

October 14, 2004 - 9:45 a.m.

**MILLENNIUM PROJECT HUNGER TASK FORCE: LAUNCH OF THE 21ST
CENTURY UNIQUELY AFRICAN GREEN REVOLUTION**

Dr. Florence Wambugu

Executive Director

A Harvest Biotech Foundation International

Please, let me first thank the chair, also give my thanks to Dr. Bob Havener, Professor Swaminathan and all the other Laureates and Monty Jones. My short presentation, which I'm going to give by a few PowerPoint slides, is going to just peek, is very short, is going to peek where Dr. Borlaug has headed, and that is focusing on the community. I need some help to get my presentation on the screen, please.

This is part of the Hunger Task Force for the last two years, since the World Summit in Johannesburg, we've been working, and Pedro Sanchez, to come to develop the report for the Hunger Task Force as part of their Millennium Development Goals. We met just two weeks ago and spent one week in Italy writing the final report. And when we were doing that, I was asked specifically to forecast on community-based implementation strategy. And after quite some discussion, we did come to an agreement that it is very important that we do have a kind of a focus.

And I think what I want to point out, the Millennium Development Goals have focused. I'll just summarize. I'll not repeat what Professor Swaminathan has said. I'll just summarize and say that all the discussion ended up in these four points, that we're going to have a school feeding program with locally grown foods as a main focus, and that is what Abina has just demonstrated, how it can be done. And I think the key thing there, the school feeding program with locally grown foods, meaning the food will come from the community, stimulate the local economy. The children will eat the foods that they're familiar with, whether they eat cassava, banana, yams, maize – the food will come from that.

Then the next one is the soil fertility, which has been discussed and presented very well. And then most important, management, soil fertility, and finally making markets work for the poor.

Now, my focus, my talk is on implementation strategy is not one straightjacket. We realize to do things in a community, there has to be a lot of flexibility. And so we agreed that this document needs to have some flexibility to work on the crowd because we agreed that there have been so many documents about what the poor should do, how their local communities should

work on it and all that, and we don't have knowledge on how these document works on the crowd.

We first decided to talk and look at, what do we mean by community? We need to understand the principles of the strategy of getting the communities to benefit or to be involved. It has to be a community empowerment, and that empowerment should be based on knowledge transfer. The farmers, the communities need to be empowered with knowledge. There has to be a people-centered perspective in their approach to hunger and poverty and nutrition. We need to promote accountability, and here money or resources meant for the poor need to be spent with the poor people.

The other one... local government and..., but again we added a caveat here. We must avoid interference with politicians. We... need good policies, good governance, but we also need to avoid interference with the community. They need to be empowered.

The extension service is to take the knowledge to the poor, need to be revived, we are saying reinvented. We will focus on that. Finally, with every activity we go with the need to have long-term sustenance. There are so many failed projects for the poor all over Africa, and I'm sure in Asia as well from donor funding. So we decided we need to point out that these projects need to have a long-term sustainability approach. We feel that if the project is attractive, people should come to it but you can't fix a project that people don't want to be in.

Then it's very important – we talked the need to have an exit point, whether it's ten years, whether it's five years. The way to empower a community is to allow them to know that you will lead and empower them either through farmers' growers' association. You have to have an exit point, which will help to empower the thinking through.

Now, we decided, we had several ways of discussing this, but I had the privilege of being asked to use our banana, model, which is a model that has worked. We know there are many models. We are not saying there is only one. We know we need flexibility, but we decided to use this as an example of how to walk the talk.

We are in this creation, stage number one, of five more. How do we walk the talk to the poor, because all this hunger and poverty, malnutrition report, two years' work, is focusing on the poor. So how shall we walk the talk? Point number one awareness creation. Awareness creation here means outreach, centralization to the farmers, good information. You can't work with one farmer; you have to have groups of farmers, and have, group management and training, that is to transfer the knowledge, program, management and training and gross margin analysis, meaning you must show the poor that what you are bringing, they're going to have more income than what they had before, and farmer-to-farmer experience. There has to be a farmer empowerment in order to transfer.

Now, this was just an example of some of the work we are doing with the banana model. As we see, this is a strategic approach. It is not a blueprint of what everything should be done, but it shows you have to have contact with the poor. It cannot be them without contact with these communities. There has to be an empowerment, a discussion, a bottom-up approach.

The next one is enhancing access to whatever product we are taking to the poor, and this is improved animals, improved goats, improved livestock, hybrid seeds, biotech seeds, cassava, banana, whatever we do – where can they find the product that we are telling them is going to help in empowerment. And again the next thing is – can they afford it? Micro-credit – we need policies to bring enhanced access. Are there intellectual property indicate the products belong to the private sector. Is there a distribution system? This is important. This needs to be considered as step number two.

With a banana access, if you're going to tell the farmer, these communities, that the way to empower you is to use their banana products, there has to be a local supply. There has to be some local distributor that can supply. If it is hybrid seeds, there has to be a seed company, whatever product, that there be access, distribution and then availability of all that.

There has to be areas where farmers can find this material. Many times we need to be involved and engaged to be sure they're having good products, because sometimes we know the private sector may not be sensitive or be able to know the needs of this community. There needs to be an engagement in the supply of the product.

The next step is now growing and livestock management. Because you have a high-value product, it needs to be managed properly. It involves planting soil fertility, water management, weed control, integrated pest management – all these are key and part of empowerment.

Doing it with the farmers is very, very important. We've tried many things, but we realize we can't just point things out. It is very important we demonstrate, we do it with the farmers.

This is like an example, we are showing the farmers how to remove the suckers – this is how to manage the banana properly so they can have a good product.

Now, you can see with the banana project that I'm showing as an example, to be able to get a good product, we must remove the suckers and teach the farmer that we need water, we need fertilizer, we need integrated pest management. But to move from the practice to the good product you have there, it will need some doing. There will have to be extension, management, transfer of knowledge. The good part of it is that you teach the farmers well the first time, they catch it and they will help other farmers.

Harvesting and post-harvest handling, and this is true of seed. You see there's a lot of loss that goes on post-harvest handling. You can see they're not treated. With the fruits and vegetables, 40% of the product can be lost on post-harvest handling. This community-based outreach, the post-harvest issues – treatment, handling, storage – need to be taken seriously.

The next thing is now you have a good product after that, and then you have to think about the marketing of this product.

With the banana, if you don't take care of the fruit, you can lose a part of the value. And so the in cleaning, packaging, we say treat the banana as an egg, and you're going to get better value.

We need the farmers to get higher value out of the product after they have taken the product home for nourishment.

Marketing entrepreneurship – this is a new thing. Several years ago when I was working with several donors, they were saying, “We don’t support marketing; we support just sustainable livelihood.” But now I’m glad to know that many donors and others are now seeing we are supporting the whole value chain, because it’s important to bring income to the farmers. So marketing entrepreneurship is the last part of the value chain. And it involves consumer acceptance, feedback, monitoring, most importantly the home consumption. We realize a lot of interest we have found is farmers saying, “Can you please multiple my own banana? I don’t want the one you are bringing. I want this and that.” Sensitivity to the community’s needs, not just what you are trying to bring in – and that will bring success.

The primary market, the high-value product will bring higher income because what we are trying to do – for example, up to 80% of all the bananas are eaten at home, and that is good, very good. Nutrition of the family – hail the nutrition of the family. But we need the surplus to get high value, so that these farmers are able to buy a car, or sometimes they buy some chicken. They keep chicken, they keep goat projects, and those good projects become now the source of income. One of the observations we had this year about, was, our banana farmers do not receive food aid. They’ve been having a famine in some of their communities with people receiving food aid. None of our banana farmers were receiving food aid. Why? Because they are food secure, meaning they do have some extra income to buy food, and the bananas are still producing because they’re a perennial crop. The surplus money they have they can go out and buy food. They are food security. The food security comes from strategy. You have either a cow – a cow becomes like you have cash, either four legs, or you have a banana you can plant every time it comes on. And so these strategies need to have legs on the ground, and really that’s what I am talking about.

This is important, because the skins of the bananas farmers are using to make curios for the tourists. That means more money is coming into the system.

There is a lady who is making banana wine. All kinds of products coming to the communities, especially empowering women.

Again in finishing, I just want again to say this is an initiative of the Hunger Task Force, my presentation on the strategies on how the documents we are going to produce can walk on the ground, putting the legs, and again this flexibility – these are just examples that we need to look at the communities have to engage them. We have to create awareness. We have to find where can we distribute the product. We have to engage them on the management of the product, post-harvest handling, marketing entrepreneurship. Thank you very much.