

# Fighting Malnutrition – Advocacy for Good Food

Experiences from **ActionAid**

**International**

Zambia

# Zambia Basic Data

- Current Population estimated at 11 million people (currently census underway. Last census 1990)
- Zambia has 'young' population with over 50% of population between ages 15 – 19 years.
- Poverty levels stand at 67%, with poverty incidences being higher in rural areas – about 80%

Source: Central statistical office - Zambia

# Zambia Health Demographics

- 2007 Zambia Health Demographic Survey (ZHDS) reports stunting at 45% for under-fives. Has oscillated between 38%-48% in the last 5 years
- 15% of under-fives underweight in the same survey
- 10% mothers with low body mass index (BMI)
- HIV prevalence in pregnant women at 19%

# Breastfeeding

- Significant proportion breastfeed children at least in the first 3 months.
- Gradual decrease in exclusive breastfeeding from 4 onwards
- Malnutrition increases substantially between 6-23months due to poor feeding practices – inappropriate, inadequate, inappropriate and untimely introduction to complementary food
- MTCT of HIV stands at 30-40% and occurs during labour, delivery and breast feeding. Breast feeding upto 2 years increases risk between 5-25%. However, risk is reduced by 4% with exclusive breast feeding up to 6 months
- Zambia has code for marketing of substitute foods for infants

# Food and Nutrition

- Zambia passed Food and Nutrition Policy.
- Nutrition challenges attributed to rising poverty levels: rising food and commodity prices, poor diversification of food production – largely produce maize, sorghum, cassava and other carbohydrates as major staple food, poor food preservation and storage methods, etc.
- High costs of agric input, challenges of access to, ownership and control of land especially by women lead to low productivity.
- Most families unable to have more than 1 meal a day

# Right to Food in Zambia

- Bill of Rights of current Zambian constitution, under Bill of Rights – under Fundamental rights and Freedoms of an Individual, provides mostly for Civil and Political Rights and Some Cultural Rights.
- Other Economic and Social Rights are found the Directive Principles of State Policy and as such are not justiciable or legally enforceable in any court or tribunal

# Right to Food in Zambia

- The current constitution was amended in 1991.
- Since then, Zambia has seen various processes to review/amend the Republican Constitution.
- Current process has taken close to 5 years.
- Process started with a Constitution Review Commission broadly consulting citizens to input into development of constitution.
- Process culminated in production of a draft constitution which by and large was acceptable to most Zambians.

# The Constitutional Challenge

- The country was faced with a dilemma on how the draft constitution would be finalised and adopted.
- Large sections of civil society, the church and opposition political parties demanded a national referendum.
- Instead, a National Constitution Conference (NCC) that was rejected by many due to its composition.
- To entice participation. A daily sitting allowance of GBP135 has been offered to participants, and 3 years later the NCCs Bill at tax payers expense is GBP18m!



# NCC Laughs at Right to Food

- The 2005 draft constitution provided for the right to food, water and sanitation under the Bill of Rights as follows: Every person has the right to be free from hunger and to have access to food in adequate quantities and of adequate value and cultural acceptability.
- NCC laughed at this and completely rejected this clause as 'unrealistic' for govt.
- The NCC draft was circulated for 40 days for citizens to comment.

# AAIZ Advocacy on Right to Food

- AAIZ supported CSO initiative to regularly monitor and assess proceedings of NCC, especially focusing on Economic and Social Rights.
- AAIZ organised National Forum of CSOs to review NCC draft and make submissions on various clauses in the Constitution, particularly right to food.
- AAIZ supporting on-going campaign to petition govt on right to food.
- Communication through various local media channels to highlight flaws in draft constitution and constitution making process.
- Efforts to draw international attention to the constitution making process are now under way, realising that this is not a challenge for Zambia alone, but many others are in a similar situation.
- AAIZ also implementing the Project for Reduction of Nutritional Vulnerability to demonstrate need to address nutrition in Zambia and offer model options.

# Project for the Reduction of Nutritional Vulnerability in Zambia (PRUVEN)

- EU funded project implemented in 2 districts over the last two years.
- New funding from EU received to scale up PRUVEN to other districts in Zambia.
- PRUVEN focuses on improving nutrition status of vulnerable groups in Zambia, especially women and children and those affected by HIV and AIDS.
- Pilots models of Social Protection (specifically Social Cash Transfers for vulnerable households), diversified food production and value addition, preservation and storage of food crops to preserve nutritional content.

# Experiences from PRUVEN

- Many households in target districts lived on one meal a day, usually consisting of Nshima (made from either cassava, maize or sorghum) and vegetables (normally sun dried, only fresh when in season)
- Families grew only 1-3 types of food crops.
- Depend on seasonal food
- No distinction in diet for children, pregnant women or lactating mothers. Normally same type of food for all groups. Infants may have one more additional meal
- Many did not have even small livestock such as goats, chickens, pigs – very limited sources of protein.
- In these areas, food supplements for infants are unheard of, but due to poor diet, many mothers not able to exclusively breast feed children.
- Many Western ‘ideas and ideals’ quickly adopted especially by younger generations in developing countries – can champion role modeling in these countries!

# Experiences from PRUVEN.

- Through provision of social cash transfers, agricultural inputs to promote diversified food production (organic food production), provision of livestock, farming implements, training of farmers, food preservation methods to maintain moisture, end of project evaluation saw an increase in number of meals consumed by beneficiaries.
- Beneficiaries also recorded wider variety of foods consumed.
- AAIZ and partners used lessons learnt to input into development of food and nutrition policy and also development of agriculture chapter in the country's Sixth National Development Plan to be implemented from 2011.

# Other Initiatives

- AAIZ also implementing Women and Land Rights Project (WOLAR) to strengthen women's access to and control over land to increase agric productivity
- Also focusing on advocating for enacting of comprehensive land administration policies.
- Advocacy around large scale land acquisition by international investors, particularly for bio-fuel production and mining activities.
- As part of AAI global initiative under take study and ensuing advocacy activities around financing for women smallholder farmers.

# What Can you Do to Help countries like Zambia?

- Scale up advocacy, particularly for implementation and legislation of international code for marketing food substitutes. E.g. baby formula in many countries like Zambia sold on open shelf with instructions only in English (or language of origin)
- Advocacy against activities by multinational companies that undermine food sovereignty of developing states.
- Support and build capacity for more local research into health, social and cultural aspects of food and nutrition.
- Support global social mobilisation and actions around issue



The End