

12. SOCIALIZATION FOR SCARCITY: CONCLUDING OVERVIEW OF VILLAGE
CHILD REARING

This preceding insight opens the door to a realistic assessment of what is happening to child rearing practices in the village. Human populations are concerned about their children. The village-internal food circulating mechanisms described above constitute one very direct measure buffering the children against nutritional scarcity.

But human societies protect their children, not only by providing them with resources, but also by training them in the necessary survival skills to cope with their material and social environment. The material environment into which the children of Kinanbwa have been born is marked by increasing food scarcity.

But living with little food is not something that "happens" casually. Rather, it is the product of careful teaching on the part of adults and painful learning on the part of children.

It takes much effort on the part of adults to socialize children and equip them with the tools and knowledge essential to survive under conditions of food scarcity. Likewise, it takes much learning on the part of children to adjust to life under these circumstances. It requires, in effect, a socialization for scarcity.

12.1. Principles of Food Socialization

This socialization rests on three main pillars: sharing, moderation, and respect for cooked as well as raw food. Of all three, sharing is perhaps the most important, although the three function like the legs of a tripod and each is thus as essential as the other.

12.1.1. Sharing

Sharing is taught directly as well as acquired through modeling. It is not rare to see 15 children drink out of a bottle of kola, or to watch over a dozen children eating from a piece of corn.

Sharing is reinforced, and when children engage in this behavior, they are socially rewarded and people are in good terms with them (byen ave ou). Misanthropy, on the contrary, is publicly criticized, and those that do not share are reprimanded as "gro voras."

But if the value of sharing does not come across through this rather elusive, "social" form, its concrete dimensions soon become obvious. In a situation of scarcity, it is to one's own advantage to share with others whatever one has. If one were always assured of having something to eat, there would be no need to recur to whatever a neighbor can provide. But this is definitely not the case in the village. The plate of food sent by a neighbor may at times constitute "the" afternoon meal for a family who otherwise would have to send their children to bed on empty stomachs. A child who shares one of his small sweet potatoes with a playmate, may find his gesture more than compensated when that very playmate gives him a portion of biswit at a later time, which may coincidentally be, a time, when it is badly needed to relieve hunger pangs. Thus, children learn the value of sharing very early in life and engage in much sharing themselves. Sometimes sharing is used as an expression of thankfulness. If a neighbor has let a child broil a sweet potato under their fire, the child automatically repays the service by sharing part of his possession. Likewise, if he has to borrow a knife to clean up the fishes, or a container to cook it, the favor is immediately repaid upon finishing the cooking.

Children are daily exposed to models of sharing. Almost every family in the village sends food gifts to a set of families on a daily basis. In turn, they receive plates of food from these other families. But this exchange of food has repercussions beyond the very act of sending the plates on a regular basis. It also constitutes a declaration of intimacy between families and forms a special bond between them. Children whose families exchange food gifts are actually allowed to stand at these kitchens and may also receive little bits and pieces of what is being cooked and distributed there. This is virtually impossible to do on a regular basis when there exist no such bonds. In fact, parents are very strict to

let children run loose to stand at others' kitchens. It is heavily criticized when children stand at other people's kitchens. The family will be criticized for letting their children hungry, and this will be carefully noted and publicly exposed if ever there is a rift or argument.

There are, then, limits to sharing. It is restricted to people who are intimate with each other, in the case of main meals. And in the case of children's sharing with one another, it is restricted to the little "passe bouches" found throughout the day, and definitely not to major meals. Children do not share their assigned portions with others. It is neither encouraged nor expected. They may request for a larger portion, but it is usually an adult that will take from their plate to supplement a child's assigned portion, never another child.

Other restrictions involve the ritual domain. Concomittant with the popular view that one is obliged to offer food to whoever is at one's house at the time of eating, there are taboos against accepting foods from non-intimates and distant acquaintances. There is much fear of food poisoning in the community, and the victims are usually believed to be children who for some reason or another will be targets of an ill-intentioned person's attack.

Thus, from very early, children are taught not to take food from strangers and non-intimates, no matter how hungry they are. This acts almost like a levelling mechanism to protect the brotherly feeling among peoples living in an isolated community. People still have the feeling that neighborly sharing goes on between them, but at the same time the taboos against taking food from non-intimates actually prevents this being put to trial and failing. Proof that people do take food from one another is offered by the fact that they will partake of the foods offered at funerals, weddings, and other occasions, when people are traditionally expected to provide those items for large numbers of community people and more distant acquaintances.

There are then, very fine dimensions in sharing, and all will have to be gradually mastered by children as they grow up.

12.1.2. Moderation

The second major aspect in the socialization for scarcity is moderation. It is important for children to learn to conserve and to eat with moderation. It is essential for a family to distribute its weekly food allocation with sound planning. Most of the village families receive their supply of major foods two times per week when the mothers send them provisions from PAP, where they are engaged in business activities. These provisions usually come on Wednesdays, and on Sundays. Sunday meals are reported to be the largest of the week, as only two days will elapse between Sunday and Wednesday, when food is sent again. As the package of food reaches the home, its contents are carefully assessed by a responsible adult in the household, and from that time on, this person assesses how much and how many meals will be able to be had from the portion.

Children learn to eat scarcely. Those that don't are reprimanded as "v_isyé", and publicly criticized, whenever they insist on requesting what is thought to be unreasonably large portions. They are also reprimanded when they make unwise distribution of food resources, say, when they eat a piece of corn, or a sweet potato simultaneously with the main meal provided at the home. This awareness and need for moderation will later become so ingrained that it is not rare to see even very young children setting aside food from the major meal to be eaten at a later--more needed--time of the day. A popular adage perhaps summarizes effectively this basic principle: "Grangou sé mizè; vant plein sé traka."

12.1.3. Respect for Food

The third leg in the socialization for scarcity tripod is respect for cooked as well as raw food. Taking food that is meant for the family is sanctioned and children are reprimanded for it. When young, children are punished more leniently, but when older, they may be later punished by being given smaller portions on account of their having violated the family pot. Much respect is also instilled for food that has been set apart for family members that did not find themselves present at the time of food distribution, a brother in a garden, or a sister that has gone on an errand. Heavy sanctions are likewise applied for children that

take from the food stored in *dépos*. It is well accepted and even encouraged for children to procure themselves little portions of foods throughout the day, some of which even entail their cooking them. But, there is a clear understanding that these foods will have to come from a source other than the family's provisions.

12.2. Investment of Time by Children in Food Related Activities

It is clear that meals provided by a family in the majority of cases fail to meet the food needs of children, whether we are referring to sheer quantities or to nutrients. This forces children to be constantly on the look for opportunities that will supplement the insufficient diet their families provide them with. In Fig.9', we can observe the proportion of time two preschool children (a boy of 5 and a girl of 3) allocate to food related activities. It takes up almost 25% of their day. Eliminating from consideration that portion of the day the children spend sleeping or resting--which in the cases observed reached a total of about 12 hours-- and only taking into account the times of the day children spend awake, it then becomes evident that these children spend about 40% of their day in food related endeavors. This, of course, does not mean that they spend all of that time eating. They do not. But they spend it looking for things to eat, observing what is being cooked or will be cooked, or attending to what others are eating. Or they spend it involved in tasks indirectly related to food such as looking for fuelwood, fetching water, going to buy the missing ingredient. Furthermore, a large portion of this time is spent by scrounging around and developing strategies that allows them to supplement their diets. Children carefully assess the foods given to animals especially pigs, just in case they come across something they can utilize themselves; they may collect the bones of a recently consumed fish, may put them to dry, so they can later be roasted; they see potential in the little bird that by chance has entered their home, may kill it, take the feathers off, and cook it; they may make various trips to the garden to verify whether there are any small sweet potatoes left from the ones just recently harvested; or they may set aside food from their noonday meal, to be eaten later at a time when they feel hungrier, so that the waiting for the next meal can be made less painful.

FIGURE 9

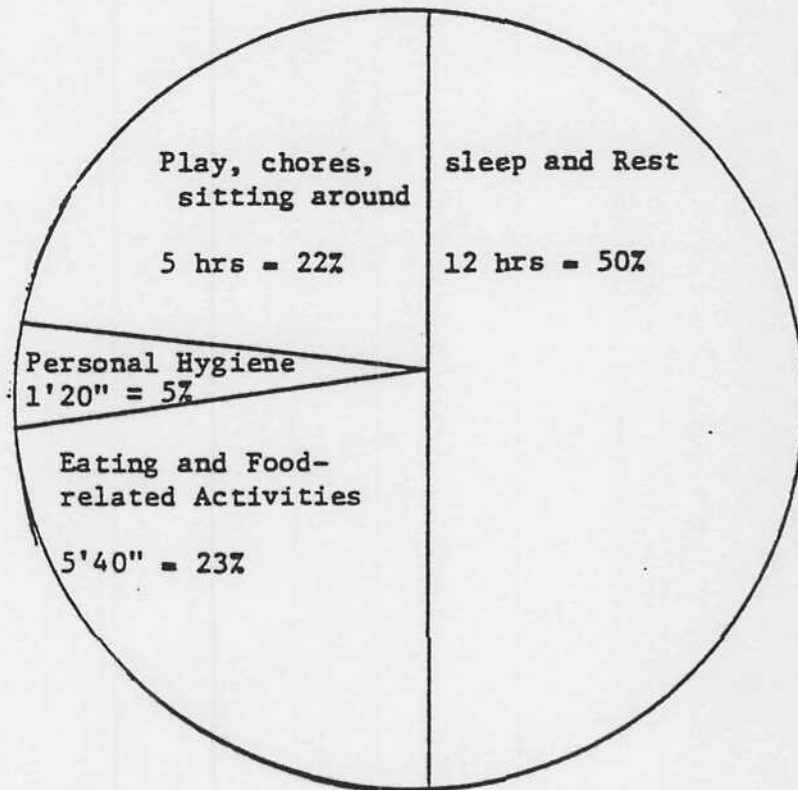


Fig. Distribution of the hours of the day of two preschool children (ages 3 and 5) observed over a 24 hour period.

It should be pointed out that the time each child allocates to these various activities varies in relation to age, family composition, sex, economic level of parents, and the time of the year. Because of the local agricultural cycle there are times of the year more abundant in food than others. A child's age is a very important factor. Up to age 5, children are not assigned too many tasks, either domestic or agricultural. Furthermore, until approximately that age, children are thought to be very vulnerable to the effects of hunger. Adults are very aware of the fact that children cannot withstand as much as adults on an empty stomach (ti moun yo pa ka kenbe), and they are painfully aware of their inability to provide as much as the children need or with the frequency that they need it. Children are accordingly allowed to roam around in search for different edibles, and their efforts are facilitated whenever they are in search of a lighted fire to cook their sweet potato or boil up the few ounces of milk obtained from the family goat. In fact, some foods such as certain parts of fish are recognized by all as child's foods and a 9 or 10 year old cleaning a fish will set aside those parts so that a four or five year old in her family will prepare with it a little sauce. In older children, however, the time allocated to these various activities gradually diminishes, while time allocated to various domestic, agricultural, or educational tasks, augments.

12.3. Pressuring of Adults

But it is obvious that children could not survive only on what their ingenuity and creativity allows them to procure. What other mechanisms do they utilize? What other strategies do they use to supplement their diet? One of the most commonly used strategies is to pressure adults. Crying is often resorted to. A reflex mechanism in the infant and toddler, crying is later well manipulated by the older children. Pre-schoolers cry when they are hungry, when they see food being prepared, or when they see others eating. They also cry when the portion allocated to them has been small, or when after finishing their meal they are still hungry. This automatically puts pressure on adults, who in some way respond to the complaint; either they offer something of what is being prepared, or they take food out of their own plates, depending on the case. They may also send to buy something additional for the child, a biswit,

a bonbon. But it also happens that next time food is separated, this child will be given first or a larger portion. Older children who have mastered language already, usually verbalize their disapproval at the same time that they make their needs known more directly. Some declare with disgust that they could eat three times the assigned portion; others comment, as did a five year old boy, "and this little bit, what good will it do me?" Still others react by rejecting the plate or piece offered them, and that they consider too small, although it should be noted that hardly any child ever throws away something that could not be later eaten, or fails to take back the rejected plate of food.

Parents as well as other adults are extremely sensitive to these complaints. If a father perceives food is going to take too long, they may add wood to the fire, may search for a piece of sugar cane out in the garden, or may send for something that can placate the appetites. children employ strategies that will secure them more and/or additional foods. But, as will be discussed in the final section, these strategies seem to have more success within certain domestic contexts than within others.

12.4. Differential Nutritional Outcomes: Successes and Failures

The preceding sections have attempted to describe the overall deterioration of the village food-supply circuits, to compare outsiders' and villagers' understandings of these causes, and to indicate some of the responses and adaptations which have evolved under the impact of this increasing stress. We have for presentational purposes talked of the "village" as an undifferentiated social unit that is undergoing certain negative, global changes. But nutrition intervention programs cannot deal effectively with entire "populations". The more common strategy is to identify those more vulnerable subgroups to whom special

preventive and therapeutic attention should be directed.

Our preceding discussion leads to the following series of propositions:

1. All households in the village are experiencing economic pressure and a tightening of traditional food-flow circuits.
2. Some households will be in a better position than others to prevent these pressures from being translated into substandard nutritional status on the part of their children.
3. The child will be better protected against these pressures to the degree that:
 - a. the overall economic status of the household is higher; and
 - b. the child is under the protection of both of its biological parents.

With respect to point 3, it is clear that houses with a stronger economic base will be able to prevent overall economic pressures from translating themselves into damagingly reduced food intake on the part of their children. But, the information presented above also strongly suggests that the nutritional outcome of the child is contingent on support from two economically active parents. And it is clear to us that the child's chances are substantially better to the degree that both male and female adult caretaker are the biological parents of the child. Where one of the adults is either missing or replaced by a surrogate (such as when the woman takes a new husband), the total adult emotional concern and resulting behavioral investment will be substantially lower than if the child were with both biological parents. Stated somewhat differently, the determinants of nutritional status are to be found not only in variables commonly lumped under the rubric "economy", but under variables that fall into the domain of "domestic organization" as well.

Table 4 is based on upper arm circumference measurements that were carried out on 59 village children between the ages of 2 and 4. By the age of 2, virtually all children are weaned and are consequently subject to the post-weaning nutritional stress that has been found in many cultural settings. The objective was to see if in fact some subgroups in the village are better at resisting nutritional stress than others. We have broken these children down into four subgroups:

1. Both parents present, higher economic status
2. Both parents present, lower economic status
3. One or both parents missing, higher economic status.
4. One or both parents missing, lower economic status.

Economic status was here measured by housetype, which has been found to be a sensitive economic surrogate variable in rural Haiti. Parental presence or absence was determined on a detailed kinship analysis of the household composition of all village houses with the assistance of village informants.

TABLE 4
ARM-CIRCUMFERENCE AS A FUNCTION OF ECONOMIC STATUS
AND PARENTAL PRESENCE OR ABSENCE

(N = 59)

	Mean Arm Circumference	Standard Deviation
1. Both parents present, higher ec. status	16.2	1.1
2. Both parents present, lower ec. status	14.9	1.4
3. One or more parents missing, higher economic status	14.7	.8
4. One or more parents missing, lower economic status	13.9	1.7
Mean of all 59 children	14.7	1.4

F = .45

Sig. = .01

Despite the relatively small N, a one-tailed test of significance suggests that in fact economic and domestic organizational variables are highly significant determinants of nutritional outcomes in children. Further breakdowns indicated that *economic status and parental presence did not interact significantly* with each other or with the age of the child. In this particular sample, children of all ages between 2 and 5 and of both economic groups were as likely to be with both parents.

The most promising formulation of the matter is perhaps one which discusses the power of these variables to generate nutritional success. And the data indicate that it is a combination of both factors which endows children with the highest likelihood of better nutritional status. The most favored nutritional group are those economically better-off children living under the protection of both of their biological parents. Remove either of these factors and the nutritional status of the child plunges. Table 4 suggests that parental presence is even slightly more important than economic status as a predictor of nutritional outcome; the nutritional implication of living in a one-parent household appears to be more serious than that of living in an economically more marginal household. But finally those children having neither economic nor domestic protection as defined here turn out to be the nutritionally most disadvantaged.

These data, based on such a small village sample, can only be suggestive. But they do suggest strongly that nutritional status can be sufficiently linked to economic and domestic variables so as to render less promising any attempt to lay the blame at the door of the rural Haitian belief or value system. The quite satisfactory arm-circumference of the highest group of children in Table 4 leads us to suspect that, given proper economic and domestic protection, rural Haitian food knowledge is perfectly adequate to produce well-nourished children.

Stated differently, our research suggests the need for a careful reformulation of the role of beliefs, values, and other dimensions of "culture" in malnutrition. Standard formulations may state that children are malnourished because of the rural Haitian belief system. Under this analysis, the major solution would then be, in one way or another, to "educate the ignorant" to assist them to make better use of their resources. But our research suggests that it is more accurate to state that rural Haitian children are malnourished in spite of an exceptionally detailed and accurate knowledge of appropriate feeding techniques on the part of

parents. It is not because of the level of parental food knowledge that rural children are undernourished. It is in spite of that knowledge. It is not because of parental value systems that children go hungry. It is rather in spite of the many pressures that village tradition has devised to motivate parents to feed their children abundantly and well.

12.5. General Program Implications.

The above discussion may appear to point to fatalistic programmatic conclusions. It states in effect that nutritional stress is generated by variables over which nutrition programs have no control. We admit that this is a dilemma, first and foremost for those human beings trapped in this situation, but also for nutrition planners who would like to take some sort of remedial action. But the solution for planners is not to arbitrarily redefine the causes of malnutrition in such a way as to make relevant the items in their own "bag of tricks." Those who have chosen to work in this field are well aware that the basic cause of infant malnutrition is to be found in patterns of inadequate infant food intake. But it is in searching for the causes of this latter variable that much program discussion, in our opinion, stumbles into a questionable overemphasis on "lack of knowledge on the part of parents."

Confusion is created by those perhaps well-meaning analyses which point out that villagers are not making maximum use of their nutritional resources. "Aren't there local leaves which could be used to supplement the cooking pot? Couldn't people plant sunflower seeds in back of their houses?" Such questions miss a very important anthropological point: few if any human cultures are characterized by absolutely maximal use of every possible food resource on the part of their people. It is true that the rural Haitian could be taught many things about nutrition. But the same is true of the urban American. And if the former is undernourished whereas the latter is obese, the difference is generated, not by differences in their cognition, but by differences in their material environments. Under crisis conditions, human populations are forced to devise extraordinary food utilization measures. But the middle-class bearers of flip-charts frequently arrive in the village with presuppositions concerning the inadequacy of the ordinary food knowledge of the villagers, a stereotype for which our own research provides little support.

Is there then any room for program action, short of a total overhauling of the entire village economy? Experiences in various parts of Haiti, including mothercraft centers and more recent (and more cost effective) "demonstration

foyers", indicate that it is possible to reduce childhood malnutrition. The centers which up till now have been the major element in nutrition intervention in Haiti are predicated on the availability of food supplements (including, of course, donations of locally popular foods to the centers) and on the willingness of mothers to attend the center during the stipulated period. These are very specialized interventions and, at least in the case of the mothercraft centers, rather expensive interventions in terms of the number of children reached per dollar invested.

In conversations with several planners in Haiti we have become aware of a desire on their part to devise nutrition interventions which are not predicated on food gifts and/or cooking lessons, not as a substitute, but at least as an exploratory supplement, to the center-based models mentioned above. Our research leads us to propose the following general guidelines as being likely to assist in devising on-target interventions.

The first step will come in the development of an anthropologically sound problem statement. Here we have repeatedly found ourselves commenting on what we perceive to be a widespread "ignorance model" of rural malnutrition. We would propose the following alternative problem statement:

1. Despite detailed nutrition knowledge and a high level of concern and social value placed by rural Haitian culture on the proper feeding of children, the economic situation in rural Haiti has deteriorated to a point where traditional food-supply circuits have been jeopardized and people find themselves unable to feed their children in the manner which they were fed as children and which local norms still regard as proper.
2. The ultimate solution must come in terms of improvements of the rural economy. Households enjoying reasonable levels of economic well-being and domestic integrity (in terms of a coresident conjugal couple) have been found to produce well-nourished children.
3. Other interventions that are "non-economic" or "non-agricultural" in character should be recognized as "emergency" in character. That is, they should be viewed as a response, not to some inherent defect in local cultural beliefs and practices with respect to feeding children, but to the unusually pressing economic conditions under which large sectors of the rural population now find itself.
4. A promising entry point can be found by observing that, even within the more disadvantaged sectors of the rural population, some households are more effective at producing well-nourished children. The research task is to identify the conditions producing this more effective feeding, with a view to assessing their replicability through some sort of program intervention.

5. Observations and quantitative data suggest that there is some "slippage" between norms and behavior. Parents are aware both of the traditional norms with respect to feeding children and the deteriorating economic conditions. During much of the year parents are giving their children less food than they themselves would wish to give them. These hunger-producing deviations are justified on the basis of the obvious material scarcity which many households suffer. But some parents "slip" more than others. Confronted with pressing circumstances, some push harder than others to keep the deviations to a minimum and to prevent their children from going hungry.
6. The quantitative data on the impact of parental presence or absence, as well as ethnographic observation of the behavior of children, lead us to suspect that a critical variable in this regard is the effectiveness with which children can exert filial pressure on parents who themselves may be under economic pressure. If the child is in a position to exert pressure, he will be fed slightly more food with slightly greater frequency. A child not able to exert pressure will get slightly less food. That is, under the types of conditions of scarcity such as those characterizing much of rural Haiti, a food-related tension arises between parents and children.
7. The conditions for exerting successful pressure by a child are only partially contingent on the personality of the child. The major determinant appears to be the ability of the child to capitalize on social pressure. If the child has both biological parents present, both will be under pressure to feed the child. They will be affected (and shamed) by public crying by the child in a way that step-parents or older siblings will not be shamed. The resulting increments in food to the child are enough to exert a measurable positive effect on the nutritional status of the child.
8. These parent-child dynamics -- the intrafamilial power-play that is being discussed here -- will find some manifestations in most human cultures. But it takes on particularly strong nutritional relevance only in those settings, such as contemporary rural Haiti, where food is scarce during much of the year. Parental feeding behavior is motivated by both affection and pressure. In conditions of scarcity, the child's ability to create the latter provides nutritionally critical buttressing of his ability to evoke the former.
9. In short, we suspect that the critical difference between economically similar households whose children turn out nutritionally unequal may be found less in terms of some supposedly greater "knowledge" on the part of one set of parents than in terms of the ability of the children of that household to capitalize on existing social pressure mechanisms. Other factors will come into play in individual cases. But we are impressed at the potential importance of the parent-child pressure balance in terms of determining the intrafamilial allocation of scarce food resources.
10. If this is the case, then nutrition programs should de-emphasize the cognitive, "informational" element in their interventions as being potentially off-target and give greater emphasis to enhancing the "bargaining position" of children. "Education" would then emphasize, not the different categories of food (of which the rural Haitians are already skillfully aware), but rather the status of malnutrition as an illness, the "rights" of children to as much food as their parents can possibly give, and the patterns (also

well known to villagers) by which some adults take better care of their children than other adults, even within the same economic level. That is, there is still room for "messages." It is their content that would be adjusted if the viewpoint being espoused here is correct.

The implications of these observations for planned nutrition interventions can be briefly specified. The report has consistently emphasized the dual problem of the basic food supply on the one hand, and the dynamics governing the subsequent allocation of food on the other. Nutrition intervention programs can focus on both of these dimensions.

A program attempting to encourage kitchen-gardens, whose produce will be directly incorporated into the family cooking pot, is one avenue that has been discussed. However the objective in such efforts should not be to try to turn a Haitian peasant family into a subsistence unit producing all or most of its food. We have seen that this is unlikely given the traditionally strong cash-cropping orientation prevailing in rural Haiti. But programs can make a serious effort to ascertain what are the inputs necessary to bring about a measureable improvement in the family cooking pot via new home-grown foods. The efforts with respect to kitchen gardens appear to have been sporadic and poorly documented up to now. One component of a nutrition intervention program could entail the devising of several alternative models to try to exert a measurable impact, within a year, on family cooking pots, and a monitoring system to evaluate what approaches, if any, work -- and why.

In line with the thrust of this report, we are convinced that the key element is not "new knowledge," but one of motivation and organization of incentives in such a way that these intensified "kitchen-garden" behaviors become successfully incorporated into communities (such as Kinanbwa) where they are virtually absent, and intensified in communities where they already form part of local tradition. One strategy might be to place these activities under the supervision of children themselves. Children could be given the facilities to have their own food gardens, a practice that would be eminently compatible with their current practices of cooking their own meals with bits of food that they find in the day. Since custom encourages this childhood independence in the realm of food preparation, it would be but a slight step to encourage it in the realm of supplemental food growing as well. Small bits of land could be allocated by cooperative parents, though the poorer families -- those most in need of nutritional supplements -- might be unable to provide such garden space. If there are blocs of unused land available for loan or rental to a project, these could be used. But whether the protagonists are adults or children, kitchen gardening should be done on an individual, rather than a collective, basis. Ordinary gardens

are grown on an individual basis, and it would be a programmatically unwise decision to saddle a kitchen-garden project component with a collective planting and harvesting scheme which is alien to the traditional ownership arrangements governing agriculture in Haiti. The project could then fail because of extraneous reasons.

With respect to the second major dimension, that of recognizing the role of "differential pressure" as an important determinant of the amount of food that will reach the plate of a child in a poorer household, a nutrition intervention might set for itself the innovative objective of an across-the-board strengthening of the bargaining position of children with respect to the timing and quantities of food that they receive. This could be done through:

1. Messages directed at adults, especially via radio;
2. Messages directed at children, especially in the context of schooling;
3. Surveillance procedures in which malnutrition will be accorded the same degree of public attention currently given to other childhood illnesses.

Each of these strategies will be briefly discussed. They all stop short of the actual interventions, predicated on available food supplements, that have characterized nutrition programs up till now and may thus constitute important alternative models for those contexts in which, for one reason or another, nutritional rehabilitation via donated supplements is not available.

1. Messages directed at adults.

The guiding assumption probably of most nutrition education programs is that the messages should be "beamed" at those in control of the family food supply, namely, adults. Though we shall argue that messages could also be aimed at the children themselves, there is no reason for downplaying the potential importance of messages to mothers and fathers. The questions are: a) what is the purpose of such messages; b) what should their content be; c) in what context should they be delivered?

In terms of their purpose, they should be construed, not so much as teachers of new concepts, as reminders of old concepts. The guiding assumptions should be drawn, we believe, from a problem definition such as that found above (see pp. 201-203), reminding people of the nutritionally excellent food categorization scheme which their traditions have handed down, and of the special emphasis which custom has always given to the abundant feeding of lactating women and young children. In theory, there may be cultures in which there are no valid traditions that could be publicly strengthened. Haiti is not one of those cultures. Without the least bit of pretense, nutrition educators need only take the time to explore

traditional food patterns, as we have attempted to do in this report, in order to generate lists of concepts which should be strengthened and encouraged. Furthermore, however, messages should also make explicit reference to the rising costs of food and to the reality of widespread stress and outright hunger during certain times of the year. That is, the messages should incorporate, in colloquial, vivid Creole, the same perceptions and complaints that are heard at village level about the increasing stress that is coming over the rural areas. The credibility of the message will be enhanced to the degree that the listener perceives that the sender of the message is on a realistic "wavelength." But finally the messages should stress that, despite the increasing economic pressure, children that have been brought into the world have a right to be fed all the food that they need when they need it. This again is an emphasis that is a deep part of the value system of the villagers among whom we lived. It is not an alien message imposed from without, but rather a living, keenly-felt message that is part of the active traditions of contemporary village life. The messages would merely give public, institutional support, in the wording used by villagers themselves, to feeding values that have been handed down for generations.

In short, we are proposing a structure of messages to adults that:

- a.) identifies and validates traditional food mixing and food timing concepts;
- b.) explicitly identifies the crisis nature of much of current rural life during parts of the year; and
- c.) reminds parents of the rights which their children have to food, despite the economic pressures confronting parents.

The messages should be constructed in colloquial Creole, not in the alien Gallicized Creole that characterizes at least some broadcasts.

What impact can be expected from such messages? We envision that the effect will be less that of imparting new behaviors of any sort than that of providing nudges toward slightly more faithful fulfillment of the traditional village norms. By rationalizing, publicizing, and giving institutional support to traditional norms, it will endow these norms with a saliency that makes them less amenable to "short-cutting" under stress of economic hardship. The radio, rather than a specially designed "nutrition meeting", seems a more natural setting in which to impart such messages. Such messages would also fit in very naturally where there are already ongoing mothercraft centers or demonstration foyers.

2. Messages directed at children.

We have become clearly aware that the nutritional drama in Kinanbwa is dependent on initiatives from two sets of protagonists, not merely one. Parents have the prime responsibility of providing food to the family cooking pot. But children quickly learn a variety of pressure-enhancing maneuvers to increase the frequency with which food actually reaches them. We have already seen the manner in which differing domestic arrangements increase or reduce the leverage which a child has.

We would like to suggest that, even giving complete, accurate recognition to the economic stresses that confront many couples, the nutrition program should assume the role of "child-advocate." That is, recognition should also be given to the ease with which children can be made to bear the brunt of the scarcity into which they were born.

Just as the traditional values of adults can be supported and made salient by the messages discussed above, so also we believe that the traditional patterns by which children are taught to ensure that the quantities they receive are adequate, and that they receive additional food in the course of a day, can also be enhanced and legitimized by messages directed at children. In industrial societies mass media campaigns motivate children to pressure their parents in ways that results in the expenditure of millions of dollars on expensive playthings. A more benevolent adaptation of this basic strategy could be adapted to the rural Haitian situation, in the form of messages which remind children that they should eat several times a day, that they should continue sharing food with younger siblings (as they are taught to do traditionally), and that they should do everything possible to ensure that their very young siblings eat regularly. They should even be encouraged to remind parents of these nutritional needs of children. It is possible to exaggerate this approach. For example, if children were taught, when hungry, to make their hunger known to neighbors as well, the result would be shame for the child's parents. But beatings, rather than additional food, might be the result. The construction of messages to children is a very delicate matter which should be worked out with sensitive Haitian professionals familiar with rural life. But the basic principle is that of publicly legitimizing and systematizing the "pressure tactics" which the children have learned traditionally.

Is this not cruelty to parents who may be economically strapped? It would be romanticizing not to recognize that there are parents who subject their children to neglect in Haitian villages, just as there are in other cultural settings. If, as a result of "importuning" learned in nutritional messages, children started

being systematically more demanding of food, it is unlikely that the matter would get out of hand in any practical sense. The parents are much more likely to protect themselves from importuning by their children, than are children able to protect themselves from unnecessary neglect on the part of parents.

The tragedy of a situation such as that found in rural Haiti is that a conflict of interest may arise between parents and children with respect to the very food supply. The most important programs are those which affect the supply of food. But in the interim, nutrition programs can also play the role of child advocates, helping to enhance the likelihood that the children -- including those not necessarily living with both biological parents -- get their share of the cooking pot, whatever its contents.

3. Nutritional surveillance.

The rights of children to food will be made even more salient if the matter of undernourishment is brought under community scrutiny. Programs of nutritional surveillance can play an important role in this regard. The objective would be to institute, on a pilot basis, surveillance procedures whose purpose would be one of detecting undernourishment and calling some sort of attention to the "illness" status of such a child. There is already a great deal of community pressure on parents to take their children to healers (either traditional or modern) in the case of ordinary illnesses. The plight of wasted children, however, is not construed in the same framework. The objective of surveillance would be that of attempting to have an undernourished child defined as "malad." Both sickness as a biosocial state and parental obligation with regard to the healing of sickness are well accepted in the village. What is here being suggested is the adoption of measures to attempt to have undernourishment defined in this context.

It would be unthinkable for a parent to have a sick child and not to fe kek demach ("take steps to do something about it"). The criticism of nosy neighbors ensures the regular undertaking of such demach. It would be an important step forward, from the point of view of children's nutritional rights, if malnutrition were thus identified and defined as a condition for which parents were obliged to make some demach. Surveillance procedures would be one strategy which could be used as an exploratory attempt to bring about this redefinition in at least some communities.

We make these recommendations after great hesitation and recognition of their possible misinterpretation or misuse. Our immersion in the daily rounds of village life has led us away from explanations of malnutrition which posit defects in village beliefs, understandings, or concerns. But in "absolving" rural Haitian belief from false charges of being the culprit in malnutrition, we have searched for causes in the environment itself. To those readers not involved in current arguments about the "role of beliefs" in malnutrition, and even moderately familiar with the poverty found in many parts of rural Haiti, assertions as to the economic roots of malnutrition may seem like stating the obvious. But the "educational" focus of much current nutrition intervention thinking has produced a style of analysis in which educators search intently for "gaps" in that domain with which they are most familiar, the domain of "knowledge" and "beliefs". The result is that the nutritional problem itself, either implicitly or explicitly, comes to be defined in terms of these "manageable" variables, rather than in terms of the jolting material poverty which strikes the eye of the "naive" observer and which we know is the ultimate root of malnutrition in Haiti.

Within this material poverty, children must maneuver and take an active part in the acquisition of their food. We have documented the maneuvers that have evolved among the children of the village that we know best. But some children maneuver more successfully than others, as some parents, even in their poverty, make slightly more energetic efforts to ensure that sufficient food reaches the mouths of their offspring. Our program recommendations have tended to focus, and capitalize, on that dynamic. We know that much malnutrition could be avoided with minor adjustments in the food allocation behavior of many households, adjustments which would not substantially reduce food intake on the part of adults.

But to interpret such recommendations as laying the blame for malnutrition on "neglectful Haitian parents" would be to misinterpret and distort the entire contents of this lengthy, detailed report. We repeat: the villagers among whom we lived not only knew about "good food" in much greater detail than either of the investigators; they also manifested a level of concern for their children, buttressed by explicit village tradition, that is every bit as great as we have observed in any other traditional or modern setting.

It is the deterioration of the Haitian economy, the undermining of the viability of life in rural Haiti, which has triggered off, and enhanced the importance of, nutritional "compromises" between parents and children. The first object of development should be the elimination of the conditions which

make such compromises and maneuvers necessary to begin with. The role of nutrition intervention should be seen as a supplement -- a very important one -- in the battle against deeper problems whose ultimate solution lies elsewhere.