

GLOBAL CHANGES AND CHALLENGES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON FAMILIES

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Abstract

This paper discussed global changes and challenges and their effects on families. The paper identified these changes and challenges to include Information and Communication Technology, (ICT) Climate Changes/Global Warming, (CC/GW) Global Food Security (GFS) and HIV & AIDS and their effects on the families to include different diseases, crime rate of various kinds, food shortages and scarcity, financial burden and death. This paper further revealed that people living in arid and tropical areas are more affected and poverty is at increase due to the shortage or increase rainfall. Home economist need to make significant contributions by acting fast to save the world by calling the world, individuals and families to employ effective decision making and problem solving strategies that can enhance healthy lifestyles in the face of global changes and challenges.

Introduction

The family is the society's most important institution established by God, which must grow, survive and function in response to the diversities and complexities of life, (Mbagwu, 2005). The author added that the family is the first and only industry endowed with the ability to replenish the earth with generations upon generations of human beings. In congruent, WHO (1996) in Mbagwu (2005), stated that the family is the first school of socialization, which is an index of the social status of the entire society.

However, some global changes and challenges are presently posing enormous threats and demands on individual members of the family and the

families in general such changes and challenges are Global Warming/climate change, information and communication technology, Global food security and HIV/AIDS to mention but a few. In several situations, the family and societal values, norms, traditions, beliefs among other things are seriously being affected due to various unhealthy life styles which on daily bases are sweeping across the global village and consequently, impacting on the family. Achalu (1998) in Ekpu and Udofia (2009) affirmed that lifestyles or the way we behave has been regarded as the single most important factor influencing or rather determining our longevity. This explains why most of the leading causes of illnesses

and death today are related in one way or the other to lifestyles.

Consequently, individuals and families are faced with diverse vital and challenging decisions which relates to all aspects of family living including, values, relationships, fertility, security and resource management among others. Furthermore, it becomes pertinent for the individuals and families to employ effective decision making and problem solving strategies that can enhance healthy lifestyle. It is against this background that this paper identifies some of the indices that affect the family to include.

- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Climate changes (CC)
- Global Food Security (GFS)
- HIV & AIDS

Information Communication Technology Family

The concept of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) is made up of three components. The word information according to WHO (1981) is message intended for communication. It refers to knowledge and ideas which are provided in order to increase awareness in people. Communication to Nwachukwu, (2008) is one of the processes of transferring information from one person to another. Onyeoma and Obiekezie, (2000). Opined that communication is the process of transferring ideas or skills, aptitudes from one person to another accurately and satisfactory.

Technology on the hand, is not a machine but a planned systematic method

of working to achieve planned outcomes (Milles, 1994). He went on to explain that technology involves various forms of analysis, research and development. In their bid to summarise the different definitions, UNDP, Human Development Report (2001) stated that information communication and technology is a combination of micro-electronics, computer hardwares and softwares, telecommunications that enable the processing and storage of huge amounts of information. These component of ICT are Desktop Computer, Laptop Computer, Internet and their accessories, mobile phones or cell phones. Nwachukwu (2008), listed the benefits of information communication and technology to the family to include:

- 1 Through the use of ICT, the family can see events of both present and past ones. They are able to hear peoples' voices, see them including that of those who were long death.
- 2 ICT also provides families with the skills they need for survival in a competitive society by creating employment thereby, reducing poverty.
3. Teleconferencing is one of the benefits of ICT where families at distant places have access to hold meetings and discuss crucial matters and issues affecting their lives and families.
4. Members of the family are always at close contact through the use of cell phones.

5. ICT is also used for training and research it has great educational advantage to the academic world.

The benefits of ICT are so numerous to mention here however, it is without ill to the family, some of which include.

- i. Pornography - youths and young adolescents browse through the net and print out pornographic materials which they use to corrupt themselves by having illicit sex and other unwholesome sex practices.
- ii. There is a higher rate of sexual immorality such as sex trade that is selling oneself to earn wages, lesbianism and homosexuality, seduction among others.
- iii. Deviant behaviours such as breaking of rules and regulations in the family, lawlessness etc.
- iv. People are malnourished as a result of hunger, starvation, poor harvest and poverty.
- v. Crime rate, such as cheating, stealing. Internet Fraud on line, killing and maiming, cultism among other things.

In line with these, Okorie (2005) agreed that the ill of ICT to adolescents and youth are on the high side to their detriments, and so the world should be at a watch.

Global Warming/ Climate Change and the Family

Global Warming is the increase in the average temperature of the earth's surface air and oceans in recent decades.

Global Warming is a continuous process. The global average air temperature near the earth's surface increased by 0.74 + 0.180C (1.33 +).320F) during the last 100 years Parry (2001) and Midori, 2007 earlier reported that research report reaching them from Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research, Meteorology Office, U.K predicts temperature increases of 1.4 – 5.50C over the next 100 years. (The range of values results from the use of different scenarios from green house gas emissions as well as models indicate different climate sensitivity). Global Warming has resulted in global climate change. Kluger (2006) is disturbed about the health status of the earth. He wondered if the planet has not taken ill. Walsh (2008) indicated the steady deterioration of the climate of the earth. The author remarked that the rate of deterioration of the earth is becoming a war of the first order.

Climate is the pattern or cycle of weather condition such as temperature, wind, rainfall, snowfall, humidity and clouds including extreme and occasional ones over a large area averaged over many years (Crystal, 2003). In the authors view, climate change implies a change in the average atmospheric conditions of climate. Climate could be affected by a lot of factors such as position of a place on the earth, local land features like mountains, type of land, amount of plants like forest or grass land, nearness of large bodies of water and human activities. Nichols and Leatherman (1995), Parry (2001), Pat and Khalig (2002), and Onyeka and Ekire

(2008) outlined the negative effects of climate change to the family to include:

1. An increase in earth's temperature which gives rise to excessive heat, resulted to climate-related diseases such as fever, Cholera, hookworm, polio, malaria, hepatitis B, and hay fever, flu (cough and catarrh) headache etc.
2. Increase temperature causes species of animals to immigrate to cooler places causing reduction in the consumption of high protein or first class protein in the family's daily meals.
3. Climate change affects grassland, forest and scrub land. This brings about a drastic change in the vegetation zones that result in drought due to lack of enough rainfall or no rainfall at all. Famine in the arid area, sometimes excessive, rainfall, people are malnourished as a result of starvation, hunger, poor harvest, and poverty.
4. There is a high rate of malnutrition and other nutrition related diseases like marasmus, asthma, Kwashiorkor, Hepatitis A, dysentery, diarrhea as children are forced to pick and eat whatever they see to quench their hunger.
5. There is increase in mosquito and tick vector production biting people and transmitting rift valley fever, malaria and lyme disease.

According to Uko-Ariomoh and Oso (2009), this change in climate could consequently result into mass movement of

people away from arid regions, causing reduction in the population of people in such areas. Uko-aviomoh and Oso (2009).

Global Food Security and the Family

Food security refers to the availability of food and the family's access to it. A family is considered food secured when its members do not live in hunger or fear of starvation. According to the World Resources Institute (2006), global per Capita Food production has been increasing substantially for the past decades. In another development, Uko, Aviomoh and Okoh (2005) argued that food security is a pre-requisite of good nutrition and can be defined as the total process that provides the required nutrients in the body to meet up the daily nutritional requirement for a healthy and productive life. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2009), further strengthened this stance when it stated that food security exist when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient state and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Food is essential to the survival of all humans. Achieving a well fed nation means improving what people eat in terms of quantity and quality. Food security for the hungry, it means increasing access to food so that they get enough to meet nutritional needs (FAO, 2003). Food is an exceptional political commodity. It is a necessity, something in which as individuals, we need food for our sustenance and survival. In Nigeria, as in all other parts of the world, the need for

food has become a policy issue. This need has taken an all important dimension because the basic nutrients in diet are all necessary for proper body functions. (Ohwovoriole & Ochonogor, 2009). However Nwabah (2005) also stressed that the relationship between foods security and the family cannot be overemphasized. This is so because food or its lack has strong effect on human destiny and subsequently on the larger society. It is also obvious that a family without food security is likely going to face the problem of:

- Hunger and starvation
- Poor nutrition which causes several nutrition related diseases in children such as, marasmus, kwashiorkor, beri beri, Rickets, Jaundice obesity in children and obesity in adult.
- Increase in mental and physical imbalances
- Increase in the chances of contacting infectious diseases, sicknesses and other health problems such as rashes, poor vision renal failure, liver diseases, low blood count and many others.
- Unproductive life and low immune system.
- Low economic status. (Olayemi 2002).

Food needs to be safe to eat and of good and high nutritional quality. Good nutrition is very important for growth and health. If someone has access to enough and adequate good food, clean water, sanitation and health care, their body's basic needs will be met. (FAO 2003)

HIV/AIDS and the Family

HIV stands for Human Immuno Deficiency Virus which attacks the white blood cells and destroys their ability to fight infections. AIDS stands for Acquired Human Deficiency syndrome. It is also called the diseases of human immune system known in some countries as slime, (UNA/IDS, WHO, 1998, cited in (Adama 2008). The menace of HIV/AIDS has affected every body in one way or the other in the whole world. It has no cure. Some Children are rendered orphans, shops are closed causing problems in the economy. Some schools are closed down due to few students in attendance, industries shut down due to death of the owner or proprietor. In government office, we have shortages of key personnels due to death.

Okoye (2006) cited in Adama (2008) noted that HIV/AIDS has been a global problem and that the rate of spreading has been alarming looking at global overview of AIDS as at 1990. In congruence, Katabira (2004) concluded that HIV/AIDS is a fatal disease harassing the world at large and the family in particular. It has posed a serious problem to the family and the world because no remedy, scientific therapy or vaccine has been discovered to the ugly situation. The author also noted that this is a global problem that cuts across all segments of the society and people (men, women, adult, children, rich and affluence, poor, urban, rural, white and black).

Recent Global HIV/AIDS epidemic summary indicate that the total nuember of people living with the virus

(HIV) in 2008 was 33.4 million. This data comprises of 31.3 million adults and 2.1 million children under fifteen years of age, (WHO, UNAIDS and UNICEF, (2009). Worldwide the greatest concern about AIDS is in sub-saharan Africa where it has reached epidemic proportions, (Pisani 2000 in Obeta, 2009). The authors also stated that all over the world, HIV/AIDS is causing devastation, destroying communities and families and taking away hope for the future. The authors further stated that the impact of HIV/AIDS are enormously bad. In the absence of adequate treatment or vaccination, HIV/AIDS diminishes or destroys quality of life before it takes away life itself. It is mostly sexually transmitted.

The first case of AIDS in Nigeria was reported in 1986. Since then, HIV prevalence has steadily increased from 1.8% in 1991 to 5.8% in 2001 and a slight decline to 4.4% in 2005. Although the prevalence rates appear low, Nigeria ranks third in terms of the actual number of people infected with HIV after India and South Africa, Wide variations in HIV prevalence have been observed across states and rural-urban localities suggesting that there are sub-epidemics within an epidemic

(<http://www.gedefoundation.org.HIV>).

Despite these facts, Government reports claim that over 300,000 Nigerians die yearly of complications arising from AIDS, over 1.5 million children are said to be orphans annually and an estimated 8 million are expected to be infected by 2012. Official figures put the steady rise in HIV prevalence rate from 1.8% in 1988 to

5.8% in 2001, 5.0% in 2003 and 4.4% in 2005 (Nigeria HIV Info, 2006). The 2005 survey released in 2006 estimated that there were 4 million adults living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, and 57% of these are women. From the figure, there are significant variations in the prevalence between states and between population groups. (W.H.O 2008).

The UNDP 2008 cited in Akam, (2008) reported that this epidemic is said to be fueled in the country largely by poverty. Nigeria is ranked 158 out of 177 on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human poverty Index (UNDP, 2007/2008). This poor economic position means that Nigeria is faced with huge challenges in fighting HIV and AIDS. Other factors that contribute to the rapid spread of the disease in Nigeria are lack of awareness, many commercial sex workers, early age of sexual activity, poor gender empowerment with religion and culture obstructing open debate about sexuality, wide spread practice of polygamy, high prevalence of untreated sexually transmitted infections, low condom use, low literacy, poor health condition, low status of women and denial of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (UNDP, 2007/2008).

Notable Effects of HIV/AIDSs to the Family are

- 1 It reduces the population of the family through premature death of the family members
- 2 Other members of the family can contact AIDS through sharing of

- little equipments like knife, blade, blood and body fluid
- 3 Young children are rendered orphans
 - 4 Young women and men are rendered widows and widower
 - 5 It gives room to stigmatization.
 - 6 It lays financial burdens to families
 - 7 It reduces the economic strength of the family due to the fact that an HIV/AIDS person do not have much physical strength for any job.
 - 8 It causes severe pains which can be in the form of headache, pains all over the body e.g. sores on the body and ulcer in the mouth etc. Akam (2008).

Summary

It is noted that global changes and challenges are posing enormous threats and demands on the family. Such that, the family's values, norms, tradition and beliefs are grossly affected due to unhealthy life style. The invention of ICT has brought many good and ills to the family as crime waves are on the increase. Climate change has also brought harm to the family as it affect the vegetation, rainfall and sun which can bring about drought, famine and poor harvest (scarcity of food and rise in prices of food stuff). Food security is another important area which has affected the family, globally as without good quality and enough food, people will suffer from hunger and starvation. Shortage of food do not promote the well-being of the family members. Many people will be exposed to

nutrition related disease. No infectious disease of the modern time has had such devastating impart on the world's citizens as HIV/AIDS. It has created an explosion of orphans. We must joins in the fight against HIV/AIDS if we must fulfill our role of helping human beings, live a fulfilled live. HIV/AIDS is no respecter of any person, position, age, financial status, colour or race.

How can Home Economics/Economist Solve these Challenges?

Nigerians and the world need to act fast. The Home Economist who has acquired the skills and knowledge in the prevention of this global problems and ways of reducing them are in a position to make significant contributions through enlightenment campaign, (media, radio, newspaper, magazine, flyers, handbills, seminars, posters, workshop and others) to educate the family and the public on the ill effects of global changes and challenges as prevalent now. If every body does their part and more people are enlightened through dissemination of information at all levels of life and learning how to live a healthy life style, they will collectively save the entire world. This therefore call for the world, individuals and families to employ effective decision making and problem solving strategies that can enhance healthy lifestyles in the face of global changes and challenges.

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