

Conceptual understanding of Sustainable Health and Linking Nutrition to Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

Nutrition is a development indicator. It indicates advancement in health, education, employment, women's empowerment, poverty, inequality reduction, and it can help in building peaceful, secure, and stable societies." It is one of the important components which is directly or indirectly related to sustainable development goals (SDGs). Multiple factors such as education, economic status, occupation, water, sanitation, hygiene, etc are interlinked with nutrition. In this article, we have emphasized the relationship of various SDGs with nutrition. Global and multi-sectorial involvement is required in the battle with malnutrition. Adequately nourished people are more productive and active. By breaking the cycles of hunger and malnutrition, we can create a path for achieving SDGs.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Sanitation, Hunger, Goals, Water, Malnutrition, Hygiene, Poverty, Occupations, Employment

INTRODUCTION

Eight millennium development goals (MDGs) were replaced by 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) in September 2015. These SDGs have specific targets to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030.

Nutrition plays a vital role in achieving these SDGs. SDG 2 aims to "end hunger, achieve food security and better nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture."

Malnutrition is a major hidden hurdle for achieving these SDGs, which often goes unnoticed. It results not only from a lack of sufficient and adequately nutritious and safe food but also from a host of intertwined factors linking health, care, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, access to food and resources, women's empowerment, and more.^[1]

Every day throughout the world, there is a struggle to provide a nutritious supper for their children. According to World food program, up to 811 million people still go to bed hungry every night. In 2019, 135 million people in 55 countries were plagued by acute food insecurity.^[2]

One of our time's great challenges is eliminating hunger and malnutrition. Not only can the effects of insufficient or incorrect food create suffering and ill health, but they also

stymie growth in many other areas of development, such as education and employment.

Feeding a growing global population is expected to rise from 7 billion people to over 9 billion by 2050. Climate change, increasing water and land scarcity, soil and land degradation, and a deteriorating natural resource base are all threats that will disproportionately affect the world's poor and vulnerable, particularly those living in rural areas, who account for the vast majority of the world's 800 million hungry people.^[3]

Sustainable health can only be achieved if we address all the elements that affect it simultaneously and try to remove obstacles to reaching it.

Achieving Sustainable Health in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic

As per information available in nature on 16 July 2020, only 2 SDGs out of 17 SDGs (avoiding preventable deaths among

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newborns and children under the age of five and enrolling children in primary schools) were close to being met pre-epidemic.

According to the state of food security and nutrition in the World 2020 Report, more than 70 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty, potentially undoing recent improvements. This is on top of the 750 million people who already live on less than \$1.90 a day. It is also claimed that the goals of eradicating poverty, hunger, and inequality and promoting health, wellbeing, and economic prosperity are on the verge of extinction. In many cases, countries will be unable to record what is happening: according to a UN and World bank audit of 122 national statistics offices, 96% of them have stopped collecting data face-to-face entirely or partially.^[3]

The COVID-19 crisis has led to a major setback in the pathway to attaining sustainable health. Preliminary estimates by FAO state that the COVID-19 pandemic might add between 83 and 132 million people to the global undernourished population by 2020, depending on the economic development scenario. Also, food insecurity can deteriorate dietary quality and raise the risk of malnutrition, including undernutrition, overweight, and obesity.^[5]

Closures of schools had resulted in missed meals and nutrition education, which was generally provided through school food and nutrition programs. Quarantine had forced caregivers to be separated from their beneficiaries, resulting in the deterioration of childcare practices.

Breastfeeding promotion and nutrition counseling activities were reduced or halted, and mothers' worries about COVID-19 infection lead to greater use of breast milk substitutes.

Purchase habits were shifted in favor of products with longer shelf life and often lower nutrient profiles, contributing to undernutrition, overweight, and obesity.^[6,7]

The cost of nutritious foods must be reduced in order to make healthy diets more affordable. Dietary cost drivers can be found across the food supply chain, in the food environment, and in the political economy that determines trade, public spending, and investment policies. Low educational achievement, poor physical growth, and low labor productivity are all linked to inadequate nutrition.^[8]

Initiatives to Achieve Sustainable Health (Table 1)

Five steps to zero hunger as advised according to World food program to achieve food security are^[2]

- Pave the road from farm to market.
- Put the furthest behind first.
- Pave the road from farm to market.
- Reduce food waste.
- Encourage a sustainable variety of crops.
- To make nutrition a priority, starting with a child's first 1000 days.

Table 1: Nutritional status and its impact on Sustainable Development Goals^[4]

<i>SDG</i>	<i>Link to nutrition</i>
No poverty	Poverty restricts access to proper food and makes it harder to follow dietary guidelines.
Zero hunger	Undernourishment is caused by unsustainable food production.
Good health & wellbeing	Nutrition that is both healthy and sustainable has the potential to minimize premature death, including death from non-communicable diseases.
Quality education	Malnutrition impairs learning capacity; however, increased awareness may influence healthy and environmentally friendly dietary choices.
Gender equality	Empowering women to assert their rights enhances their quality of life and nutrition; good nutrition boosts learning performance, which leads to greater career prospects.
Clean water & sanitation	Undernutrition may be reduced if they have access to safe drinking water and sanitation.
Affordable & clean energy	Creating a world free of fossil fuels will minimise greenhouse gas emissions and pollution while also ensuring food security.
Decent work & economic growth	Increased nutrition security and sustainable agriculture may be possible as a result of economic restructuring.
Industry, innovation & infrastructure	Agriculture development and food security require affordable access to technologies and infrastructure.
Reduced inequalities	Income, food, health, and education access are all affected by inequalities.
Sustainable cities & communities	Expansion into rural areas raises food demands, causes competition for food and water supplies, and ultimately leads to a reliance on food purchases.
Responsible consumption & production	Food production and access to water must be sustainable to meet the nutritional needs of a growing global population, as uncontrolled and inefficient food production contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and land degradation.
Climate action	Global food production and security, as well as access to fresh water resources, are all impacted by climate change.
Life below water	Overfishing limits biodiversity, yet aquaculture reduces hunger and increases nutrition.
Life on land	Soil degradation occurs as a result of land use change, as well as a reduction in biodiversity and food production, as well as a reduction in access to fresh water.
Peace and justice	Malnutrition and death are caused by war because of insufficient/insecure food supplies and limited access to food.
Partnerships for goals	Partnerships between many sectors and governments are required to attain the objectives.

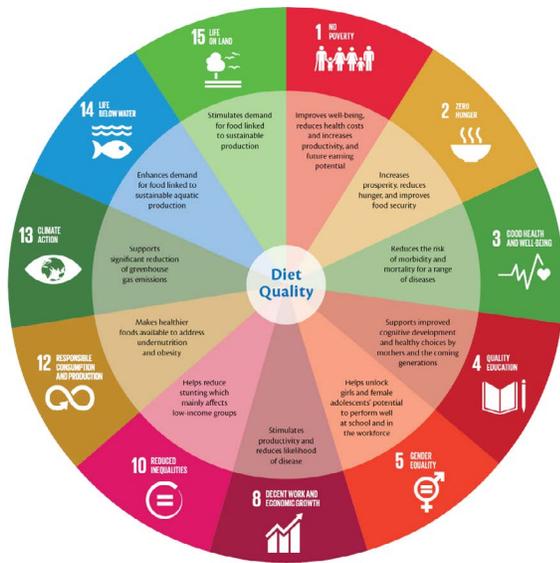


Figure 1: Diet Quality in context with SDG^[9]

Six priorities for policymakers to make available high-quality diets to all are as follows^[8]

- While formulating plans to accomplish sustainable development goals, pay special attention to food quality.
 - To improve diets and accomplish the SDGs, take a food systems approach (Figure 1).
 - Improve the diets of babies, small children, adolescent females, and women.
 - Address the hurdles and shocks that prevent vulnerable groups from accessing nutritious foods.
 - Enable policy action by broadening national policy approaches to SDG2 interpretation to guarantee that food systems are in good working order
 - Intensify data collection and reporting on diet quality.
- To reduce food losses and improve efficiencies at all stages of the food supply chain, countries will need to rebalance agricultural policies and incentives toward more nutrition-sensitive investment and policy measures. In order to boost the purchasing power and affordability of nutritious meals for the most vulnerable groups, nutrition-sensitive social protection

programs will be essential. In order to make the sustainable health notion a reality, policies that more broadly support behavioral change toward healthier eating will be required.

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