

Survival Options for Creating Sustainable Family

Ukpore, B.A.

Vocational Education Department
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper focuses on survival options for creating sustainable family. It reviews the factors affecting sustainable family survival options, including rapid population growth, poverty, environmental degradation, among others. It further examines creative and sustainable family options and their implications for Home Economics.

Key Words: Survival, Family, Sustainability, Poverty, Population.

Introduction

There are numerous definitions of the term sustainable development. The Brundtland Commission describes “sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Holbrook, 2009 p.47). This definition, given by the Brundtland Commission, in its 1987 report published by the United Nations as “Our Common Future” is the most commonly accepted definition. The concept of sustainable development is intended to embrace the idea of ensuring that the future generations inherit the earth which supports their livelihood in such a

way that they are no worse off than generations today.

There are three dimensions of sustainability: social sustainability (i.e. people issues such as health, food safety, quality life, hunger), environmental sustainability (i.e. land use, energy use, and gas emissions, soil pollution) and economic sustainability (Ligren, 2005). These must be coordinated and addressed to ensure the long term viability of the earth planet especially in the pursuit of development and improved quality of life. Thus the concept of sustainable development has received much attention in the past decade. The interest in sustainable development results from the

growing concern over the depletion of natural resources that humans need for survival. To be able to solve these problems, many countries and international bodies have laid down options for families.

This paper thus focuses on:

- Factors affecting sustainable family survival options
- Creative and sustainable family survival options
- Education and technology
- Implications of creative and sustainable family survival options for Home Economics

Justification for Creative and Sustainable Family Survival Options

Many factors combine to justify the need for creative and sustainable family survival options. Families are the social unit of change in society. It is within the families that change is supported or opposed, encouraged or under minded. Thus, family is a critical national resource for the nation (GreenHeart Education, 2011). There is increasing evidence that, families can either greatly facilitate or disrupt the recovery process from all types of emotional and physical problems ranging from child abuse to drug abuse, from sexual abuse to physical violence and from juvenile delinquency to adult crises amongst others. The home should be a place where people feel comfortable and

secure. It ought to provide the support needed to face all challenges and stressors of daily living. Families have to be aware of options they could adopt in order to live a sustainable lifestyle.

Factors Affecting Sustainable Family Survival Options

UNESCO (n.d) argued that many factors contribute to problems faced around the world. These also impact on the family and include:

- **Rapid population growth:** Sustainable development cannot be achieved with a continuous growing population (Kraft, n.d). In 1950, the estimated population of the planet was 2.5 billion; by the year 2000, it is projected to grow to more than six billion and by the year 2025, to more than eighty billion (UNESCO, n.d). In fifty years time, the population will be around 12 billion (Pimental and Pimental, 1999). It is also projected that by 2030, there will be three billion more people on earth than today. The consequences of such growing population pressures especially in already densely populated and poor countries include rapid urbanization, possible further reduction in living standards, per capital investment in education and increased environmental distress and degradation. Less obvious outcomes might include a rise in

violence or even war, large scale migrations and escalating poverty and famine.

- **Poverty:** Poverty affects the individual, the community and the nation. A limited income restricts people to living in declining neighbourhoods, with deteriorating houses, inadequate sanitation, crowding, lack of privacy and related challenges. Poverty also entails hunger, disease, crime, etc. In Nigeria for instance, the National Policy on Nutrition (2001), found that generally poor economic situation (rising inflation and escalating food prices) have aggravated the poor nutrition status of the citizenry. The policy specifies that the major nutritional problems in Nigeria are protein energy malnutrition (PEM) and micronutrients. These problems affect mostly the poor, vulnerable groups of infants, young children and pregnant women.

- **Environmental degradation:** Agenda 21 stated that unsuitable consumption and production patterns were the main cause for global environmental degradation (Lefin, n.d). Environmental degradation constitutes the depletion of various resources such as water, air and soil. Destruction of ecosystem causes a large number of environmental challenges. Pimental and Pimental

(1999) posited that during the past 40 years, 30% of the world's cropland has been lost to erosion and overuse. Increasing the use of fertilizers and pesticides to achieve higher yields bring with it other problems (Manning n.d). The use of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides needed to feed and clothe a rapidly expanding population has placed unprecedented stress on the world's ecosystem. These problems impact on the family and threaten sustainable development.

Creative and Sustainable Family Survival Options

To solve the problems affecting sustainable family survival options, there is a need to apply the three pillars of sustainable development (social equity, economic viability and environmental conservation) to families, through a series of family-chosen, family-directed projects. Families also need skills and support in three major areas: Resources, relationships and a sense of community. Families must be empowered in ways that can be transferred to the next generation so they can build a better today for a better tomorrow.

According to Lingern (2005), the following are possible survival options for creating sustainable family:

- **Family cohesion:** Family cohesion is defined as a feeling of emotional closeness among family members. A balance between separateness and togetherness is most functional across the family life cycle. The right balance allows family members to fully develop their potentials as individuals. Two qualities related to family cohesion are commitment and spending time together. Commitment refers to a willingness to invest time and energy in family activities and not let careers/jobs or other priorities take too much time away from family interaction. Members ought to care about each other and show it through words and deeds. They should be committed to promoting each other's growth, happiness, and welfare and agree to work out difficulties when hardships strike. Moreover, spending time together refers to quality experiences the families engage in. This promotes the emotional bonding family feel for each other. Strong families regularly schedule activities.
- **Family flexibility:** Family flexibility is the ability to change its power structure, roles and rules when needed. Two qualities related to family flexibility are: the ability to cope with stress and crisis and spiritual well-being.
- **Family communication:** Family communication is the major key in creating, supporting, maintaining or destroying a family. Two characteristics strongly related to family communication are: positive communication, appreciation and affection. Positive communication means family members talk and listen to each other in a non-critical, non-judgmental and non-threatening manner. Appreciation and affection are expressions of how family members show their feelings for each other
- **Quality of couple relationship:** The quality of couple relationship sets the tone for the quality of the family environment or an assessment of couple's relationship and its potential.
- **Community involvement:** Strong sustainable families give their time and talent to community activities and community affairs. They influence policy-making and legislation by participating in several community and state organizations. They organize with other families to change policies and legislation.
- **Management and decision-making:** Strong sustainable families are both flexible and adaptable. Leadership within the family is more democratic and less authoritarian. People share responsibilities according to available time and competencies.

- **Adoption of viable financial management options:** Families should adopt appropriate financial management options that allow them to live within the limits of their income. Recklessness in the expenditure of family financial resources should be avoided.
- **Education and Technology:** Education and technology are considered as the key to sustainable development and it is a fundamental human right (UNESCO, 2000). Governments and families should ensure that individuals are given opportunities to acquire education. Such education should empower people for survival and self-reliance.

Implications of Creative and Sustainable Family Survival Options for Home Economics

Home economics is a dynamic field that imparts knowledge intended to help people adapt to their environment by making effective use of human and material resources. It is also a unique profession that pays attention to the problems that families encounter from one generation to another (perennial problems) and then draws information and insights from a number of disciplines (McGregor, 2008). Hence, the International cohesion, family communication

Federation of Home Economics (IFHE) sees Home Economics as multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary. Atilas and Cude (as cited in Ukpore, 2012) posited that Family and Consumer Sciences (Home Economics) is equipped to play a significant role in resource development and sustainability because the profession has made significant contributions to the knowledge base which defines sound management of many types of resources including time, money and human resources. Moreover, Home Economics profession could assist in bringing out the characteristics of sustainable family as well as the creative and sustainable family survival options discussed in this paper.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that nations, international bodies and groups of persons have made tremendous effort to improve the quality of life of families but the efforts made so far seems not to have been focused on the family and so sustainable families have not been fully achieved especially in developing countries. Factors affecting sustainable families such as poverty, population growth, environmental degradation and others were discussed. Family

and family flexibility among others were considered to be important creative options for family survival. The implications of Home Economics assisting in achievement of creative and sustainable survival options were considered.

References

- Green Heart Education (2011). Sustainable Family Development Retrieved from: <http://www.greenheartedorg/sustainable-family-development.html>
- Holbrook, J. (2009). Meeting Challenges To Sustainable Development Through Science and Technology Education. <http://www.icaonline.net/insei.files/p4.pdf>
- Lefin, A (n.d) Food Consumption and Sustainable Development: An Introduction (1) ConSntSus. Retrieved fro: http://consentsus-project.pbworks.com/f/SustFoodCons_patterns.pdf
- Lingren, H.G. (2005). Lower Mainland Assessment and Referral Service (ETAP/ARS). "Creating Healthy Employees, Families and Communities". Creating Sustainable Families. Retrieved from <http://www.lmars.com/sustainable-families.htm>
- McGregor, S.L. (2008). Response to the 2008 IFHE Position Statement Home Economics in the 21st Century. Retrieved from http://www.consultmcgregor.com/documents/research/ifhe_position_paper_response_mc_gregor_pdf.pdf
- Manning, J. (n.d). Sustainable Development. Mostey Retrieved from <http://mwillet.org/politics/Sustainable.htm>
- Pimental M. and Pimental, D. (1999). Population Growth, Environmental Resources and the Global Availability of Food. *Social Research*. Spring 66(1) 417-428
- Ukpore, B.A (2010). Classroom teacher's adherence to philosophy and ethic of Home Economics for sustainable development in Anambra State. *African Research Review*. An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal, Ethiopia, 4(1) 439-450
- UNESCO (n.d) Educating for a Sustainable Future. www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/TLSF/.../uncom01t05s01.htm-France