WN *Feedback*

World Nutrition **Volume 6, Number 11-12, November-December 2015**

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

The 2015 Global Nutrition Report
A one-sided consensus



Claudio Schuftan
People's Health Movement
Email: cschuftan@phmovement.org

Access this issue Editorial on Standing up and taking sides here
Access the 2015 Global Nutrition Report here
Access this issue Editorial on the 2015 Global Nutrition Report here



The nutrition report business is flourishing. But the state of world nutrition among impoverished populations remains a scandal. Can the new 2015 Global Nutrition Report make a difference?

The 2015 *Global Nutrition Report* is out. It is admirably reviewed *in an editorial in* this issue by four young *WN* editorial team members. Here I write as a member of the People's Health Movement (PHM). As indicated *in the other editorial* in this issue of *WN*, PHM has a consistent attitude. We are on the side of the claim-holders, the people most affected by inequality and injustice, who are neglected, exploited, impoverished, and therefore very often malnourished and hungry.

My first concern with the *Global Nutrition Report* is that, in common with so many official and quasi-official reports on development, it is presented as an objective account. But it is not objective. It also has a point of view. It is more on the side of the duty-bearers – the 'us' who give 'them' aid.

It comes from the International Food Policy Research Institute, based in Washington DC, which does much good work, and has had close ties with the World Bank and the US Agency for International Development, that have been among its funders. The report is also funded by the Gates Foundation. Around half of the many named contributors to the report are based in the USA. Do not misunderstand me. I myself have US citizenship and close ties with the US. But these named institutions are near the centres of power and, more often than not, share their ideology – or attitude. Can I say they come out in the report on the side of the duty-bearers? I think they do, but this is not surprising, since they are the duty-bearers. This is apparent when analysing the report's seven 'areas of action', on which I have some comments.

1 'A political environment has to be generated'.
The report puts this responsibility mostly on 'visionary leaders and champions' including 'members of the SUN Lead Group'. The SUN (Scaling Up Nutrition) initiative is committed to partnerships with industry, including corporations whose strategies and practices conflict with those of public health nutrition. The report rightly regrets that nutrition is under-represented in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and mentions that the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition, 'supported by a group of civil society organisations', sought to put this right. But what it does not say is that, in its present non-representative form, the SCN is mostly devoted to SUN initiative business.

2 'High impact nutrition interventions'.
The report calls for more aggressive 'proven nutrition interventions', and complains about the lack of data for targeting the most needy. This sounds logical, except that high impact interventions, no matter how forcefully implemented, are increasingly agreed not to be sustainable. The UN-backed universal vitamin A supplementation programme addressed in *Ted Greiner's commentary in this issue of WN* is a case in point.

3 'A multisectoral approach'
This is taken here to involve 'recruiting more sectors as indirect drivers of nutrition'. Does this include the corporate sector? Yes, it does. Moreover, multidisciplinary teams that keep on devising 'more comprehensive' or 'multisectoral' approaches to old problems typically do not address the structures of power that are the root cause of the problems. Looking at nutrition from a wider trans-disciplinary perspective

does not automatically lead to more rational, fair and egalitarian solutions. In the present set-up, multidisciplinary approaches typically take existing social and political institutions and power relations as a given, and evade structural issues. Interventions proposed thus stay 'micro', with all involved assured of a slice of cake for their contribution to the approach in the proposed packaged solution. Predictably, the fundamental causes of impoverishment stay unaddressed.

4 'Creating healthy food environments'

This means here, 'promoting healthy eating by making healthy food choices'. Examples are better food product labelling, restrictions on food product marketing, taxes and subsidies to encourage healthy choices, better school meals locally sourced, and decreasing the consumption of salt, sugar and *trans*-fats. The section ends with a call to develop 'objective indicators' for better healthy food environments. Civil society organisations are called on to mobilise support. Very limp.

5 'More funding for scaling up nutrition'

Reports like this always ask for a lot more money. Since this is unlikely to be supplied on a regular reliable basis, calls for more billions of cash could build in an excuse for continued failure. Yes, governments and donors should increase their funding. But much more effective would be wholesale lifting of external debt burdens imposed by irresponsible lenders and corrupt borrowers in the past, which remains a main source of immiseration, especially in Africa. Free of external debt, the people of impoverished countries will be far better able to find their own appropriate solutions.

6 'Bringing in new partners'

Who are these? Not really clear. This section states that 'climate change does bring nutrition vulnerabilities', and calls for national nutrition plans to take environmental impacts on nutrition into account. It also rightly says that 'food systems are the real drivers of nutrition outcomes'. But there is practically nothing in the report about agroecology, let alone food sovereignty. This section also rightly says that citizens must hold governments to account, but ends only by proposing monitoring of indicators of impact of current food systems. Again, limp.

7 'Strengthening accountability to reassure investors and citizens'

This starts by calling for new champions and new investors. It is recognised that 'businesses profoundly affect nutrition; they shape the environment in which people make decisions. Some businesses make choices negative for nutrition outcomes' and 'they lobby and influence government policy makers'. More accountability is needed though, but is likely to remain weak, the report says. The section ends by calling on United Nations agencies to establish a commission to clarify responsibilities of business in nutrition. Yes, yet another commission, and another report... The experts will be busy. But reports do not nourish hungry people.

*Schuftan C. A one-sided consensus [The 2015 Global Nutrition Report] [Feedback]. World Nutrition November-December 2015, **6**, 11-12, 872-874*



***WN** Project Phoenix*

From nutrition to nourishment



José Luis Vivero Pol
Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium
Email: Jose-luis.viveropol@uclouvain.be

Access Sept-Oct commentary on Project Phoenix here
Access Sept-Oct Raj Patel, Anthony Fardet, Colin Tudge on Project Phoenix here
Access this issue Jose Luis Vivero Pol Visions

Congratulations on the *WN Project Phoenix*. I elaborate some of the points I make here in *my contribution to the WN Visions* series, published in this issue.

In order to appease the unsustainable eating habits of millions of the so-called sovereign consumers (easily manipulated by the Big Agri-food industry and public relations specialists), humans are eating this planet far beyond its capabilities, mortgaging the food and nutrition security of future generations to maximise profits with the private exploitation of food systems. The planet will be destroyed – and then, will future generations have to migrate to other worlds in spaceships filled with fatty people, as marvellously depicted in the Pixar film 'Wall-E'? Raj Patel's *Stuffed and Starved* is still a painful analogy of our post-2015 world, although the elites keep insisting in cooking up the statistics to make us believe we are progressing a lot.

If we want to abate and reverse the growing self-destructive trend in the low-cost food system, the so-far called 'nutrition' science, polluted by a money-driven ethos and appropriated by the corporate cluster to promote corporate solutions to global health based on profit-making blueprints – such as the ready-to-use therapeutic food best known by the commercial brand Plumpy'Nut – could be re-branded as 'nourishment' as proposed last month in *WN* article. This split in the nutritional world, between those exercising a technologically-driven, patent-protected, profit-seeking and results-oriented type of nutrition and those promoting an open-knowledge, well-being-seeking, holistically-driven and happiness-oriented type of nutrition science could be epitomised by using and promoting two different terms: 'nutrition' for the former, 'nourishment' for the latter.

'Nutrition' would deal with food as a commodity, a mono-dimensional good whose tradeable features are dominant, stressing the value-in-trade aspects of food and nutrition. 'Nourishment' would approach food as a commons, a multi-dimensional public good whose cultural aspects, human rights considerations, essentiality for human survival, and natural origins, would also be valued. The value-in-use of food would be taken into consideration by the new food and nourishment policies.

So the name of this journal should perhaps change accordingly to *World Nourishment*.

Vivero Pol JL. From nutrition to nourishment. WN Project Phoenix. [Feedback]. World Nutrition November-December 2015, ***6****, 11-12, 875-876*



WN Project Phoenix

The future is with real farming



Colin Tudge
Wolvercote, Oxford, UK
Email: colin@colintudge.com

Access June-July 2013 Colin Tudge on Real farming here
Access Aug-Sept 2013 Colin Tudge on Real farming here

Project Phoenix is an excellent and vital initiative. Surely, too, *all* scientists and policy makers should be taking note of the project – as indeed should the gung-ho technophiles at *Nature*. The innate limitations of science (it is not and cannot be the royal road to omniscience) and the shortcomings of present strategy and practice, need to be spelled out and indeed shouted from the rooftops.

With many colleagues I am now seeking to establish the College of Real Farming and Food Culture. It has a very broad agenda which of course must include nutrition. *See the prospectus attached*, together with a *visual of its philosophy*, and please contribute your ideas. Agriculture and nutrition science must march hand in hand.

Tudge C. The future is with real farming. WN Project Phoenix. [Feedback]. World Nutrition November-December 2015, ***6****, 11-12, 876*



WN *Project Phoenix*

Integrated learning



Mark Wahlqvist
Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China
Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
Email: mark.wahlqvist@gmail.com

Access December 2014 Mark Wahlqvist on who, what and why are we? here
Access June 2015 Feedback Brooke Aksnes on nutrition curricula here
Access June 2015 Feedback Maria Alvim on nutrition curricula here
Access July-August 2015 Feedback Maria Alvim on what nutrition students eat here



Mark Wahlqvist (at right in the picture, left, with Claus Leitzmann, Tim Lang and Colin Tudge, reasoning out the Giessen Declaration at the university of Giessen in 2005. and (second from left in the picture, right), with Barrie Margetts, then editor of Public Health Nutrition, Tony McMichael, and Ibrahim Elmadfa, a successor as president of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences.

I welcome *Project Phoenix* as set out in *WN*, and also its stated aim to transform formal nutrition science curricula, as also advocated by two of my fellow *WN* editorial team members, Brooke Aksnes and Maria Alvim (see above).

In many parts of the world, nutrition is finding a more common place in curricula from primary through to secondary and tertiary education. As it progresses through these stages, it has a wide opportunity to mesh with other areas of knowledge

acquisition and development of life skills. Then, in common with other subject material, it becomes increasingly segregated until it assumes more and more a career development path. It can be kept personally and socially relevant, as long as it retains a broad vision.

In so doing, it can retain an immediacy and responsiveness to the socio-environmental changes which are now accelerating. At the same time, the interplay between learner, teacher-learner and their needs can be included and enhanced. This will inform the conceptual framework and the evolution of nutrition science itself.

The context of nutrition

The overarching content of nutrition curricula should always be food system-based, with due regard to people, their biology and their place in society, the environment, now, in the past and future. Stating this, is in accord with the *Giessen Declaration*, the product of a project jointly sponsored by the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) and the World Health Policy Forum, which for the first time positions nutrition as a social, economic and environmental as well as a biological science (1) The Declaration encourages curricula and vehicles of learning to encompass these domains at whatever stage of education is active.

IUNS has paid special attention to the needs of nutrition in health care professional training. In the late 1980s and early 1990s it produced with WHO, in English and Chinese, a *Manual of Patient Problems in Clinical Nutrition* (2,3). This continues to be used throughout the world It has contributed to an awakening of clinical nutrition practice (4).With the encouragement of preventive medicine in family medicine, preventive nutrition has been to the fore (5, 6).This has been less food-based than is desirable because of an ongoing deficit of food knowledge and food-based clinical strategy among primary health care practitioners.

A new, disturbing motivator for nutrition curricula and practice is the recrudescence of food insecurity across the globe (7). This has led to a re-think of food and health in ecological terms, where humans are understood as ecological creatures beset with 'ecosystem health disorders' (8,9).

A science-based profession needs various facilities for its practitioners to be up to date, reliable and competent. This presupposes an adequate literature – textbooks, journals, and other writings – research, scholarly societies, and independent peer review. All this has been lacking. But in 1992, impetus was given in the Asia Pacific region by the advent of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (10). Curricula must meld with an intellectually vigorous and dynamic knowledge base which connects to life-long learning and critical appraisal.

A disturbing trend

One thing troubles me particularly. This is the competitive, commercial and reductionist rather than collaborative, just and integrative academic milieu in which food and nutrition is now so often taught and researched .This is not peculiar to

food and nutrition. But it leads to careers with similar characteristics. One of the most disquieting outcomes is a lack of appreciation of the risks of 'designer foods' or 'nutraceuticals' – products with added components directed towards a 'market' of medicalised phenomena and outer ranges of what is actually normal physiology and behaviour.

Any benefits or adverse effects of such pseudo-health products will be increasingly difficult to detect amidst their density and dominance in the 'market'. We may even have had 'reassuring', but non-contextual, feeding studies of 'novel ingredients' to show that this or that biomarker is 'favourably' changed. So what? What matters, is the background diet, the food structure as a delivery system, medium-to-long term health outcomes, and mortality. And what about the cost? The sustainability?

Nutrition curricula need radical review. They will also need to be revisited regularly. What we consider most relevant today and tomorrow may change fairly soon. The minds of today's nutrition learners must be ready for the unknown. That is all we know. Most important is to recognise what we do not know.

References

1 *The Giessen Declaration. Public Health Nutrition* 2005, **8**(6A): 783-786. *Access pdf here*

2 Wahlqvist M, Vobecky J. *Patient Problems in Clinical Nutrition: A Manual.* London: John Libbey, 1987.

3 Wahlqvist M, Vobecky J. *Problems in Clinical Nutrition: A Manual* (Chinese edition). Translated and adapted by Gu Chin-Fan. Beijing: People's Surgeon Publishing, 1991

4 Wahlqvist L, Isaksson B. Training in clinical nutrition: undergraduate and postgraduate. *Lancet.* 1983, 2, (8362):1295–1297.

5 Wahlqvist M, Vobecky J. *Preventive Nutrition in Medical Practice.* London: Smith-Gordon, 1994

6 Truswell AS, Family physicians and patients: is effective nutrition interaction possible?American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 2000. **71**: 6-12.

7 Wahlqvist M. The clinical practice of food.security. *Journal of the Australasian Journal of Nuritional and Environmental Medicine* 2013, **32**, 1, 3-8.

8 Wahlqvist M. Ecosystem health disorders - changing perspectives in clinical medicine and nutrition *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2014; **23(**1):1-15. doi: 10.6133/apjcn.2014.23.1.20.http://apjcn.nhri.org.tw/server/APJCN/23/1/1.pdf

9 Wahlqvist M. Who, what and why are we? *World Nutrition* 2014, **5**, 12, 1061-1066. *Access pdf here*

10 Wahlqvist M. The *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition*: its philosophy and a brief history. *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2012; **21**, 1,:1-2

Mark Wahlqvist is a former president of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences. He is founder and editor of the Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

*Wahlqvist M. Integrated learning. WN Project Phoenix. [Feedback]. World Nutrition November-December 2015, **6**, 11-12, 877-879*



WN *Sugar. Taxation. Mexico*

Victory!



Boyd Swinburn
Chair, Policy and Prevention, World Obesity Federation, London, UK
www.worldobesity.org

Access this issue Editorial on taking sides here
Access this issue Update on sugar taxation in the UK and Mexico here
Access this issue Marion Nestle and Tina Rosenberg on Cola wars here

Big Sugar team note. The lead *Update* and the commentary by Tina Rosenberg (access them above) tell of an epic battle fought – and won – against Big Soda in Mexico. The ground-breaking law that has imposed taxation of 10 per cent on sugared soft drinks was under threat. A bombardment of protest such as that from the World Obesity Federation (below) has been effective. On 29 October Mexican legislators reversed the decision.

23 October 2015. Dear Senators: On behalf of the World Obesity Federation Policy and Prevention section, I urge you to maintain and preferably increase the taxes on the foods and beverages which are driving up obesity in Mexico. Mexico was hailed as a world leader in the battle against obesity when it introduced its tax on sugar-sweetened beverages and unhealthy snack food. Many countries were looking to follow Mexico's lead. This measure is particularly important for reducing childhood obesity and is a core recommendation of WHO's Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity. The public health gains for the Mexican people and the political leadership you have shown to the world are now under threat. If the Government cannot withstand the threat from the multinational companies and its pioneering public health policies are reversed, it will leave a terrible legacy of ill-health and governance-by-money for the people of Mexico. World Obesity urges you and your government to maintain the hard-won taxes on sugary drinks and unhealthy food products and look to increasing them in the future to 20 per cent for even greater health gains.

Swinburn B. Victory! [Sugar. Taxation. Mexico]
Feedback. World Nutrition November-December 2015, ***6****, 11-12, 880*



***WN** Development. Middle East*

Sustainable? Not likely



Sara Diana Garduño Diaz
Your Choice Nutrition Consultancy, Kuwait
Email: sdgarduno@gmail.com

Access September-October 2015 Editorial on Sustainable Development Goals here

Following the publication of the *WN* Editorial on the Sustainable Development Goals I write from Kuwait and what is happening in this region of the world in terms of the SDG. With 17 goals to discuss it would be too ambitious to try to address them all here, hence I will focus on just two:

Goal 5
Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Kuwait is considered one of the most forward thinking countries in the Middle East in terms of gender equality and women empowerment. However, most leadership positions, decision-making in political, economic and public life remains largely dominated by males. Women are still much better off here than in many other countries; access to education, health and financial independence are highly available to women in Kuwait. The biggest setback is perhaps cultural, with social stigmas carrying a heavy burden on the lifestyle of the female gender and with family duty and expectations dictating much of the long term planning that women must make. Arranged marriage at a young age and the expected delivery of several offspring often becomes a demotivating obstacle for many women who may lack mentoring for the achievement of work-life balance.

Sexual exploitation is also an area of concern in the region. With the extremely elevated number of domestic workers from abroad sexual exploitation and abuse is a recurring theme in the news, and if we consider the likelihood that many of these cases go unreported the issue is likely to reach alarming rates.

In Kuwait there is increasing participation of women in the political and business spheres. Female entrepreneurs, supported by a legislation that identifies them as

equal to men in rights, are helping develop the county by becoming role models for the younger generations, by adapting archaic ways of thinking to a new forward facing society, and by leaning in to create for themselves empowerment and gender equality.

Goal 12
Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

This one is likely to be one of the most challenging goals for the Middle East to achieve, in particular for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. To begin with, with an almost exclusive dependence on oil for their progress, the region will need to make major changes in its development plan. A better plan will need to be designed and implemented to make use of their limited natural resources.

A second issue to tackle under this goal is waste management. Most countries in the Middle East are not big on reducing, reusing and recycling. Landfills are rapidly filling up and garbage crisis like the one happening in Lebanon at the moment are not a once-off event. Piles of garbage that rot during the elevated summer temperatures also spiral diseases.

And finally we come to sustainable consumption. Not very likely. With Dubai hosting the world's largest shopping mall (Dubai Mall) and with ATMs that give out gold ingots, it is difficult to imagine anything further from sustainable consumption.

In Kuwait many of the daily activities of the population young and old centre around non-stop acquisition of goods. From a very early age young Kuwaitis are taught the value of money and how it can make or break you. A sense of entitlement comes from material ownership and less so in the form of meritocracy. A culture of having always the latest model of the latest trend is prevalent and waste control and reduction is slim. Given the lifestyle that dominates at the moment, the future looks unsustainable, at least from a consumption and production perspective.

References:

1 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). Sustainable Development Goals. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300

2 Al-Diwan Al-Amiri Forum espouses empowerment of Kuwaiti women. 2015. http://www.da.gov.kw/eng/articles/Article_Minister.php

3 Stel N, El-Husseini R. Lebanon's massive garbage crisis isn't its first. Here's what that teaches us. The *Washington Post*, 18 September 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/09/18/this-isnt-lebanons-first-garbage-crisis-and-what-that-should-teach-us/

*Garduno Diaz S. Sustainalble? Not likely, [Development. Middle East] [Feedback]. World Nutrition November-December 2015, **6**, 11-12, 881-882*



***WN** Nepal*

The need for eco-tourism




Martin Tondel
Department of Medical Sciences, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden
Email: martin.tondel@medsci.uu.se

Lena Lindahl
Link & Learn International, Uppsala, Sweden
Email: lena@linkandlearn.se

Access April 2015 Ashok Bhurtyal, Dushala Adhikari on vitamin A in Nepal here
Access May 2015 Ashok Bhurtyal Vision here
Access June 2015 Ashok Bhurtyal, Dushala Adhikari et al on Langtang rebirth here

We visited Langtang village as tourists in April 2015 before it was ruined in the devastating earthquake. This is our perspective on reconstruction. Tourists of any place are often a very heterogeneous group of people. Some want to enjoy the landscape, others want to climb peaks. We like to experience a culture that is different from our daily life. We appreciate local food and to learn about how people live. What is important to the people we meet? How do they live? What do they worry about and what makes them happy?

Some tourists come with a guide, some do not, Guides should have a good relationship with the local people and be knowledgeable about daily life and customs, as well as knowing the names of mountain peaks, plants and birds. To be a local guide provides income for the community. It can be hard for them to see what is special about their familiar surroundings and know how to convey this. With good training these jobs can be kept by the locals and not exploited by outsiders.

Promote local food

In Langtang nature and wildlife, and the Tibetan culture, is particularly interesting to us. We do not expect or want food and drinks we can get at home. The traditional food of Langtang is nutritious and exciting, including locally produced fresh vegetables, potatoes, buckwheat bread, buckthorn juice and yak cheese and yoghurt. These local products could be developed, with Tibetan menus, to offer something

unique for tourists. The knowledge related to the local food culture is also an attraction that will stimulate more interest. We like to hear about how food is produced, processed and prepared. Local knowledge on medical plants and its use is also interesting to us. These are important topics for guides.

Some aspects are particularly important to tourists, for example clean drinking water and hygienically prepared food. A holiday that ends with a disease affecting the return trip is a holiday you don't want to recommend. Healthy tourists are good ambassadors for Langtang.

Golden opportunity

Tourism can have a negative impact on both nature and culture. This is a challenge for a village under reconstruction. The people of Langtang now have a golden opportunity to decide their own future. Their decisions will determine what kind of tourists they will attract. Is there a need to restrict the numbers of tourists to sustain the unique attraction of nature and culture in Langtang?

We do not want to feel that our holidays cause forest depletion or sewage pollution of rivers or piles of waste. Many visitors to remote regions of natural beauty have a sense of responsibility for the environment. We would like to encourage the use of solar power, solar heating of water and wood fuel-saving technology for cooking. Some education on how to benefit from these possibilities might be useful for the inhabitants. If locals can explain the importance of responsible use of scarce resources, the tourists will be happy to take part in making Langtang prosperous.

When Langtang has developed its vision for sustainable tourism, marketing needs to be tailored to attract the type of tourists that Langtang wants to welcome.

*Tondel M, Lindahl L. The need for eco-tourism [Feedback]. World Nutrition November-December 2015, **6**, 11-12, 883-884*

Status

All contributions to *World Nutrition* are owned by their authors. They are not 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 usually respond to or comment on contributions to *World Nutrition*. Usual length for main text of letters is between 400 and 1,300 words but they can be shorter or longer. Letters are edited for length and style, may be shortened or developed, and once edited are sent to the author for approval.