

## Editorial

# 2009 – the year of solutions?

### Finances and food cost

During 2008 total havoc in the financial world and a tremendous rise in food prices coincided. As Josette Sheeran, executive director of the World Food Programme points out<sup>(1)</sup>, the effect of doubling of food cost is devastating for those living on \$US 1–2 per day or less. Livestock has been sold or eaten, vegetables have been cut out from the diet and several days without a proper meal is a reality for many. Among Dr Sheeran's suggestions for solutions we find safety-net systems, including insurances and risk-management products protecting against threats such as sky-rocketing food cost. This in order to provide a safe framework for healthy living. She also suggests a major investment in agriculture and agricultural research, providing support for an increased production of foods, especially in low-income countries. Dr Sheeran concludes on an optimistic note: that we can defeat hunger, if we pull together and act now.

### Disasters and war

Armed conflict and natural disasters are on top of the list of news from WHO this week, in the end of October 2008<sup>(2)</sup>. Peace negotiations and rapid response to threats seem like the most obvious solutions here. Rebel troops are gathered outside the city of Goma the day I write this and a major earthquake in Pakistan means 20 000 displaced individuals and large-scale human suffering. Including the environmental threats, climate change and the world stock market being so brittle, it is difficult to find room for optimism.

### Solution focus

Nevertheless, the optimist finds the solutions and that is what the world needs now. The task for this journal is to try to identify solutions and to contribute to the evidence base for what works. This journal provides a platform for solution-oriented public health nutritionists, showing how change towards food security and general nutritional

health can effectively be introduced even under harsh conditions. The journal can also, in parallel with an increased evidence base, lobby for investment in more action-oriented research on solutions to today's food and nutrition problems.

### More scope for discussion

*Public Health Nutrition* will remain a journal that publishes first-rate original research papers from all over the world. We are also committed to publishing commentary, news and reviews. Our discipline is necessarily political, in the general – and sometimes specific – sense of the word. Our job includes the encouragement of debate, including on contentious topics.

Accordingly, we have made some changes in our editorial pages. Our signed editorials remain here, at the front of the journal. We have strengthened the back of the journal, with a section that as from this issue will include regular and usually brief invited commentaries or reviews; our Out of the Box column; and reader's letters. This section is the place for debate. Once again, dear readers, we ask you to propose invited commentaries and to contribute letters for publication, both in response to what we publish and on issues you believe should be raised in the journal.

My best wishes for what will be a challenging New Year.

Agneta Yngve  
Editor-in-Chief

### References

1. Sheeran J (2008) High Global Food Prices – The Challenges and Opportunities. IFPRI Annual Report 2007–2008. [http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/books/ar2007/ar2007\\_essay02.asp](http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/books/ar2007/ar2007_essay02.asp) (accessed October 2008).
2. World Health Organization (2008) Medicines sent for 60 000 affected by DR Congo crisis; WHO warns of health risks in Pakistan. <http://www.who.int/en/> (assessed October 2008).