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Youth Voices In Development #3

Topic Three. Goal Two: Zero Hunger: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. (See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1300> for information on the targets related to goal two)

1. Choose one of the targets of goal two. What are your observations and recommendations for addressing this target in your host country, based on your experience?
2. How does the target you chose relate to goals four and five, if indeed it does?

Length: Approximately 500-1000 words

2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality

Sustainable food production is an extremely important subject in Tanzania as agriculture is the number one industry for jobs, employing more than two-thirds of the population (Charle & Dhliwayo, p.4). This goal is also important because of its effects on the environment and direct link with human health and development. Even with most working in the agricultural sector, the severe problems of malnutrition and stunting stem from people not being able to afford the food, not being able to keep it before it spoils, not having a variety of nutritious foods and the epidemic of intestinal diseases that cause malnutrition. Ultimately though, poverty remains the biggest barrier to accessing food because agricultural work, which most people are employed in, pays very little. In Tanzania, stunting affects 42% of children under 5 and malnutrition is a contributing factor in 130 child deaths a day. Children do not necessarily starve to death but the prolonged lack of essential nutrients weakens the immune system making them unable to fight common childhood diseases. Without adequate food, children are more likely to become sick, less likely to go to school or do well once they are there (UNICEF-Tanzania).

Although there are issues in Tanzania, addressing sustainable food production and its related human health impacts requires global thinking. Indeed, resilient agricultural practices are necessary but all countries need to think about the extent to which farmers can or should adapt in order to produce profitable yields in the face of climate change. If polluting countries think that climate change should be mitigated in order to preserve the current climate for food production among other things they will make the necessary and deep measures to stop their devastating contributions to it. The more extreme the weather, the more inputs and work profitable agricultural yields will take, which will affect poorer countries more significantly than richer ones. Currently, less than half of Tanzania's cultivable land is under irrigation constraining farmers to rely on the rains (Charle & Dhliwayo, p.4). Addressing this goal in Tanzania requires first and foremost a commitment by all countries to do what they can to ensure that those who are most affected by climate change and least responsible will not have to adapt to impossible levels to continue agricultural productivity and livelihoods. Sustainable and secure food production means mitigating climate change by whatever means possible.

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The agricultural sector needs national investments and commitments as well but improvements are being made in the closely related area of environmental sustainability. Tanzania is already mainstreaming environmental sustainability into national planning strategies with special focus on safeguarding biodiversity by cracking down on illegal poaching and its illicit trade (Charle & Dhliwayo, p.10). Rural infrastructure improvements in roads and communication networks can allow better access for farmers to markets with less food being spoiled along the way. Irrigation can be improved by introducing innovative and ecological rainwater collection and storage facilities instead of being shipped by trucks. Increases by the government in the already existing program of providing farm implement subsidies can be an effective strategy at targeting farmers for assistance and increasing the mechanization of the sector (Charle & Dhliwayo, p.3-4). Water, whether by rain or storage facility, and systems that allow consistent access to it, is an enormous influencer of food production.

Additionally, attaining sustainable food production is increasingly being viewed as a gender equality issue. Poverty and patriarchy reinforce each other to undermine many efforts to empower the girl child with her human rights and her agricultural productivity. In Tanzania, **75% of farmers are women** (“Tanzania’s Newest”, 2015). Discrimination against African women farmers in loans, access to land, fertilizer etc. contributes to an estimated **100-150 million less people fed each day** (World Bank, 2014).

Poverty and patriarchy in Tanzania also make a dowry payments tempting for parents when they cannot afford school fees for their (girl) children and don’t want to support another mouth to feed. They fear having to feed two mouths if the girl child is of childbearing age, not in school and at home, “idle”. This creates a situation where children are married against their will, or capacities in an attempt for their parents to get a short reprieve of poverty. What the Tanzanian organization the Children’s Dignity Forum is trying to convey to people, among other negative consequences of child marriage, is that it creates poverty, rather than relieves it. Girls do not achieve the same level of education, become pregnant very young from scarce contraceptive access and end up with few marketable skills or access to jobs in order to support themselves or their child. Often, their pre-mature marriages result in divorce or abandonment and their parents are left with a homeless daughter and grandchild. Men may not be able to afford caring for two more people and may have multiple wives and/or children already to care for squeezing the family income very tight in case of medical emergencies or savings for school for all children.

Ending discrimination against women and girls, inclusive education, sustainable agriculture and eradicating poverty are issues that cannot be worked on individually. Along with practically all development issues, the desire for long-term sustainable change will happen incrementally from concerted efforts targeting all levels of society in a variety of ways to contribute to that long-awaited social change. It is imperative to continue efforts to increase the tax base, reduce corruption, and advocate for fair prices for Tanzanian resources in order to improve the economic situation generally but also innovative tools and eco-low-cost strategies should particularly be marketed for female farmers. Tanzania’s economic growth is strong but not enough of the wealth is being shared with the agricultural sector increasing inequality, including gender inequality. Efforts need to ensure that farmers see adequate financial growth relative to overall national growth and that the sectors that are capturing more of the growth have females being encouraged in them.

References

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