

SYSTEMIC ANALYSIS

Systemic Analysis is one of several methods of analysis that assist us in understanding the social and economic reality of which we are a part. These types of analyses are not usually separate or discrete. Each in some way includes the other and in some way complements the other. Each is important. The fuller the understanding we have of our reality, the more effective our work will be. We need all of these analytic methods.

Structural Analysis - Examines the organizational patterns of roles and functions established within a society in order to fulfill the tasks needed for its survival and development. These include, among other facets of group life, the governance, maintenance, development and security of the group. The analysis includes the inter-relationships of these organizational patterns (including accountability patterns) within any level of society.

Social Analysis - Examines a present situation, looks at the history behind the situation, and examines how culture, ethnicity, race, class, economic and belief systems impact the situation.

Systemic Analysis - Examines the operational dynamics of the social and structural dimensions of society or group. The analysis includes, but is not limited to, the dynamics of power, voice, inclusion or exclusion, and consequent benefit or profit, harm or loss. It articulates the starting points one uses in analysis, and clarifies the consequences of using any particular starting point. CREA has developed many sets of analytic constructs that facilitate this kind of analysis. Using the constructs raises the level of the analysis beyond personalities and blaming, and focuses objectively on ways that systems may be improved.

CREA offers programs to train participants in systemic analysis. The constructs are also used in CREA's publications.

No single person or organization can answer all of the questions raised on the inside pages. For this reason, individuals and groups who are especially concerned about a particular facet of an issue form organizations to monitor and address the core questions. When these organizations are not-for-profit, they are usually supported by others who want to know and address the causes, but do not have the time to do the research themselves. CREA is a not-for-profit, faith-based 501(c)3 organization.

Listed below are some web sites that may be helpful to you as you search for opportunities to raise questions and to look for answers about the problem of hunger on our planet.

www.developmentgoals.org/Poverty.htm This UN site gives statistics on poverty and hunger and measures progress toward the Millennium Development Goals.

www.oxfamamerica.org/ Oxfam is a credible, international not-for-profit organization. Its website contains articles and reports on current issues. Its starting point is the effect of policies on the world's poorest communities.

www.twinside.org.sg/ Third World Network has reports and analyses that in some cases parallel the core issues laid out in systemic analysis of problems. The network's starting point is the effect of policies on third world countries.

www.actionaid.org/documents/power_hungry.pdf This report provides an excellent over-view of corporate consolidation in agribusiness.

www.usda.gov United States Department of Agriculture. This site has many sections that provide a good over-view of the federal support of U.S. agriculture. Keep in mind the three core issues of access, control and benefit while using the site.



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DEVELOPING A WAY TO THINK SYSTEMICALLY

When we are faced with the barrage of information, facts, and ideas that come at us, trying to figure out how to make sense of it all can be overwhelming. Do we look at isolated facts, get upset with them, and then realize that there are simply too many of them for us to respond to? Or do we realize that there is a way to assemble this information so that we can see patterns of behavior and patterns of response?

Learning to think systemically teaches us how to organize both what comes in by way of information or ideas and what needs to go out in terms of our ability to bring about change. Then, when we wish to respond, we can couple our desire with that of others and begin to see possibilities of positive change.

Thinking systemically requires that we be able to acquire a picture, in photos, in charts of how the pieces of information, ideas and facts fit together. When we see how this fact or issue fits into a broader picture, the effect of what we do in linking it with the efforts of others creates a synergy of actions, where the whole is greater than the addition of the parts.

For example, how many times have each of us heard about a child diagnosed with leukemia? We get calls asking for prayers. We think about how horrible it is and we do what we can to respond to the family's needs.

When we think systemically, however, we begin to realize that many of these requests for prayers and supports are coming from families who have all lived in a particular place at a particular time. We begin to see patterns. This moves us to look for causes in that particular location, and to think about what can be done to bring about the changes needed to remove those causes.

When we begin to act, we may discover that the causes involve many institutions and groups, for example, regulatory institutions that set the siting rules for factories or facilities with toxic emissions; governments that appoint

regulatory commission members; corporation whose campaign contributions provide access to the decision-makers and whose representatives may serve on the relevant committees; and communities who have or do not have the economic or political power to protest the siting of the facilities in their neighborhood. We organize the facts so that we see patterns emerging. We ask ourselves what the basic or core issues are with regard to these groups. These core issues form the tools for systemic analysis.

Three of these core issues are presented on the next pages: Access, Control, and Benefit.

- ◇ **Access.** The opportunity to participate, to make one's voice heard, and to acquire what is needed. Who has access?
- ◇ **Control.** The ability to determine the actions and the life situations of others. This ability may be exerted formally as in legal or governmental structures, or informally, as in various forms of coercion. Who has control?
- ◇ **Benefit.** The increase in wealth, or access to desired goods resulting from actions taken. Who benefits?

The questions raised are the guide to our investigation of the problem. We can ask them without having to know the answers; the answers we find will lead us to action. On the accompanying chart we raise these questions about food and hunger, and include groups and institutions whose actions affect the availability of food. The underlying question is not "Can I get my organic food?" but "Can everyone get the kinds of nutritious food they need?"



Women like those in the photo do over 50% of the agricultural work in their countries. Yet, how much access, control and benefit are theirs among the groups and institutions involved in food supply?

USING THREE OF THE CORE ISSUES —

Core Issue	Local Community	Consumer	Corporations
<p>Access</p> <p>Ability to participate, to make one's voice heard, and to acquire what is needed.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Can farmers use their own seed from a previous crop or do they have to buy corporation seeds each year ? How does the location of stores affect the ability of the local community to access food at reasonable prices? How much representation do small farmers or the local community have at decision-making levels? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How do wages/income limit consumers' access to food? How does the placement of stores affect consumers' access to food? How does the transportation system in a country affect consumers' access to food? Is reliable information available to consumers regarding use of Genetically Modified products? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What ways do corporations have to influence decisions about food in local, state and national government, and in national and international financial institutions? Are agribusiness leaders considered experts on issues of food? Are small farmers considered experts? Who is appointed to governmental commissions to study and make recommendations? How do the wages paid by the company and its suppliers affect people's access to food?
<p>Control</p> <p>Ability to determine one's own actions or the actions and life situation of others.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Does a local community retain control of new products developed from indigenous plants? Can a local community control the kind of plants introduced into their soil? Can a local community control the kinds of fertilizers used? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What power do consumers have regarding the availability and affordability of food? Does the availability of food and seed choices affect the power of consumers ? Farmers? How does the concentration of the food supply network into a few huge international companies affect the power of consumers and farmers? How does it affect local communities and local stores? Can local communities protect their environment? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How does the company influence the development of regulations and laws, especially patent laws, that affect it? How do patents awarded to companies give them control over types of food? How does a company determine where to place its products or locate its stores? How do shareholders influence corporate decisions ? Non-shareholders? How do environmentally polluting corporations affect food and water supply?
<p>Benefit</p> <p>Increase in wealth or access to desired good resulting from actions taken by oneself or others.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Are small farmers given fair price for their produce? What are the effects of the agricultural subsidies which enable US agribusinesses to sell products in other countries at below cost? What happens to a country's sustainability when farmers are forced to sell their land to developers who then sell the land at a profit for industrialization, e.g., in China? Or in the US? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How does benefit to consumers depend on where they live? Who benefits the most from the present arrangement of food supply? Who loses? Why is it that some countries increase benefits while others lose benefits? Is there a difference in distribution of benefits within countries? Why? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Who benefits the most when huge corporations control much of the food supply? Who loses?

DOING SYSTEMIC ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM OF HUNGER AND FOOD SUPPLY

Financial and Legal Institutions	Governments	Religious, Educational, Media & Other Cultural Institutions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What are the requirements for loans to farmers? What are the foreclosure processes? What conditions do insurance companies as land owners set for purchase of land? How does foreign ownership of land and/or facilities affect the influence of local farmers ? How much representation on financial and legal bodies is given to low-income farmers and consumers? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What is the role of campaign contributions and lobbyists in decisions of government with regard to food, farmers and food companies? How does the appointment of representatives of the financial and business world to government food commissions provide access to decision-making? Is proportionate representation given to small farmers? How do subsidies in one country affect farmers in countries without subsidies? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What role do these institutions play in creating attitudes that affect access to food and food policy-making? What role do these institutions play in the development of food policies? What role do these institutions play in the development of dissent from present policies? How are these institutions financially supported? Who has access to them and how is that determined?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What legislative actions are possible regarding control over food? What constraints are placed on farmers by conditions for IMF or World Bank Loans, e.g., changing crops from local food to export products? What rules of the World Trade Organization require opening markets to companies from other countries? What WTO rules regarding intellectual property rights apply to indigenous farmers? Who decides? Who controls these institutions? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What effect does the World Trade Organization, with its disciplines and regulations, have on the power of national and local governments? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways are the decision-makers of the society supported by the actions of these institutions? How do the government, corporate, and financial decision-makers affect the actions and policies of the religious, educational, media and other cultural institutions? Does the mainstream media provide the information needed to facilitate citizen participation in the decision-making regarding food supply and availability?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What losses do local communities sustain when financial aid institutions set conditions on specific loans that require reduction of social benefits? What losses do local communities sustain when financial institutions set conditions that require privatization of a country's assets? ...or when requirements include changing to export-oriented food production? In what ways do local communities benefit from the IMF and World Bank loans? Is the benefit equally distributed? Why or why not? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How do individuals in government benefit from their positions and decisions? How do governments ensure that policies and program benefit their people? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How do individuals and groups within in these institutions benefit from their decisions and actions? Who benefits? Who loses?

HOW DO WE READ THIS CHART?

How do we read the boxes in their respective rows? First, each box by itself, tells a specific story, invites us to a particular understanding.

Second, each row and each column provides additional understandings, a different way of analyzing the core issues. Lastly, the rows and columns intersect and, in each combination, provide us with sets of LENSES through which to examine the ideas, the information provided from so many sources.

NO ONE CAN EXPECT to be able to answer all these questions. Rather, the questions are sets of LENSES through which we must learn to read, listen, reflect and evaluate.

THE KEY IS TO BE WILLING TO QUESTION!