



Intergovernmental Institution for the use of Micro-algae Spirulina Against Malnutrition
Permanent Consultative Observer with the United Nations Economic and Social Council

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

Forty-first session, 30 June to 18 July 2008

United Nations Headquarters, New York

Gender Equality and Poverty:
Food as a Tool of Empowerment

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IIMSAM

Madam Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to be here today, and I thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of my delegation. We know discrimination is about power and domination; we know women are the primary targets oppression and exploitation and we know that in our globalizing world their economic state and social well-being is inherently linked to their subjugation.

UNDP reports reflect the fact that 70 per cent of the world's 1.2 billion people who are estimated to live in poverty are women and children. A woman dies every minute from complications arising from pregnancy and childbirth, and HIV rates are now rising faster among women than men. 700 million women are living without adequate food, water, sanitation and education.

To quote Anne Veneman, women do 66% of the work in the world, produce 50% of the food, but earn 5% of the income and 1% of the property. What does this mean? This means that poverty, hunger, and malnutrition have been feminized.

Barring the few Matriarchal societies in the world, women have always remained below men on the political and social ladder, a relationship maintained by economics. Until the time women have essential empowerments such as the physical strength and health which is their RIGHT as human beings, they will not be able to rise to claim their political, social, educational and spiritual positions in this world.

I sit before you today as a representative of IIMSAM. The Inter-governmental Institution for the use of Micro-algae Spirulina Against Malnutrition. Spirulina is a micro-algae essential in all the essential vitamins, minerals and proteins—precisely 200x the proteins of beef—and is able to grow wherever there is sun and water. Cultivation of the algae is cost-effective, and as it travels in pill-form, Spirulina is easily transportable. IIMSAM aspires to make Spirulina a key-driver to eradicate malnutrition, achieve food security and bridge the health divide. Our initiatives have a special priority for the Developing and the Least Developed Countries; more specifically we aim to serve the traditionally marginalized groups of women and girl children.

Besides its nutritional value, it has shown efficacy in many pathological conditions both as a preventive and curative agent. Spirulina can overcome eye problems caused by Vitamin A deficiency. The protein and B-vitamin complex makes a major nutritional improvement in an infant's diet. It is the only food source, except for mother's milk, containing substantial amounts of an essential fatty acid GLA that helps regulate the entire hormone system. One tablespoon a day can eliminate iron anemia, the most common mineral deficiency.

Spirulina is the most digestible protein food, especially important for malnourished people whose intestines can no longer absorb nutrients effectively. Clinical studies have shown it

helps rebuild healthy intestinal flora. These health benefits have made it an excellent food for rapid recovery of children from malnutrition related diseases in Mexico, Togo, Romania, China, Rwanda Zaire, Ukraine, and Belarus.

Spirulina is being produced in more than 22 countries and used in over 77 countries.

The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) has confirmed that can be administered to children without any risk. Other proposed uses of Spirulina are for cancer prevention, fibromyalgia, hay fever, herpes infection, high cholesterol, hives, HIV infection, and liver protection.

In light of our Millennium Development promises to eradicate poverty, hunger and malnutrition, IIMSAM will soon be launching projects in Brazil, Ghana, Haiti, Honduras, Iraq, and India. I am very excited to inform you that the first phase of IIMSAM's Greenlife Project in Fallujah, Iraq, has now been completed.

I feel that is extremely important for delegations, NGOs and civil society to recognize the power of Spirulina and to utilize it for the benefit of those in need.

The UN has made great strides by passing Resolution 164, the Right to Food and I commend those who have made the efforts to secure its passage, but to eradicate hunger, is not to eradicate malnutrition. I ask you today to consider the **Right to Health** as a pathway to the **Right to Life**.

By giving women the tools needed to break the vicious cycle of poverty, we will be empowering them to be ACTIVE in the movement towards gender equality. As I recall the UN's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, I urge us all to remember that health is not a privilege, and to send the message that food will no longer be a tool for the powerful to dominate the weak.

Thank you.



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