Chapter 10
Rights-Based Approach to Food and Nutrition Security in Nigeria

Clementina Oluwafunke Ajayi
Federal University of Technology – Akure, Nigeria

Kemisola O. Adenegan
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the need for a rights-based approach to food and nutrition security in Nigeria. The topic is introduced with the definition of basic terms used throughout the chapter. The objectives of this chapter are to create awareness of the need to adopt a rights-based approach to food and nutrition security and help define the context of the right to food in Nigeria. The rest of the chapter sets out the roles of right holders, duty bearers, and accountable agents in food and nutrition security. It highlights their rights, obligations, and responsibilities, as well as voluntary guidelines and implications for a rights-based approach to food. The chapter also reviews policies that have been developed toward ensuring a right to food in Nigeria.

BACKGROUND

Food and nutrition insecurity is increasing in the world where 925 million people are undernourished. Today, over 900 million people are food insecure across the world despite the fact that the world food production has doubled during the past three decades (FAO, 2010). Helen (2002) noted, food security maintains political
stability, and ensures peaceful coexistence among people while food insecurity results in poor health and reduced performance of both children and adult. Poor nutrition weakens children’s immune systems and renders them more vulnerable to deadly diseases, which further deteriorates their nutritional status. Hence children get stuck in a cycle of undernutrition and infection, which adversely affects their health, development, and increases the risk of mortality.

The first and most important component of social and economic justice is adequate food production (Otaha, 2013). This can therefore improve food and nutrition security if viewed from rights-based perspective with the ultimate goal of development to guarantee all human rights to everyone. A human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to encouraging and defending human rights (United Nations, UN, 2017). It seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the core of development complications and amends discriminatory practices and unfair distributions of power that hinder development progress.

Under a human rights-based approach, the plans, policies and processes of development are anchored in a system of rights and conforming obligations established by international law. This helps to promote the sustainability of development work, empowering people themselves—especially the most marginalized—to participate in policy formulation and hold accountable those who have a duty to act. A rights-based approach to development is both a vision and a set of tools: human rights can be the means, the ends, the mechanism of evaluation and the central focus of sustainable human development (UN, 2002).

According to World Food Programme (WFP, 2017), here are ten things to know about Nigeria food and nutrition security status:

1. Nigeria is a food deficit country and is Africa’s largest importer of rice.
2. One third of children under 5 are stunted. That’s twice the rate of Thailand and three times that of Tunisia.
3. A child in the remote northwestern region of Nigeria, where stunting rates are around 55 percent, is four times more likely to experience malnutrition than a child in the south.
4. At the same time, child obesity is increasing and 33 percent of adults are obese or overweight. That is roughly on par with Singapore.
5. Nearly half of women of reproductive age (48.5 percent) are anaemic. This ranks Nigeria 172th best out of 185 countries.
6. Conflict with Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria has left a large part of the population without access to enough food, water and health services.