

The Aftermath: Nutrition Improvement Through Agriculture

By

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Background: I participated in the JICA Knowledge Co-Creation Program short course **Nutrition Improvement Through Agriculture** in Japan and Madagascar from 2 July to 22 July 2017.

Participants from several African countries and most importantly from various sectors of the economy (Health, Agriculture, Education, Information) gathered to tackle this issue, nutrition.

Objective of the course: Acquire knowledge and capacity for planning, implementation and management of nutrition improvement through agricultural and rural development.

Lessons learnt:

- Needs assessment is a must in addressing problems to do with nutrition.
- Life Improvement approach helps communities to work with what they have.
- Adopt the multi-sector approach, there is no success with the silo approach to problems.

Success in nutrition improvement is anchored on availability of the food from the farms!!! There is no school lunch, maternal care (the 1000-day initiative) and household food security if productivity remains subdued.

The challenge for food and nutrition security remains when soils for food production are 'sick' and worn out, characterised with low fertility, poor nutrients and water holding capacity, and highly acidic.

Japan's school lunch program is one that should be emulated.

Understanding the intentionality in nutritional supply



Typical school lunch in Japan



My experience in Japan has been an eye opener for me, the preservation of their cultural values, the interest in observing their legal and moral laws, being responsible for their environment and the respect for fellow humans, making it a safe place to stay. I also admire the zeal of the Japanese people to impart how they changed their narrative, from a war torn country to this amazing developed country. I THINK IT IS DOABLE, we can change our story too.

Personal challenge: As a crops' researcher, I felt addressing nutrition issues through agriculture should start with looking into the means of production. Most of our communities are producing on soils whose productivity is failing to secure enough food for their families. Look at the picture below.

Can anything be harvested from this field for nutrition security???



Implementation of what was learnt:

- I implemented the "work with what communities have" approach, and realised that the soil did not allow for optimal production and that the communities also faced drought and climate change.

I managed to change the approach and to find ways to improve the soil's productivity so that food could be produced optimally as a way to secure the needed food and nutrition.

Following the short course and application of what I learnt, a hunger was birthed in me on how nutrition can be improved in the face of our reality. Thus, I came **back to JAPAN** for a Masters' program (Oct 2020 - Sep 2022) at **Tottori University**, this time to learn on ways to improve crop productivity for people who produce under semi-arid to arid conditions. I believe with technology to increase productivity for our farmers, we will be able to meet the nutritional demands.

As a country, it has proven very difficult to sustain the school lunch program, mainly due to low productivity, I hope when I finish my current studies, I will be able to influence positively the producing community.

Learning by practice in Japan

