



# Africa Study Group | Groupe de réflexion sur l'Afrique

ASG website: [www.africastudygroup.ca](http://www.africastudygroup.ca)

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## The Africa Study Group Presents : Food Security and Nutrition - Progress and Challenges in Africa

**DATE:** Wednesday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**TIME:** 17:30 pm - 19:30 pm

**LOCATION:** St. Paul's university, Guigues Hall, 223 Main street, room G102

### 1. Opening remarks

In attendance: 15

Our Chair provided the opening remarks and announcements regarding upcoming events. We sent out a message that is from the Canadian High Commissioner to Cameroun, requesting input from anybody who works in the region. Furthermore, we will co-sponsor a session on Mali with the University of Ottawa on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016 – e-mail forthcoming with details. In November, François Arsenault will chair the meeting on Artisanal Mining.

### 2. Food Security and Nutrition - Progress and Challenges in Africa

David Stevenson studied at the University of Calgary and Queen's. He worked 18 years with WFP, including as Country Director for Rwanda and then for Zambia, and as Director of Policy, Planning and Strategy. He then worked at CIDA as DG for Global Issues (multilateral approaches to health, nutrition and education). He is now an Ottawa-based contractor for the Howard Buffett Foundation, working as Managing Director, Africa Initiatives.

Mr. Stevenson gave his impressions on food security and nutrition in Africa from a leadership and management perspective. Food security is about both availability and access to food; and nutrition is about food quality and nutrients. The presentation included a description of contributing variables including: urbanization; climate change with more frequent droughts, floods and storms. Point was made that adaptation programming (most applicable for Africa) should expand upon what is already proven to work for vulnerable farming communities and not try to invent new systems or activities, just because there are new sources of funding; irrigation needs and potential; inputs including seeds and fertilizer; post harvest infrastructure; markets and market failure; credit; farm system challenges (inefficiencies of small scale and cooperative challenges); land policy; budgetary allocations; coordination among partners and between sectors; and, diet.

He explained the “last mile” problem when the hungry poor are hard to reach; the “good year” problem if and when farmers cannot sell their surplus produce because of market failures- over supply/ low prices; and, the “lean season” problem when too little food is produced by subsistence farmers.

Mr. Stevenson explained that from his experience he believes that the most important variables for success in food security and nutrition are not usually on the list: good leadership and management – also important in other sectors with an example of global health and the Global Fund. He gave an example of performance accountability in Rwanda which has been a key driver of impressive improvements in food security, nutrition and health indicators which he has witnessed since the war and genocide in 1994. He suggested that this level of consideration of practical governance support could be part of Canada’s International Assistance Review, but probably is not, and gave an example of PM Trudeau’s PMO hiring of Michael Barber to advise on deliverology as an applicable good governance example.

The presentation included a number of stories and examples of progress and challenges: the transition of WFP from a food aid only agency to cash transfers, home grown school feeding and market support through Purchase for Progress; a colleague that showed tactful leadership to engage Finance Ministers through the African Union on cost of hunger; his work with Howard Buffett Foundation to introduce large scale solar powered irrigation and a practical agriculture university for capacity building including leadership skills, and the potential increased role for the Micronutrient Initiative- he is on the Board- if it went to scale.

The Q and A touched on:

- capacity building with potential role for Canadian municipalities to provide governance expertise.
- primary role of women in agriculture.
- trade policy
- GMO concerns and potential
- irrigation in Malawi
- India and China investments

Summary points were:

- ***There is progress on food security and nutrition in Africa so stay the course supporting multilateral efforts and tangible activities in priority countries.***
- ***Make the Micronutrient Initiative a global institution, perhaps with a new name. Take more of a leadership role in nutrition linked to women and girls’ empowerment.***
- ***Find innovative and empowering ways to promote good governance across sectors and particularly in health, education and food security. This is not just about democracy and elections, it is about performance management and personal accountability at all levels. It is also about leadership.***