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The answer to African persisting Hunger

As the world sails in this first quarter of the new decade, many African countries are still threatened by famine/hunger. Though in the past decade the continent experienced impressive economic growth, Africa remains one of the poorest.

The human Development index Consumption data reveals that the bigger percentage of the African population do not meet their basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, health, education, and transport)

Assets & Activities in Rural Africa:

Being an agricultural economy, land in Africa is the major productive asset both for nations and households. Ninety percent (90%) of the African population are peasant farmers on customary land, with more than 70% women providing the labor in the agricultural production.

The picture emerging from research is that poorer groups in rural Africa depend principally on food crop agriculture, seasonal wage income, and remittance for their livelihoods; while the better-off combine food crop agriculture with rising livestock holdings and widespread engagement in non-farm self-employment activities. The asset status of the households is captured by both the wealth ranking exercise, and by house level data.

From the wealth rankings, the well-offs in Africa village societies are distinguished by having land holdings above 2hectars, 4 or more cattle, 5 or more goats, employing non-farm labor seasonally, sending their children to schools etc. The middle wealth categories have correspondingly less of all these assets, and can be found to shade into selling rather than buying seasonal labor. For this category, non-farm activities would tend to be in small –scale trading or bicycle taxis. The poor possess little or no land, no cattle, and a few small livestock, sell labor to others, are unable to pay school fees for their children, do not possess bicycles, and have few non-farm self-employment options with beer brewing being cited very often.

Household level data confirms this picture in details especially when variations across villages in African countries are examined. The poor are associated with low or zero land holding often associated with sub-division of land at inheritance, and low livestock holdings. They depend on wage –work, on other farms, non-farm self-employment activities that require little capital to startup.

Much as African Governments in their respective countries have put in place some comprehensive frame work for sustainable Agriculture, as a means of poverty eradication, a policy implication is that efforts to raise the agricultural productivities will have little direct effect on the poor, although some indirect benefits may occur if larger farmers employ more labor or purchase more services. Some indicators show that Sustainable Agriculture practices have helped in reducing food shortages in many African homes and thus improvement in their health. Since it is common knowledge that poor nutrition leads to frequent disease attacks of all sorts, it is well understood that Sustainable Agriculture does not only help reduce expenditure on food alone but also on health. Therefore Sustainable Agriculture is a practice which needs to be geared up, the ONLY HOPE for the world in general and more so to Africa . But in order to achieve the goal, African leaders/ policy makers have to do a lot to realize the positive results.

Ethnic Wars:

The on going arms conflict in most parts of Africa has the greatest effects on the population. The common victims are the rural habitants who are always displaced and are ever on the move. Such kind of situation leaves no room for people to concentrate on their day –to-day

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farming activities thus making them permanent dependants. Clear examples are: Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Liberia, Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, etc.

Corruption:

The corrupt systems in place at different levels have also a big role they play in the undermining of the enhancement /development of the life of the poor. Most governments in Africa have failed to put in place the necessary infrastructure like irrigation systems, roads, agro-processing plants and facilitating marketing strategies, in order to uphold the Sustainable Agriculture.

Diseases:

Poor living conditions threaten health. And the majority of the African population suffer from all sorts of diseases every day due to poor feeding and poor living conditions, and yet care services are just next to none. Sanitation is never enforced and in some village parts people still share shelters with animals and birds. AIDS/HIV too has largely affected the continent's man power living the horror footmark.

Illiteracy:

In order for the African Governments to succeed in their campaign towards Sustainable Agriculture, There is a great need for disseminating imparted information and messages to the population, however the problem is that a good number of the interested parties i.e. rural farmers can not read or write, which makes the work more complex. The population needs to know about;

- **Land and how to use it more efficiently** (by teaching them how to maintain high **quality soil**).
- **Crop rotation.**
- **Water management** (Teaching the farmers how to time / utilize rain since many are not accessed to irrigation systems.
- **Proper use of Chemicals/Green manure:** If fertilizers and pesticides are to be used, farmers need to be educated how to apply them properly, as they consider soil conservation.
- **How to control soil erosion:** -Farmers need to be encouraged to plant trees and discouraging the cutting of the already existing ones.
- **Cultivation techniques.** Farmers need to learn modern cultivation methods in order to make proper use of the land.
- **Birth control:** Birth control is very essential since findings reveal that over population and displacements are associated to the undermining factors of Sustainable Agriculture, in various parts of the world.

At this age of the globalization, farmers in Africa or developing world have to think beyond substance levels and switch to a type of Agriculture which will free them from the caveat of poverty, Hunger /famine, and Diseases. It is only at that stage that the real meaning of Agricultural sustainability shall be visible.