



Welcome

Goodbye and Hello

I was thinking of the words “goodbye” and “hello,” which provide the theme for this issue of *Sight and Life* magazine, and realize that they are often emotionally loaded words: we tend to see goodbyes as sad and hellos as happy.

If one looks at their etymology, it is fascinating. Hello, hallo or hullo (there are multiple spellings) dates back to c. 1400 and is considered to possibly come from “holla, hollo,” a shout to attract attention and demand that the listener should come to a stop or cease what he or she is doing. It is said to have gained popularity as a common greeting when Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone and it became necessary to have some form of greeting to use when answering it! Necessity is indeed the mother of invention. I loved the fact that telephone exchange operators used to be known as “hello girls.” As for goodbye, good bye or good-by (again, there are many forms), it seems simply to be a contraction of “God be with ye,” and dates from the late fourteenth century. It was used when someone was leaving, and its formation was influenced by the phrases “good day” and “good evening”.

How relevant this theme is to the magazine, as we enter the post-2015 era.

Goodbye to the Millennium Development Goals

Nutrition has come a long way since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) came into being in 2000 following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The eight goals meant that there was some level of focus of the world’s attention on the serious issues they aimed to address – poverty, hunger, gender equity, maternal and child health and HIV/AIDS, among others. Goals 1, 4 and 5 provided the nutrition community with a platform from which to proclaim their message and highlight the importance of nutrition.

It was a slow process, but nutrition has come to be recognized by the World Bank as being core to development, and we have seen its critical role underscored by the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet* and the respected Copenhagen Consensus. Nobel laureates, economists, high-profile politicians and even His Holiness the Pope have spoken up for nutrition. And now

we have the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, launched by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Irish Foreign Minister Micheál Martin, that has really generated attention, commitments and actions. So there was some sense of sadness as we said goodbye to the opportunity the MDGs gave nutrition – a sadness compounded by the harsh reality that the world did not achieve the goals that were set and that, despite some progress being made, there is much work left unfinished.

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“Nutrition has come a long way since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) came into being”

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Hello to the Sustainable Development Goals

Thus the “hello” to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and all that they mean for nutrition in the post-2015 era is also poignant. In the true meaning of the word, this injunction requires that we come to a stop or cease what we have been doing. It requires us to look back at what we have achieved and to be open about where, how and why we have failed. And then to move forward with innovations that attract new and revitalized attention and action for nutrition.

This issue of the magazine is filled with interesting reading that looks both backward (goodbye) and forward (hello). The infographic is a good place to start in internalizing the link between the SDGs and nutrition: it depicts how improved nutrition is at the heart of the SDGs, either as an essential input or as a positive outcome. The articles by Jessica Johnston and Jerome Singh address the ever relevant topics of transparency, accountability and ethics. The role of financing and engagement with the private sector is also covered. All these, together with Johann Jerling’s article on the need for investments in leadership development, drive home the message of how critical it is to do things differently in the post-2015 era if we are to succeed. It is also good to read how internships and graduate programs are developing the capacity of the up-coming generation – something we must nurture and develop.

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“We must do things differently in the post-2015 era if we are to succeed”

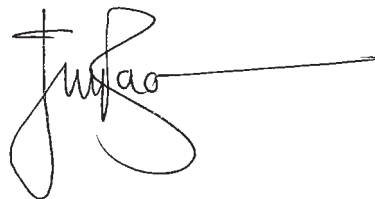
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The article by Stephen Kodish highlights why undertaking formative research before we jump into programs is crucial, as one size certainly does not fit all. We have to truly understand those for whom we are working; they cannot be a mere afterthought. The perspective by Zlotkin et al. is a wonderful reminder of the advances we have made in evidence-based interventions and yet how complex scale-up is in reality. And the article by Rob Arts and Christine Benn, with its two associated opinion pieces, reminds us that there will always be debate and

discussion on nutrition interventions, but that we must remain firmly grounded in scientific rigor and be careful when promoting policy changes.

At this point of “Goodbye, Hello,” there is little doubt in my mind that we must move from talk to action, from our focus on efficacy to a passion for scale-up and implementation. We must all become the telephone exchange operators for nutrition, like the “hello girls” of days gone by – the point where new ideas and ways of doing things are linked with new partners and programs. We also need to be the innovators. In the words of Alexander Graham Bell, *“Sometimes we stare so long at a door that is closing that we see too late the one that is open.”* So as we bid goodbye to the MDGs, let us say hello to the SDGs and all the opportunities they bring and, as Alexander Graham Bell also said, *“Concentrate all [our] thoughts upon the work at hand. The sun’s rays do not burn until brought to a focus.”*

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Badham', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jane Badham
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