

HLPF 2020 Session: Ending hunger and achieving food security for all

Talking points for AED, Valerie Guarneri

2019 SOFI report indicates that despite the progress made, the world's food systems have left millions of people behind, with over 2 billion people in the world who do not have regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food. This includes 820 million people who were still hungry in 2018, underscoring the immense challenge of achieving the Zero Hunger target by 2030.

The progress in ending hunger has also been uneven, with hunger on the rise in almost all African subregions, making Africa the region with the highest prevalence of undernourishment, at almost 20 percent, followed by Western Asia, with more than 12 percent of its population undernourished. Rural and marginalized populations, women and girls are disproportionately affected by hunger.

Conflict, climate variability and extremes; economic slowdowns, downturns and shocks as well as income and wealth inequalities are closely associated with and undermining efforts to end hunger and malnutrition. The COVID 19 pandemic might further impact food systems, causing even higher increases in food insecurity by the end of the year and during 2021.

Food insecurity and malnutrition affect the most socially and politically powerless groups: women, children, ethnic minorities and those less educated or living in poverty.

Bold, inclusive, people centred and environment friendly structural transformation that addresses the root causes of hunger, food insecurity, inequality and unsustainable management of natural resources, in a comprehensive manner, is critical and urgent.

Rural transformation is already a top priority for developing countries, especially in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Countries need to ensure smallholder access to markets, finance and technology, with a focus on rural livelihoods and youth jobs.

A minimum availability of infrastructure, knowledge and regulations is needed. Government and donor programmes and investments must enhance the last-mile reach and effectiveness of public and private infrastructure investments, to enhance agricultural value chains and access to markets to. They must also strengthen risk mitigation, climate adaptation and disaster-and-climate proof food system infrastructure, which tends to reduce instability and curb migration.

This should go hand in hand with investments in a broader social protection agenda to ensure no one is left behind and to help vulnerable populations make progress and contribute more to their societies and protect people in times of shock.

Investments in better health, nutrition (starting with pregnant women and the first 1000 days) and learning among children lay the foundation for acquiring improved physical capacity and higher cognitive skills later in life, and directly contribute to boosting productivity, reducing poverty and contributing to overall human capital.

Since inequities are pervasive across food systems and all areas of society, equity actions should be informed by a more equity-sensitive approach to data collection, analysis and reporting, which facilitate identifying and understanding the drivers of unequal food security and nutrition outcomes and initiating the right action for impact.