

Interview „Students4Kids“: Prof. Gerd Assmann

Why do you personally feel the need to get involved in fighting malnutrition and Hidden Hunger?

Much of my commitment to fight Hidden Hunger is based on my past as a physician: I know from personal experience, what kind of impact a healthy, diverse and micronutrient-rich diet during early childhood has on maintaining health and well-being for the rest of your life.

Working in medical prevention, it becomes quickly apparent that improving ones quality of life and increasing life expectancy largely comes down to a healthy and sustained diet throughout the entire life.

What you do think is most important to successfully counteract Hidden Hunger?

Knowing when to counteract Hidden Hunger and realizing the negative implications of malnutrition is key to this. A shortage of micronutrients in the first 1.000 days of life, including the nine months of pregnancy, can be devastating to the proper development of basic body functions and the genetic code does not even get a chance to does it's work properly. Even if one improves his diet significantly later in life: these early restrictions and consequences can never be fully remedied.

Why did you decide to turn to universities instead of regular schools after the successful competitions with “Teens4Kids”?

When we decided to pass the relay from schools (Teens4Kids) to universities (Students4Kids), practical considerations were the main concern. Students who are constantly in touch with Hidden Hunger during their studies or are already involved with corresponding research, develop a broad knowledge base, awarding them with a more in-depth understanding and therefor well-founded ideas and solutions. Additionally, our partner F.A.Z. has a long-time experience organizing student competitions and a well-developed network in universities. Nonetheless, we are always happy to see innovative ideas by students or school classes.

What impressed or amazed you the most during the Students4Kids competition 2016?

The sheer abundance of well-developed ideas and the selfless enthusiasm to stay on track over a long period of time, constantly improving and enriching their own work – that was inspiring. Not only did we receive incredibly diverse ideas, ranging from interesting approaches to educate Zambians on a more healthy diet to new way of improving the local availability of highly nutritious foodstuffs, almost all of them were extremely well thought-out and could have been implemented more or less on the spot. During the development of their initial ideas towards an comprehensive concept, we were always in close contact with the teams and more and more amazed and surprised at their tireless work and excitement, if not zeal, to create the best possible solution for our competition, regardless of the place and time zone they were currently working from.

What's your advice for the new teams joining the competition this year?

Hold to your conviction, that your ideas and concepts can be decisive and critical to overcome one of the greatest challenges for mankind: food security and a healthy diet for every human being. Take up our foundations offer to support you, be it with information, advice or hands-on action.