



INAUGURAL LECTURE



Professor Richmond Nii Okai Aryeetey

*BSc, MPH (University of Ghana); PhD (Iowa State University, USA)
Head, Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health*

Topic:

**Child Feeding for Human Health and Development:
Bridging the Know-Do Gap**

Date: Thursday, July 11, 2024

Time: 5.00 p.m.

Venue: Great Hall



VISION

Our vision is to become a
“world-class research-intensive University.”

MISSION

Our Mission is to create an enabling environment that makes University of Ghana increasingly relevant to national and global development through cutting-edge research as well as high quality teaching and learning.

VALUES

Integrity

We will demand the highest standard of ourselves to earn the trust of others.

Commitment

We will be committed to knowledge generation that positively impacts the lives of those within and outside our University community.

Respect

We will provide others with a world-class experience that demonstrates our value for the diversity and contributions of the members of our community.

Loyalty

We will demonstrate a strong resolve to give back selflessly to our University.





Inaugural Lecture

by

Professor Richmond Nii Okai Aryeetey

Topic:

Child Feeding for Human Health and Development:
Bridging the Know-Do Gap

Chairperson:

Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo
Vice-Chancellor

ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

- 4.30 p.m.
- Arrival/Seating of Guests
 - Procession
 - Welcome Remarks/
Introduction of Chairperson:
Mrs. Emelia N.K. Agyei-Mensah,
Registrar
 - Chairperson's Opening Remarks/
Introduction of Lecturer:
Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo
Vice-Chancellor
 - Appellation
 - Inaugural Lecture:
Professor Richmond Nii
Okai Aryeetey
 - Interlude
 - Presentations
 - Chairperson's Closing Remarks:
Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo
Vice-Chancellor
 - University Anthem
 - Recession
 - Reception

ABSTRACT

'You are what you eat' is a commonly quoted phrase when people think of diet. A healthy diet promotes optimal health and development. On the other hand, suboptimal diet can hurt you in more ways than you can imagine. Diet simply refers to what you eat and drink regularly as a lifestyle. It also relates to the habits and practices surrounding how you eat. Transitions in lifestyles, fuelled by rapid industrialisation, urbanisation, global trade, information access and other indicators of civilisation is creating a situation where unhealthy diets have become the norm. Indeed, there is a global pandemic of unhealthy diets.

The bad news is that, unhealthy diet is one of the leading risk factors driving the main causes of death, diseases and disabilities, including diseases like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and some cancers. Infants and young children are most vulnerable to unhealthy diets. In our part of the world, they suffer twice from unhealthy diets. During childhood, they experience undernutrition that is occasioned by suboptimal feeding. Across West Africa, about one-third or all children under 5 years are chronically malnourished. The suboptimal feeding in childhood and its resulting malnutrition, then physiologically programmes young children into adults, with a high risk for diet-related chronic diseases.

These young children have an even bigger challenge. They depend on their caregivers (mothers, fathers, grandmothers, others), to make the decisions that ensure that their diets are adequate for not only surviving childhood, but also to

grow, thrive and to contribute meaningfully to society. This is because when infant feeding goes wrong, it has implications not only for individual children and their families but also for the entire society.

A large part of my research and extension over the past two decades has focused on understanding the barriers to optimal infant and young child feeding. My expectation is that this evidence will serve as a basis for advocacy to improve the quality of the public health interventions that target young children. There is robust and consistent evidence that when children are exposed to appropriate ways of breastfeeding and subsequently complementing breast milk with appropriate nutrient-rich foods from the 6th month, in line with national and global recommendations, they, their mothers, their households and society benefit in many ways including reduced risk of disease, death, savings of revenue that will otherwise be spent for health care, improved learning abilities and enhanced productivity. However, despite the weight of the evidence related to these outcomes, as a nation, we have failed to ensure adequate feeding of our children.

Our failure is not due to the lack of effort to address this challenge. Indeed, several programmes and projects have been, and continue to be implemented, with much resources expended to address the multi-dimensional and hierarchical drivers of sub-optimal child diets. In this lecture, I utilise global evidence, as well as my own research to demonstrate why we have not been successful in addressing the challenge of child feeding. In outlining the barriers, I point to the irony of having access to all the evidence of what works (efficacy) and yet not being able to translate them into action. I will argue that this is partly a challenge of our institutional arrangements

regarding the delivery of services for ensuring optimal infant and young child feeding as well as our individual choices as caregivers of the children we love so much. I also underscore the complexity of delivering interventions in an increasingly urbanising population with diverse needs, and how important it is to enhance coordination across sectors in our governance system to meet the needs.

Between 2014 and 2018, I led multiple research projects in Ghana focusing on young child nutrition that provided evidence on how we can improve the diets of infants and young children. I will provide a brief synthesis of findings of these studies as a basis for bridging the know-do gap, to limit the current sub-optimal diets of Ghanaian children. Further, there are emerging challenges that must be recognised as well as novel solutions to infant and young child feeding that Ghana is yet to take advantage of. I will make reference to some of these as a basis for the recommendations that I will advance for improving infant and young child feeding in Ghana.



Professor Richmond Nii Okai Aryeetey

BSc, MPH (University of Ghana); PhD (Iowa State University, USA)
Head, Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health

PROFILE

Richmond Nii Okai Aryeetey is a Professor of Public Health Nutrition at the University of Ghana School of Public Health. He has over two decades of experience as a public health nutrition expert. He currently heads the Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health. He has previously served as Head of the Department of Biostatistics. He joined the School of Public Health as a Lecturer in 2007. Professor Aryeetey is a fellow of the African Nutrition Leadership Program (2008), the Yale University Global Health Leadership Institute (2009 and 2010), and the Brown University International Advanced Research Institute (2011). He is currently a Visiting Professor at University of Sheffield's Centre for Health and Related Research. Prior to joining the University of Ghana, he worked as a Research Assistant with the WHO Multicentre Growth Reference study at the university of Ghana and as Researcher Officer with the Dodowa Health Research Centre, District Health Directorate. In 2022, Professor Aryeetey was inducted into the fellowship of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Professor Richmond Aryeetey's interdisciplinary research intersects Human Nutrition, Public Health, Food Systems and Public Policy, across the entire life course. However, his work places much emphasis on the nutrition of young children, adolescents and women in reproductive age. His research interests focus on dietary intake, nutritional status of individuals and populations, food systems, diets, overweight and diet-related diseases. He is especially passionate about breastfeeding and complementary feeding of young children, and the drivers and barriers of young child feeding. His work has contributed to answering key questions about feeding of infants and young children. The nature of his work

has only been possible through collaborations with a wide network of partners across the globe including Sub-Saharan Africa, North America, Europe, and Asia.

Professor Aryeetey's work has incorporated a strong component of capacity building and mentoring. He has taught multiple courses at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, including Public Health Nutrition, Nutrition Rehabilitation Programmes, Malnutrition and Food security, Applied Nutrition, Nutrition for Public Health Programming, Child Growth and Development, School Health and Education and Health Surveillance Informatics. He also teaches Food security as a visiting Lecturer at University of Sheffield.

He has mentored several graduate and undergraduate students from multiple departments across the University of Ghana including the School of Public Health, Department of Nutrition and Food Science and Department of Dietetics, Regional Institute for Population Studies, University of Ghana Business School, Department of Sociology and School of Education and Leadership. Eight of his PhDs have successfully completed their programmes, and five more are in various stages of completion. He has also successfully mentored 55 master's degree students, and 15 undergraduate students.

Since 2018, Professor Aryeetey has led or co-led funded-mentoring programmes that have strengthened research and professional skills of PhD students and early career scientists. Funding from the Canadian Queen Elizabeth II Scholars Program, which he has led at University of Ghana, has benefitted more than 42 PhD students and Early Career Faculty from University of Ghana, UHAS, KNUST, UCC and institutions in other West African countries, including Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, and La Cote D'Ivoire. In

collaboration with University of Sheffield, Professor Aryeetey has co-led an educational and research exchange between University of Ghana and University of Sheffield under the ERASMUS+ mobility programme. As part of the ERASMUS programme, 12 faculty and staff of UG and 12 students visited and used laboratories and facilities at University of Sheffield on various research activities.

Professor Aryeetey has led multiple collaborative research grants. His research has attracted funding and resources from various funding agencies including the International Food Policy Research Institute, Family Larsson Rosenquist Foundation, European Commission, UNICEF Ghana, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, IMMANA, Population Council, IDRC and Global Affairs Canada.

The following are some of the grant-funded research that Professor Aryeetey has led as Principal Investigator or Country Lead investigator:

- Nutrished: Adapting Foodshed Analysis for Nutrition Security Planning (IMMANA, 2023-2025)
- Netlinks Mentorship Project (Universities Canada, 2022-2024)
- LINKin-Ghana Mentorship Project: (Universities Canada, 2018-2021)
- Breastfeeding Best Practices Intervention Framework (FLRF, 2020-2022)
- Operational Assessment Framework for Breastfeeding Intervention Evaluation (FLRF, 2024)
- Will #Breastfeed4Ghana go viral? Evaluating the dissemination and impact of the first breastfeeding social media marketing campaign in Ghana (ISRHML, 2017-2018)
- Becoming Baby Friendly Phase III (Yale University, 2018-2019)

- The 'Baby Friendly Country' Metric: Assessing Readiness and Progress with Scaling-Up of National Breastfeeding Programs (Yale University, 2016-2017)
- Using Trials of Improved Practices to Strengthen Infant and Young Child Feeding Programming in Ghana (UNICEF, Ghana 2017-2019)
- Stories of Change in Nutrition in Ghana (IFPRI, 2017-2019)
- Capacity Development for Evidence Review Phase of Food-Based Dietary Guidelines in sub-Saharan Africa (FAO, 2020-2022)
- Operational Research on Financial Literacy and Educational Incentive Program for Adolescent Girls in Ghana (Population Council, 2014-2016)
- Building sustainable Capacity for Research for Health in Africa (EU Commission, 2010-2013).

So far, his research and collaborative activities has attracted a cumulative investment of over 7 million US Dollars of external funding into the University of Ghana. His research has resulted in the publication of over 160 peer-reviewed journal articles, 5 book chapters, more than 30 peer-reviewed conference abstracts and several technical and policy reports.

Professor Aryeetey currently serves on the Editorial Boards of the following nutrition and food systems peer reviewed journals including Global Food Security, Maternal and Child Nutrition, Environmental Research: Food Systems, World Nutrition, and Academia Nutrition and Dietetics. He reviews manuscripts for leading journals in his field of expertise including PLOS One, Journal of Human Lactation, African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development and the Ghana Medical Journal.

Outside the University, Professor Aryeetey has served on various committees and boards in Ghana and externally. He

is currently a member of the WHO's Strategic and Technical Group of Experts (STAGE) on Children, Adolescents and Women's Health and Nutrition. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement as a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Expert. He has previously served as co-chair of the WHO Guidelines Development Group for Complementary feeding.

In Ghana, Professor Aryeetey has served on various national committees related to nutrition policy and programming including the SUN Cross-Sectoral Planning Group (CSPG), SUN Movement Technical Committee, the National Nutrition Partners Coordinating Committee, and the National Salt Iodization Committee. He is also a foundation member and Convenor of the Ghana SUN Academic Platform.

During his career, he has provided technical advice and participated in various processes to develop or revise national health and nutrition policies, strategies and guidelines. Some of the most recent policy processes that he has been involved in include the National Nutrition Policy, National Policy for Aflatoxin Control in Food and Feed, revision of the National Breastfeeding Promotion Legislation (LI 1667), National Strategy on the Elimination of Trans Fatty Acids from Ghana's Food Supply, and the Essential Nutrition Actions. More recently, he has co-led the development, pretesting and publication of Ghana's first Food-based Dietary Guidelines and its accompanying Food Systems Guidelines. He is currently co-leading a project supporting implementation of the Food-based Dietary Guidelines.

Professor Aryeetey is actively engaged with professional societies in his area of expertise. He is currently serving

as a council member on the Executive Committee of the International Society for Research in Human Milk and Lactation. Between 2011 and 2015, he served as Vice President of the Federation of African Nutrition Societies (FANUS), and then as its Acting President between 2016 and 2017. He is also a member of the American Society of Nutrition, the African Nutrition Society, the Ghana Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Ghana Science Association.

Professor Aryeetey has served on various boards and committees in the University of Ghana including Academic Board, Business and Executive Committee, School of Public Health School Management Committee, Consultancy and Field Practice Committee of the College of Health Sciences and Research Innovation and Development Management Board. He has also performed roles on various ad hoc committees including planning GUSA games, programmes/course development and UGRF proposals review. He has also been Sports Patron (Sports Directorate), Floor Tutor in Akafo Hall as well as Founder and first President of the Legon Swimming Club.

Professor Aryeetey is married to Mrs. Faustina Aryeetey and they are blessed with three children: David Nii Ayitey Aryeetey, Kevin Nii Ayikwei Aryeetey and Faustina Naa Ayele Aryeetey. In addition, their home is open to several young people under their mentorship and supervision. Professor Aryeetey is a Christian and a member of the Legon Interdenominational Church (LIC). He loves music and is a member of the LIC Choir. He also loves reading, travelling, art, architecture and sports. His love for sports is what drove him to establish the Legon Swimming Club in 2013. He also plays Tennis, Racket Ball, Table Tennis, and Pickle Ball.

UNIVERSITY ANTHEM



Hail University of Ghana
The nation's hope and glory
The place that bears the star of peace
That bids us all to do our best
Let the great Tower of learning
Inspire both young and old
May we proceed in unity to uphold the public cause.

//: Arise, arise O Legon
Defend the cause of freedom
Proceed in truth and integrity to make
Our nation proud: //

We ask for strength and wisdom
As we climb the hill of learning
May we excel in what'er we do
As we prepare to face the world
With a mind ready at all times
And a conscience quick to feel
May we proceed in unity to uphold the public cause.

//: Arise, arise O Legon
Defend the cause of freedom
Proceed in truth and integrity to make
our nation proud ://

(Prof. Emeritus J. H. Kwabena Nketia)
(1921-

2019)

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 16, 2024 1:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SRC Day with the Vice-Chancellor Venue: ISSER Conference Facility
July 17, 2024 10:00 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Launch of Strategic Plan (2024-2029) and Official Outdooing of<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research Policy• Revised Statutes• Manual on Human Resource Management and Administrative Policies and ProceduresVenue: Great Hall
July 18, 2024 4:30 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inter-College Lecture - College of Basic and Applied Sciences Topic: Can Soybean Production Contribute to Farming System Sustainability and Poverty Reduction in the Savannas of Northern Ghana? Venue: ISSER Conference Facility
July 19, 2024 3:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2024 Demo Day Student Venture Support Programme (SVSP) Venue: ISSER Conference Facility
July 25, 2024 5:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inaugural Lecture by Professor Michael Perry Kweku Okyerefo Topic: The Autobiographical Self as an Object for Sociological Enquiry Venue: Great Hall