

**Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-Day Adventist**

**LEARNING BY EXPERIENCE
TRANSMITTING SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
NUTRITIONAL PRINCIPLES THROUGH
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

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INTRODUCTION

At this time a major need of the world's population is to receive health education, which includes preventive medicine, nutrition education, personal hygiene, environment sanitation and attention to vulnerable groups.

Nutrition is considered fundamental to the harmonious development of the faculties of human being, permitting maximum fulfillment in each area of life.

In this essay is presented a draft of the actual nutritional needs in economically deprived countries; in addition, the vulnerable groups of the population are considered, along with basic needs, their alterations and complications as related to their nutritional status.

Also is included the biblical focus about the nutritional needs of man and possible solutions in his existing condition.

This essay also considers the concept of humanity, its origin, the reason and purpose of its existence, and its final destiny.

In describing the Christian ideal of service, this work offers a pattern for the design of nutrition programs in the community and a description of student participation in services to the community which integrate church and school.

One main objective of this essay is to offer to the student the opportunity to know the needs in the community and to respond to them, when understanding the value that each person has as a human being.

The second main objective is to offer a service to others wherever they are, without expecting remuneration, full of love and walking in Jesus's footprints.

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**"LEARNING BY EXPERIENCE: TRANSMITTING SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
NUTRITIONAL PRINCIPLES THROUGH COMMUNITY PROGRAMS"**

I. ACTUAL NEEDS OF NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT IN MEXICO

Presently governments around the world try to satisfy primary needs of the population, with nutrition considered among the most important. It is recognized that nutrition contributes to the physical, mental and spiritual development of man, as well as more productivity in the later decades.

The countries more affected are those with less economic means, such as some Latinoamerican countries, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

Some world health institutions, like the WHO (World Health Organization) have been pioneers in the action programs that lessen the risk of morbidity and mortality in vulnerable groups of the population, among them pregnant women (adolescents and adults), nursing infants, preschool children, adolescents and elderly.

Through other institutions like FAO (Foods Agriculture Organization) the communities that have greater need and risks are supplied which choices to modify their actual nutritional status.

This Institution, through the WHO (Worl Food Programme), offers food support to the communities, giving foods, like salary for service within the same community.

Among the nutritional needs of the community we may note:

- Reduced economic means
- Deficit of food availability

- Inadequate distribution of food resource
- Poor education on food preparation
 - Deficient use of regional food resources
 - Lack of instruction on foods conservation
 - Lack of education of nutritive value of food

It is necessary to identify and to know the groups that require immediate attention and to know the particular characteristics of each group vulnerable.

1. PREGNANT WOMEN:

a). PREGNANT ADOLESCENT.- A group with greater risk, these women require more nutrients during this period, to satisfy their own growth and development needs.

They have higher risk of premature delivery, anemias, toxemias, maternal death, underweight babies at birth, and high baby morbidity and mortality during the first years of life.

b). PREGNANT ADULTS.- These group is of greater risk to premature delivery, anemias, toxemia, maternal death and low birt weight, the risk is increased in women with 35 years of age, obesity, hypertension, multiparities, etc.

2. NURSING INFANTS:

a). YOUNGER NURSING INFANTS.- Included are the babies until their first year.

b). OLDER NURSING INFANTS.- Included are children from one year to two years old.

These infants are submitted to unfavorable circumstances, considering the environment where they are born and growing.

For this stage one of the main necessities in the growing and development of the child is proper nutritional status, to avoid major risks in his or her future advancement.

3. PRESCHOOL CHILDREN:

These include children aproximately between two and five years old. The majority of these

children are submitted to stress in their families or environment. The nutritional status during this stage will influence the physical growth and development of the children, lessening all their capacities.

The accidents, respiratory infections and malnutrition have incidence in this stage. Actually Nutrition school have a program with special support offer them periodical vigilance for to identify health needs, each student have one group for give support.

4. ADOLESCENTS:

The third and last stage of greatest speed in growth and development in the human adolescence, requires care and special attention, plus adequate nutritional support in accord with its characteristics.

So, the nutritional state during this stage determines the rhythm of physical, emotional and social development.

Is important the incidence of risk factors to the health in this group, the accidents, malnutrition, anorexia, bulimia, obesity and suicides are result of environment, less food, drugs, psychological illnesses, family environment and high consumption of foods.

5. ELDERLY:

The elderly are also considered in the vulnerable groups and need special attention.

Wasn't until the 1980's that, continuing education and counseling programs began for the elderly. These programs try to offer medical attention, psychological support and periodical evaluation of their nutritional status for the purpose of maintaining the health of elderly.

There are special institutions like INSEN (Instituto Nacional de la Senectud) in Mexico, where the elderly have an opportunity to participate with others in social activities like games, movies, lectures, crafts, etc.

They have an ID card that gives them access to medical services and transportation, among other things.

Their nutritional status is most important for their care, because of the social, environmental, physical and psychological factors that affect them favorably or unfavorably.

The malnutrition, diabetes, anemia, heart illness and coronary risk are result of food deficit or increase, chronic illness and food high fats.

The Nutrition school have some programs of support for these vulnerable group, each time of clases.

II. FOCUS OF POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE NUTRITIONAL NEEDS OF HUMAN BEING

The Holy Bible describes God's original plan about the condition of the human being as a son of God.

In the Old and New Testaments we can find the meaning that the human being has in the eyes of God.

I Peter 2:9 describes the place that we have before God: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light".¹

The Bible is clear when it describes the foods that God recommended for them in order to remain healthy.

In Genesis 1:29 God says: "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food".²

But, before we review and apply the biblical teaching in respect to human nutrition, we need to consider the following questions:

1. What is the human being?
2. What is his origin?
3. What is the reason and purpose of his existence?
4. What is his final destiny?

THE HUMAN BEING:

Man was created in the image of God. With physical, mental and spiritual capacity, with

¹- Holy Bible. New International Version. 1a. Peter 2:9

²- Holy Bible. New International Version. Genesis 1:29.

powers of choice and decision, affected by sin, but redeemed by Jesus through the cross.

ORIGIN:

The origin of human nature can be traced back to the dust with which it was formed. God gave it life through his breath. It was created with feeling and the capacity to manifest these to others. In this we can see God's power.

REASON AND PURPOSE OF HIS EXISTENCE:

Man was created to reflect the character of God, to obey his commandment and to "... declare the praises of Him..."³

FINAL DESTINY:

The final destiny of the human race is shaped by man's faithfulness. It will conduct him either to eternal life or to eternal death. There are only two alternatives.

Knowing the concept and the significance of the human being, we can consider God's plan for humanity. Man, then, created in the image of God, will have no deficiency in his nutrition.

Genesis describes the food given to man and talks about the longevity of men during this period. Again in the Exodus God gave nutritive food to His own.

After the people changed their habits and were perverted, God classified the food as clean to eat or unclean.

Through the biblical story in the Old and New Testament are mentioned people that were faithful to the commandments of God, following his original food plan. We know the cases of Joshua, Daniel and his friends, John the Baptist, among others.

As time passed and the generations following changed their food habits, meals

³ Holy Bible, New International Version, 1st Peter 2:9

degenerated into pleasers of sensuality. Among other problems, this food deficit provokes malnutrition, illnesses and death.

How can we offer a solution to these nutritional needs?

God gives us the answer to this question through the Bible and through the Spirit of Prophecy.

How do we begin?. In the first place, we must review the message given in I Peter 2:9 and regain consciousness of our origin and God's purpose to redeem us.

In the second place, remember that our body is a "temple of the Holy Spirit."⁴ In third place we have been bought at a high price, by the precious blood of Christ. In fourth place, remember to do all things to glorify God. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."⁵

When we decide to make a change in our lifestyle, remembering the promises and blessings to the obedient, then we can solve the nutritional needs of the human being.

⁴ Holy Bible. New International Version. 1 Cor. 6:19.

⁵ Holy Bible. New International Version. 1 Cor. 10:31

III. PATTERN OF NUTRITIONAL PROGRAMS DESIGNED FOR THE COMMUNITY

DESCRIPTION

In order for a health program to be successful within the community, education is a necessary instrument. Several means have been used to teach people how to develop proper habits of healthy living, and how to participate in health programs within the community. It is important to consider the process to be used in order to follow clear and measurable objectives, which would then lead to planned activity. Therefore it is necessary that every student who serves the community be able to develop strategies for better service.

DESIGN

In order to achieve the most objectives and gain the active participation of the people from the community, we must consider the following aspects:

1. INITIAL ASSESSMENT:

This includes activities required before the start of the program, with the purpose of:

- a. Detecting possible problems and obstacles
- b. Avoiding mistakes in the application of the program
- c. Considering possible modifications during the program

The evaluation should include:

- Collection of data
- Analysis of the data
- Direct observation to identify the needs of the community

2. DIAGNOSIS:

According to the findings of the evaluation, we pass to the next step, to assess:

- Factors that caused the situation
- Limiting factors
- Needs felt by the community

- Knowledge and habits
- Available and alternative resources

The diagnosis is the responsibility of all members of the health group, as much as that of the members of the community. It's necessary for the instructor to motivate the community, so as to achieve the participation of everyone.

3. OBJECTIVES:

The objectives define what we want to achieve and the time needed to achieve it . The following questions need to be answered:

- a. What would be the end result?
- b. When could we hope to achieve this end?
- c. Where would the activities be held?
- d. How much should be done to alleviate or eliminate the problem?

In order to design and plan an adequate program, the student must first know what the most urgent needs of the community are.

4. STRATEGIES:

In order to plan a program, we must first: Identify, analyze, and select the strategies or means through which we may achieve the objectives.

5. RESOURCES:

After we have made a diagnosis of the situation and identified the problem, we need to know what we require in order to develop the program. This part includes:

- Economic resources
- Human resources
- Local resources or infrastructure
- Material resources
- Time
- Knowledge and ability

6. IMPLEMENTATION:

Once the student has identified the needs of the community, and knows the available resources, he is now in a position to offer alternatives to solve a specific problem. A plan of action must first be drawn up.

7. EVALUATION:

An evaluation must be made to see if objectives of the program have been reached; secondly, the student who has participated in the activities of the community must draw up a diagnosis of the actual situation. Then he must write the objectives and goals down and evaluate if it is necessary to modify the situation. He can then develop strategies to achieve what had originally planned, using the available resources and drawing up a plan of action during his time limitations.

EXPERIENCES

Finally, make an evaluation of all activities and results achieved up to the moment, while drawing up the program points to include, focusing on activities that enhance and fortify the deep desire of service that the student feels towards the community.

Through the evaluation it's possible to identify all the objectives that came about.

IV. STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY SERVICES

1.SCHOOL

Adventist education considers the student's direct participation in serving the community as an integral part of his academic achievement. Whenever study programs and work plans in health education are formed, this particular objective is kept in mind as a very effective agent. It is necessary that the student should have the responsibility to offer alternatives for a better quality of life for the people.

It is considered that: " Too often the minds of students are occupied with men's theories and speculations, falsely called science and philosophy. They need to be brought into close contact with nature. Let them learn that creation and Christianity have one God."⁶

Student participation in the community offers experiences that are not obtained in the classroom. It provides the opportunity to make friends and to take part in the their activities. The main objective is to win the people's confidence as they have this social interaction.

In a very particular way the student of nutrition has many advantages when it comes to getting in touch with the community.

The students identify the people with more needs of health, each student choose your community, made a diagnosis of actual situation in each community, they planning a program of health care in the community, causing the community participation. They use human, physical and economic resouces of the community, have actions of the program during some time, assess the activities finished, design a new plan, if is necessary.

Activities of each student:

⁶ Ellen G. White. He taught Love. p. 9.

- Health promotion
- Personal Hygiene
- Care environment
- Infections illness control
- Childrens care
- Pregnant care
- Medical assesor
- Home visitor
- Nutrition education
- Nutrition in some life stage

Among other objectives in these educational problems is that of helping people to help themselves in order to solve their own problems and satisfy their needs. Filling the great need of men and women willing to serve requires knowing what true education is as Ellen White writes in many places.

Student participation in the nutrition education programs in the community calls for capable persons who can offer solutions for the needs of the people. It requires students that may become lights to the world. They need to be filled with heavenly principles so that when they mingle with others they may show them the light that they have in them.

Before he serves, the student should be prepared in different aspects of his life, including his physical, mental and spiritual development, as well as his personality.

The best example of education is found in the teaching that the Israelites gave to their young people. The teachers were men with the following characteristics:

- They knew divine truth

- They enjoyed communion with God
- They received the gifts of the Holy Spirit
- They had the people's confidence and respect because of their wisdom and holiness

In our days, this is a great need: To know the true purpose of education in order to restore in the souls of youth the image of God and Christ, which may then be shown through their lives wherever they go.

Therefore as educational Christian institutions, we should maintain on our campuses an "atmosphere of faith and teaching."⁷

⁷ Arthur F. Holmes. *The Idea of a Christian College*. p. 9.

V. CHURCH AND CHRISTIAN ASPECTS OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

A. LOCAL LEVEL

The church has several departments that contribute to the community development in different ways:

-COMMUNITY SERVICES.- Every church has a Community Services with the particular purpose of taking care of and giving immediate attention to the needy groups already mentioned. The main objective is to satisfy the urgent physical and health needs, as well as their spiritual hunger.

For this reason Community Services is an important group in the missionary activities of the church. It is a labor group that spend their time and use their talents. They collect and fix clothes and materials for the poor, the needy and the unfortunate. Besides they promote adult education, home visiting, housekeeping help, the care of sick people in their own homes, feeding to many people and others services. This department has a tremendous responsibility in this particular program, serving the community.

-ADVENTIST MEN SOCIETY.- This group has many activities. Their main missionary endeavors include visiting and preaching to the prisoners, furniture restoration, house repairs for old people, helping the invalid and the widows; When a disaster occurs, they help to rescue persons and to transport food and materials that are needed. They clean the streets and provide rehabilitation to the handicapped.

-SOCIAL ASSISTANCE CENTER.- In some places, there is a center that offers help and provides good food to the needy at different meal hours.

-HEALTH AND TEMPERANCE DEPARTMENT.- Through this department the adventist

Church accepts the responsibility of making Jesus known to the world and believes that this includes the moral obligation of preserving the dignity of every human being, by letting him reach the top levels of physical, mental and spiritual health, and besides providing help to the sick.

It embraces the responsibility of preventing sickness through educational programs that present to the public the principles of good health and promote a good lifestyle that provides abundant health to the individual.

These programs might include: Plans to stop smoking, cooking classes, health principles classes, stress control and management, family relations and others.

B. NATIONAL LEVEL

On a National level we have the support of ACFE (Educational, Philanthropic and civil Association) in Mexico whose main objective is to provide help and advice whenever there are disasters such as floods, fires, earthquakes, wars or any other emergency.

C. WORLD LEVEL

In order to provide food and help for sanitary problems in countries that don't have enough means and that are victims of natural or artificial disasters, the support of ADRA (Adventist Disaster Resources Agency) is offered.

ADRA's structure extends into 192 countries, including Asia, Africa, the American continents and South Pacific countries; this makes possible a quick action in almost every corner of the world.

The services that are offered to the community include:

- The building of houses
- Food supply
- Teaching agricultural technology
- Providing clothes
- Medicines

-Rehabilitation (material goods, storage of foods for future crises and medical care)

Every service that is offered in behalf of the community provides a personal benefit to the giver as well as to receiver.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The relation between learning in the classroom and the experience in practical life indicates how much we can do for others. It requires modification and change in different aspects of our life.

We know the situation and the needs of the population and we know the groups that require more attention. We think of our origin and of the reasons why we exist, as well as our final destiny.

We have the model to offer support to these needs. We have enough human resources, building capacity and the financial solvency to satisfy this demand.

What do we need to do ?

Only to unite our forces, reflect in our character and actions that we are created in the image of God and through practical education, reveal our hope and message of eternal salvation to those who don't know God.

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2. Ibid.,p.8
3. Ibid.,p.8
4. Ibid.,p.6
5. Ellen G. White. HEALTH MINISTRY,p.11
6. Ibid.,p.12
7. Ibid.,p.13
8. Ellen G. White. COUNSELS TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS,p.25
9. Ellen G. White. HEALTH MINISTRY,p.30
- 10.Ibid.,p.32
- 11.Ibid.,p.32
- 12.Ibid.,p.32
- 13.Ellen G.White. FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION,p.409
- 14.Ellen G. White. CHRISTIAN SERVICE,p.126
- 15.Ibid.,p.234
- 16.Ellen G. White. DESIRE OF THE AGES, p.303
- 17.Ellen G. White. HEALTH MINISTRY,p.153
- 18.Ellen G. White. HE TAUGHT LOVE, p.9
- 19.Arthur F. Holmes. THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN COLLEGE,p.81

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