of and profits from crises and wars, will continue to lead to massive suffering. Unless we organise and network as citizens and 'take the reins of this carriage', I fear that I will be alive as a witness of global mass murder, large-scale starvation and dehydration, displacement of most local cultures, loss of naturally grown and stored seeds, and other horrors and terrors now already evident. I also fear that the projected impact of change in climate, with all the consequences which include those mentioned above, will prove to be correct.

Identify up to three of your greatest hopes, with reasons
My hopes are related to the way humans can and do live together and the values we share. I hope to live in a community in which the majority of people care more about each other than about money or power. I hope to live in a world in which countries send more doctors and nurses to fight Ebola, and do not think just about making more money. I hope to live in a global society in which the lives of the poorest people are worth more than all the wealth of the richest ones. I hope to live in an era in which everybody has something, nobody has nothing, and nobody has much.

Make any other remarks as you may wish
Not from me, but from Paulo Freire again, in his *Ideology Matters*:

> We need to say no to the neoliberal fatalism that we are witnessing at the end of this century, informed by the ethics of the market, an ethics in which a minority makes most profits against the lives of the majority. In other words, those who cannot compete, die. This is a perverse ethic that, in fact, lacks ethics. I insist on saying that I continue to be human... I would then remain the last educator in the world to say no: I do not accept... history as determinism. I embrace history as possibility [where] we can demystify the evil in this perverse fatalism that characterises neoliberal discourse at the end of this century.

At the beginning of this century as well, Paulo.

Diana Parra





Sharing home-made meals made with locally grown, healthy foods, as is traditional, as here among workers after hours in a restaurant, is not a privilege of the minority but a right of the majority

What mainly determines population well-being, health, disease?
Pretty much everywhere we look, we can discern determinants of good and bad health. From the food we eat, to the air we breathe, our bodies are interacting with the environment, and every action has a reaction. But determinants of health and disease also go beyond personal behaviour. They tap into political, cultural and social systems, which also determine and shape our ways of life. One of the main determinants of well-being, health and disease is the degree of equity in any society. Inequity in the distribution of wealth, inequity in health care systems, and inequity in the distribution and production of food – these all breed ill-health and disease.

What mainly determines population good nutritional status?
Good nutrition status is also determined by so many factors. These include how healthy was our development in the womb, maternal nutrition, breastfeeding and feeding practices during infancy, and also how healthy are the food systems with which we live. Healthy food systems are those that give priority to and support the production of locally grown foods, family farming, rural employment, local food security, and the maintenance of traditional and cultural practices around food. All food systems go beyond production – marketing and advertising, for example, shape consumption and thus cycle back to production. A healthy food system is one in which children are protected from irresponsible propaganda for ultra-processed products, which consumed regularly, damage current and future health.

How useful are the current nutrition sciences?
Current nutrition researchers are now beginning to realise the need to be more publicly aware and more aware of the public, and to consider real world problems, including transformation of food supplies and dietary patterns. Moving away from deterministic and narrow approaches to nutrition – what Gyorgy Scrinis and Michael Pollan have wisely identified as the age of nutritionism – is I believe the right and most useful move for nutrition science. This should help to deliver a clear message to everybody outside the profession that nutrition really is useful, and that the work of formally qualified open-minded and world-conscious professionals really can have a positive impact on community, family and personal health. At this time when in so many countries obesity and diabetes rates are rising rapidly and are obviously out of control, it is especially important that the science of nutrition and its practitioners engage with the wider determinants of states of health.

Are enough governments and official agencies making real progress?
Not enough. There are only a few countries, many of them in Latin America where I come from – I am Colombian – that have recognised the large impact that political systems and regulatory regimes have on health and nutrition. These include Mexico, Ecuador, Chile and Peru, and outside Latin America, France and Hungary. These countries have implemented policies to protect traditional and established food systems that range from taxes (Mexico), to marketing regulation (Chile, Peru), to subsidies for family farming (France), and moratoriums on genetically modified seeds (Peru, Hungary).

Are current dietary guidelines and nutrition education programmes, effective?
Dietary guidelines and education programmes are important and necessary to promote and deliver the message of good nutrition. But they have to get real. They should be more in touch with the actual situations and needs of the populations they address. To be useful and valid they need to take full account of the actual world in which we live now, and need to include clear, brief, realistic messages that relate to what the public experiences and knows, as opposed to the complicated and contested conclusions of so many colleagues that create more confusion and uncertainty.

What types of civil society groups are most responsive to the biggest issues?
Around the world, journalists – such as Michael Pollan in the US – seem to be key players within civil society movements. So do gastronomes, and chefs – such as Gastón Acurio in Peru, who started a movement that has helped to put a ten-year moratorium on genetically modified seeds and foods in Peru. But public health and nutrition researchers are usually far distant from the civil society movements and other active citizen organisations that really can protect population health.

Name up to three inspiring leaders likely to be active to 2030, with reasons
Champions for public health nutrition are likely to come from areas outside academia and will be emerging from journalisms or gastronomy, like Michael Pollan and

Gastón Acurio. Activist civil society leaders will become increasingly influential. But let's not just think of leaders. Each and every one of us can and should be a champion for public health nutrition, meal-based diets and physical activity, globally, institutionally, or simply in our communities and families. Be the change!

Identify up to three of your greatest fears, with reasons
One is the destruction of traditional and local food systems, because of the invasion and penetration of genetically modified foods and seeds and the homogenisation of food systems. Another is climate change and its ominous and frightening impact on crops, water, and food systems in general. A third is oligopolistic transnational corporations and their power in creating and controlling unhealthy and destructive industrial food systems

Identify up to three of your greatest hopes, with reasons
The reverse of the above. One is civil societies and social movements around the world waking up and standing up to transnational corporations. Two is countries such as some in Latin America like Chile, Ecuador, Mexico and Brazil, which are recognising the importance of regulation, food- and meal-based diets and protection of public health and public goods.

Make any other remarks as you may wish.
When we envision solutions in bleak times, these may sometimes seem like dreams. But 'in dreams begins responsibility'. There is movement. I think of the citizens of the small town of Malvinas in Argentina, who blocked the construction of a Monsanto plant for a year. I think of the national, municipal and local governments of more countries that are defying Big Food and Big Drink, and passing laws and regulations that protect children from predatory propaganda. I sense hope in the air.



Protest very much at the grassroots! Ctizens are becoming politicised, conscious that transnational corporations whose profits come from shaping food systems are acting against the public interest

Isabela Sattamini

1



2



A student's meal in Zhejiang, China, where the central value of food in personal, family and community life is still preserved after many hundreds of years. Here is a vision of nourishment

What are the determinants of population well-being, health?

The determinants of population well-being and health are more social than biological. The science of epigenetics emphasises that the experiences of every person will influence their genes, and therefore their health outcomes. These experiences relate to the immediate and more distant environments, such as living conditions, sanitation, air and water quality, food habits, and access to education and health services. Environment also includes national and local politics. The degree of equity in a city will for example influence levels of violence. It will also influence the degree of political participation and openness to social critical thought and other social factors deeply related to population well-being. The type of study that looks at twin siblings who do not share the same upbringing, is able to show the great importance of social factors compared to biological ones.

What are the determinants of population nutritional status?

The social environment is also the main determinant of nutritional status. Within this the food system as a whole (a complex and multidimensional factor, itself shaped by political and economic ideology), and also nutritional education (a cultural factor) are the main determinants. The food system will influence access to healthy food in

many different aspects, such as which foods are available at the market and at what prices. Nutrition education is a relatively recent term and practice, but it has been practiced by many societies and by families for decades. For example, the Eastern cultures in countries such as India, Thailand, Japan, and China (see the picture above of student food in Zhejiang) consider food to be a means of maintaining health, and also understand the need for food quality and beauty as part of the whole gastronomic experience. By contrast, the Western habit in general now is simply to think of food as fuel, so that anything that is tasty will be eaten, regardless of origin, the extent of processing, the nature of preparation, and what the food or product is made from. This way of thinking about food as unimportant is passed on through generations. Children are brought up not to understand the importance of smart food choices, and to know little or even nothing about the joys of cooking and of preparing and enjoying meals at home. In Western societies so very many people do not understand the link between food and health as a whole – which is so much more than mere absence of disease.

How useful are nutrition science and currently practicing nutritionists?
Nutrition science as it is now is not very useful, I would say, because it does not look at the big picture and at the root of problems. As a nutritionist, I have a very critical view of current conventional Western nutrition science. This is quasi-medical, concerned with achieving the same standards as medicine, turning nutrients into remedies, managing diseases, not investing in prevention and health promotion, and in general overlooking most or all wider aspects. Nutrition is also a social and political science. The name 'nutrition' is inadequate. So many people, including young professionals, mostly see nutrition as a way of reducing body weight.

Are enough governments and official agencies making real progress?
Considering the seriousness and urgency of the current situation – such as rises in obesity rates, rises in chronic diseases rates, overuse and abuse of pesticides use, degradation and loss of land, climate change, traditional food systems at risk – governments and official agencies are not making real progress as they must. Transnational industries are very efficient in controlling governments, although I sense there is push-back now.

Are current dietary guidelines and nutrition education programmes, effective?
Not until they address the real causes of problems and targeting prevention instead of palliative measures. Enough with individual blaming, and let's take political action, please. Obesity being treated with physical activity and low calorie diets programmes? There can be some results, but nothing will change until the food industry and its marketing is regulated. Micronutrient deficiencies treated with supplementation? This can be dangerous and evades the real solution of food based approaches that recognise the value of agro-biodiversity. It's time for real investment in family farming, and control of pesticides, genetically engineered organisms, and ultra-processed product regulation. On food guidelines, I am very proud that the new Brazilian *Guia* sidelines nutrients and emphasises foods, meals and conviviality.

What types of civil society groups are most responsive to the biggest issues?
Brazil is a participatory democracy. We have many councils with participation from civil society and civil servants, to advise governments. This has been part of Brazil's emergence from the dark period of military rule which ended 30 years ago. I particularly admire Brazil's National Food Security Council (*CONSEA*), which does great work regarding public policies. *Meu Rio* (My Rio) aims to listen to the people who live in the city so that it can be made stronger and safer, more inclusive, sustainable, creative, accessible and good to live in.

Name up to three inspiring leaders likely to be active in 2030, with reasons
May I name people who I know? *[Ed – yes, you can]*. *Marcelo Firpo* is a researcher in workers' health and human ecology in Brazil's national Oswaldo Cruz public health foundation (FIOCRUZ). I met him when I took my Master's there. With his commitment to social justice, and his courage, he faces the forces of big business. His research and activism includes political ecology and ecological economics, knowledge construction, and environmental justice. Inês Rugani is mastermind of the Rio2012 conference with its mission for knowledge-decision-action, constantly mentioned in WN. My boss at INCA, Brazil's national cancer institute, who has courage, energy and vision, is Fabio Gomes. No need to explain him here in *WN*!

Identify up to three of your greatest fears, with reasons
First, I fear the dominance of industry over the traditional food systems, that if not now checked will cause massive species extinctions and food supplies dominated by ultra-processed products. Second, I fear political actions that reduce social programmes and increase poverty and inequity, which is happening in some parts of the world and in my own country. Third, I fear the continued rapid rise of chronic non-communicable diseases, especially cancer, which kill people prematurely.

Identify up to three of your greatest hopes, with reasons
First, I hope for an increase in people's recognition of the importance of good food and all the factors that create good food systems. Second, I hope for an equitable world, in which people and populations have freedom and autonomy to choose their own paths. I see this as part of the civilisation process, and believe this will happens. Third, I hope for education that is accessible to all. Knowledge creates freedoms.

Make any other relevant remarks as you may wish.
Many people now are depressed and pessimistic and say they believe that the state of society will get worse. This is not my case. In my own country of Brazil, I see changes for the better at national level, at state and city levels including in Rio de Janeiro where I live, and in communities and families. People in Brazil have a tendency not to take pride in their country. This is not my case either. When I worked at FIOCRUZ within its beautiful campus and stunning Moorish castle headquarters I knew that I was one person in one of many great teams in one of the most distinguished research centres in the world. Inside and outside Brazil progress is being made towards equity and social justice. Public health nutrition is and must be part of this movement.

Claudio Schuftan





Eleanor Roosevelt, one of the team that drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the foundation of the United Nations. This vision now more than ever needs to be affirmed and renewed

What mainly determines population well-being, health, and disease?

I am committed to the concept of the social determination of well-being, health, and disease. Social factors determine the incidence of preventable diseases, including deaths from all types of malnutrition. 'Social determinants' is a generic term. It includes cultural, economic, political and environmental determinants as well. Until 15-20 years ago, these were generally overlooked or denied. Now they are belatedly accepted as crucial – for no longer can arguments be found to deny their causal role! But the frustration all of us in public health and nutrition must surely feel is that close to nothing is being really done to address these determinants. Health and nutrition 'experts' so often have tunnel vision that shuts out the big picture. Very sadly, young nutritionists are still being taught from and mystified by narrow, restricted and outdated technical curricula. This, plus the stubborn resistance of the representatives of powerful countries in global negotiations (as is happening as I write during the preparation for this month's International Conference on Nutrition) reduces resolutions to technical actions bordering on charity that perpetuate poverty and misery. The Chinese proverb says: give hungry people fish and you feed them for a day; show them how to fish and you feed them for life. But it has always been more than that. The pond is privately owned with 'no trespassing' signs, and the waters are polluted by chemicals…and in the case of oceans, fish stocks are dwindling and dying out. You get my point. I rest my case.

What mainly determines good population nutritional status?

Following what I say above, I am equally committed to the social determination of nutrition, as well as to the conceptual framework of the causes of malnutrition introduced by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 1990. This sees malnutrition as

an outcome, with clear immediate, underlying and basic (or structural) causes. In 1983, I participated in the workshop in Tanzania where the concept was discussed, agreed and framed. All three levels of cause must be addressed at the same time. But before and after the Tanzania workshop, and publication of the concept by UNICEF, the basic or root causes of malnutrition continue to be overlooked or ignored. This is why the rates and prevalence of undernutrition have not changed much, and why those of new forms of malnutrition such as obesity and diabetes, notably in impoverished populations, have soared. Women's and children's rights, crucial to protect against malnutrition in all its forms, remain as abused as ever. Women in their lives and work as food producers, mothers, breastfeeders, housekeepers, cooks, and fetchers and carriers, have rights that must be once and for all affirmed and ensured. Similarly, the rights of family farmers, peasants, fisherfolk and of all those who live and work at or close to subsistence level, must be respected, protected and fulfilled, not just in speeches and writing, but in real life, all the time, constantly. It is a first duty of governments to yield to their vulnerable populations now becoming empowered to protect themselves. The same applies to the rights of all humans. Conscious public health nutrition work is political. It must be so.

How useful are the current nutritional sciences?
Yes, 'standard' work is needed. Yes, clinical nutrition applied to communities is needed. Yes, we do need our colleagues to do what they are doing. But colleagues must not leave the social determinants of health and nutrition to 'others' (what others?), because they feel they have inappropriate public health 'tools' in their 'tool-boxes' (what are these tool-boxes?). Please, no more *Lancet* series of spectacular statistical analyses that carefully evade almost all the big issues.

Are enough governments and official agencies making real progress?
A better question is why they are not making real progress? The main reason is the entrenched arrogant top-down approach to malnutrition. Have commensurate grassroots initiatives to combat malnutrition been sufficiently supported and strengthened? No, they have not. Has massive human rights learning taken place? No. Are claim holders demanding the changes they see as a priority to strengthen their food sovereignty? Many yes, but far fewer than would be doing so with greater political awareness and support. We professionals have a duty to fight in equal partnership with people rendered poor by an unfair system, for access to land and agricultural inputs, for the empowerment of women in agriculture, for sustainable agro-ecological practices, and for artisanal fishermen and nomadic groups. Yes, a duty! Moreover, we have the added duty openly to indict greedy transnational corporations, corrupt governments, and autocratic donors.

Are current dietary guidelines and nutrition education programmes, effective?
Are you kidding me? 'Food groups'? 'Healthy' food pyramids? 'Recommended dietary allowances', or 'daily amounts'? Give me a break! What? To teach poor people to choose and eat what they cannot afford? So they can respond to a quick

quiz set by the teaching 'health worker'? All of these are nutrient-based, and not based on what people eat, which is meals! Many millions of dollars have been spent by well–meaning colleagues working for different agencies doing this useless nutrition education. Who are they deceiving? There is a role for nutrition education, yes, but only in the context of and in support of the right to nutrition, of food sovereignty, and of empowerment of claim holders, above all, women. A final thought: Does conventional nutrition education think it can rival the enormous advertising power of Big Food and Big Drink? I'll let you figure that one out.

What types of civil society groups are most responsive to the big issues?
First, reject the concept of 'non-state actors' which like 'stakeholders', is a manipulation meant to merge conflicted industry with genuine public interest groups. Next, please distinguish between the two main types of genuine non-governmental organisation. One is international NGOs funded by big traditional donors that have to protect their funding. The other is a mixture of 'public interest civil society groups' and 'social movements', both of which are clearly most responsive to claim holders' demands. Think here of *La Via Campesina*, the People's Health Movement (PHM), indigenous people's movements, and many others. In the last decade, many international non-government organisations have become more proactive, but when it comes to call a spade a spade, they usually act cautiously to avoid offending their funders. True, there are a rapidly growing number of small local groups that see the big picture and are becoming more vocal and militant. Latin America has many, especially in the Andean region. Grass-roots organisations are the most committed. Increasingly, people understand that their misery has national and global determinants. This is a good omen. Here, I will deliberately say nothing about the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) initiative.

Name up to three inspiring leaders likely to be active to 2030, with reasons
I have just completed a piece on this topic for *WN* in December. Please wait!

Identify up to three of your greatest fears, with reasons
On my dark days I sense doom. Why should we be different from the Egyptians, the Romans, or the Easter Islanders? Greed, status, folly, consumerism, burgers and television (the modern bread and circuses) obsess or absorb most people. But I cannot and do not give up. Top of my fear list is the growing power of transnational corporations that are usurping national sovereignty. The consequent growth of religious and other ideological fundamentalism is my second great fear. The third fear is certainly climate change. Through PHM and otherwise, I do engage with these three topics. I also abhor the global monster of ultra-processed products, and of the transnational and national corporations and industries that produce and peddle them.

Identify up to three of your greatest hopes, with reasons
Hope #1: Human rights learning becoming a global reality. People need to know that they have rights and then to fight for them, not as beggars, but as claim-holders. The challenge is to find the resources to implement a massive global human rights

learning campaign. This is an endeavour whose time has come. Hope #2: Countries really and truly adopting the human rights framework in confronting, preventing and controlling malnutrition, thus claim-holders taking up the space they are entitled to to actively demand their rights. Hope #3: All multilateral and bilateral development agencies really and truly adopting the human rights framework, including extra-territorial obligations that will scrutinise and regulate particularly transnational corporations. All this may sound hopelessly idealistic. But the menace of climate change alone, requires a revolution in the ways societies are shaped and governed. Not surprisingly, the greater the menace, the greater the need to place human rights at the centre, and thus fulfil the vision of great public servants such as Eleanor Roosevelt (pictured above),who built the United Nations 70 years ago on the foundation of human rights.

Make any other remarks as you may wish

I chose public health nutrition as my life's work 40 years ago, after qualifying as a physician in my native Chile. In the early 1970s, socially conscious people became politicised there, because of the changes occurring in the country. For me, then, nutrition blended science, medicine and politics. Undernutrition and related infections, and high infant and young child mortality were endemic in Chile at that time, as now in Asia and Africa and among other populations rendered impoverished and marginalised. Nutrition work made me an activist. It still does.

Status

Readers may make use of the material in this commentary if *WN* is cited. Cite as: Aksnes B, De Sá T, Parra D, Sattamini I, Schuftan C. Nutrition. Visions for this century. [*Development*] *World Nutrition* November 2014, **5**, 11, 953-970. All *WN* contributions are obtainable at www.wphna.org/

World Nutrition commentaries are reviewed internally or by invitation. Contributions to *WN* are the responsibility of their authors. They should not be taken as the view or policy of the World Public Health Nutrition Association unless this is explicitly stated.

How to respond

Please address letters for publication to wn.letters@gmail.com. Letters should usually respond to or comment on contributions to *World Nutrition*. More general letters will also be considered. Usual length for main text of letters is between 350 and 1000 words. Any references should usually be limited to up to 10. Letters are edited, may be developed, and once edited are sent to the author for approval.