

Ending hunger and poverty is possible in our lifetime

Hunger and poverty are inextricably linked in many places around the world. Currently the number of food-insecure people in the world is estimated at 805 million, which accounts for one in nine people. In addition, 1.4 billion people live in poverty, and one billion of these people live in rural areas and must grow their own food to survive.

The 16th of October is World Food Day - a day set aside to focus on the challenges and solutions to food and nutrition security in the world. This year's World Food Day is celebrated under the theme, Family Farming: Feeding the world, caring for the earth. It has been chosen to stress the vast potential family farmers have to eradicate hunger and preserve natural resources.

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty will be celebrated on the 17 October to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries. The 2014 theme recognizes and underscores the demanding challenge of identifying and securing the participation of those experiencing extreme poverty and social exclusion in the "Post-2015 Development Agenda" that will replace the Millennium Development Goals. Food and nutrition insecurity remains a critical issue for Zimbabwe. The good news is that, following a good agricultural season in 2014; the food security situation in the country has improved. An estimated 565,000 people (6 percent) of rural populations will be unable to meet their food requirements at the height of the lean season between January and March 2015 compared to 2.2 million a year ago.

Despite this improvement food and nutrition security remains a challenge. Chronic rates of undernourishment remain high with one third of Zimbabwe's children stunted or short for their age. It should also be noted that despite the improved cereal production during the current season, with an estimated national cereal requirement of 1 800 000 tonnes, the country still needs to cover the estimated shortfall of about 343 847 tonnes through imports.

Ending hunger and poverty remains at the core of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the development of the Post-2015 development agenda. On occasion of the World Food Day and the International day for the eradication of poverty, we urge all to galvanize their efforts and not just focus on reducing hunger and poverty, but eradicating it altogether.

The new approach should be based on the concept of sustainable development. It should consist of 'mutually reinforcing strands' of economic, social and environmental development along with dynamic poverty eradication strategies which foster inclusion and empowerment. A central element of the new thinking should be decent work; that is work that is freely chosen, productive, fairly remunerated and backed by appropriate social protection – decent work – can lift individuals, families and whole communities out of poverty and build resilience to underpin general human security, food and nutrition security and ensure social peace."

It is indeed possible to end hunger and poverty in our lifetime.