

# The Need for Professional Training in Nutrition Education and Communication



Federal Ministry  
of Food, Agriculture and  
Consumer Protection

## FINAL REPORT



**FAO-BMELV Project GCP/INT/109/GER:  
“Training Needs Analysis:  
Course in Nutrition Education, Including e-learning”**

**NUTRITION, EDUCATION AND CONSUMER AWARENESS GROUP  
NUTRITION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION (AGN)**

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## SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS AND WEBSITE REFERENCES

The following supplementary project output documents are included in this folder.

### DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW:

- NEAC needs in the literature
- NEAC training needs in the literature

### DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE COUNTRY CASE STUDIES:

- NEAC country case studies report
- Country surveyors
- Graphs from the questionnaires

### DOCUMENTS RELATING TO FUTURE COURSE DEVELOPMENT:

- Course outlines (also used in the case studies)
- Project proposal

Other project output documents and outputs mentioned in this report are to be found on the project website ([www.nutritionlearning.net](http://www.nutritionlearning.net)) and are linked to the website's front page at <http://www.nutritionlearning.net/moodle1/course/view.php?id=5&username=guest>

## ACRONYMS

ADA	American Dietetic Association
AGND	Nutrition education and consumer awareness group, FAO
AMREF	African Medical and Research Foundation
BCC	Behaviour change communication
CBC	Communication for behaviour change
IEC	Information, education and communication
IT	Information technology
IYCF	Infant and young child feeding







LIDC	London International Development Centre
LMS	Learning management system
MCH	Mother and child health
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
NEAC	Nutrition education and communication
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PLWHA	Persons living with HIV/AIDS
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education



## A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

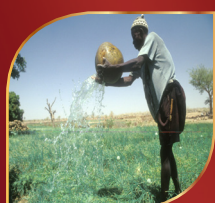
In the course of the activities it became clear that existing nomenclature was confusing. One difficulty is that education activities in nutrition go by many different names (e.g. health promotion, awareness-raising, social marketing, information, education and communication (IEC), communication for behaviour change (CBC), demonstrations, behaviour change communication (BCC), community counselling and even, occasionally, nutrition education), each associated with different educational models, formats, processes, settings, ideologies and institutional loyalties. Another difficulty is that “nutrition education” is often taken to mean “learning about nutrition” rather than learning better dietary practices or helping people to improve their diets.

The project adopted “nutrition education and communication” (NEAC) to refer to this kind of nutrition education, in line with a well-known definition of functional nutrition education

**“Nutrition education and communication” (NEAC)** here means whatever gets people to improve their own health and others’ by eating better, through discussion, demonstration and practice. NB In NEAC we do not include technical training in nutrition science.

**Nutrition educators** are those who “do” NEAC: teachers, counsellors or facilitators who get people to improve their own health and others’ through eating better.

**Nutrition education training (NEAC training)** is the professional skills education needed to become a good nutrition educator, i.e. training in what effective NEAC is and how to do it (plan, promote, implement and evaluate).



as “any set of learning experiences designed to facilitate the voluntary adoption of eating and other nutrition-related behaviours conducive to health and well-being” (ADA 1996).

The definitions and explanations in the box below were developed for the project and used throughout the project activities. Nevertheless, there remained some confusion among project participants, not to mention in the world at large, between direct NEAC, NEAC training, and academic instruction in nutrition science.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> An alternative for the future is to replace these terms with the acronym EN-ACT: Education for effective Nutrition in ACTION. This makes clear the distinction between learning about nutrition and acting to improve dietary practice, and can embrace any form of action, at any level, which is effective in producing results. It includes activities in three spheres: political, academic and community, bringing together under one umbrella advocacy, education and in-service training, as well as direct community action.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Effective education is a key factor in improving nutrition and health, yet nutrition education continues to be overlooked in health and food security interventions, and is often weak or absent in professional training. In response to this gap, the “Nutrition Education and Communication” (NEAC) project was initiated by FAO’s Nutrition Education and Consumer Awareness Group (AGNDE), Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division (AGND) in September 2010 to assess the need for professional training in NEAC, with a focus on Africa. This assessment is seen as a preliminary to developing one or more learning modules in nutrition education and communication to be made available both locally and internationally.

The main assumptions underpinning FAO’s initiative are that, first, there is a demonstrable need for *more NEAC* to improve diet and dietary practices; second, there is a need for *more effective NEAC*, based on empirical evidence; and finally, there is therefore a need for *more, and more effective, NEAC training* in how best to promote healthy diets and good eating habits.

The needs assessment aimed to:

- review the literature and develop (a) models of effective NEAC and NEAC training content, approaches and best practices, (b) course outlines;
- review the NEAC training available both nationally and internationally;
- explore the need and demand for effective NEAC and NEAC training in Africa through a set of country case studies, looking at existing practices, attitudes, achievements and constraints in Botswana, Ghana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria and Tanzania;
- prioritise target groups and settings for NEAC training, national and international;
- identify suitable delivery methods and platforms (online, face-to-face or blended);
- identify suitable future partners in course development and trialling of materials;
- develop a proposal for course development;

**The literature review** summed up the evidence of the functional value of NEAC and NEAC training in two review documents. Each included guidelines for design and implementation:

- for “good NEAC”, a process diagram integrating the essential features of current models; lists of attested strategies for successful NEAC; and appropriate processes in formative research, learning design and evaluation;
- for “good NEAC training”, a checklist of recommended features, covering the design process, learning outcomes, curriculum and methodology.





These guidelines were used in developing the course outlines proposed in the case study surveys.

**The course search and analysis** focused on obtaining information about NEAC training available in Africa and internationally, to show accessibility and prevalent learning models. Although much interesting material was found and catalogued, there were difficulties in finding directly relevant courses or enough key information on courses to assess whether they met the criteria for “good NEAC training”. One conclusion is that if it is difficult for a dedicated team to track down relevant and accessible training it must be even more difficult for a student. The analysis is continuing.

**The country case studies** In each country a “surveyor” interviewed 14 to 20 national experts in universities, training institutions, ministries and projects, most of whom were themselves NEAC educators or trainers. They also gathered data from NEAC trainees and briefly surveyed national media coverage of nutrition issues. Each produced a report collated from the responses.

The reports consistently endorsed a strong need for NEAC and NEAC training, noting that:

- NEAC has a very low profile in national consciousness, the media, national policy and strategy, institutions, capacity building, agriculture, food security interventions, school curricula and the education of health professionals. Apart from normative MCH and IYCF counselling in the health service, NEAC activities are largely uncoordinated and there is little inter-sectoral collaboration. However there are signs of growing interest at all levels;
- standard NEAC approaches are largely top-down and one-way, and effectiveness is rarely assessed. A few innovative programs were reported involving demonstration, community mobilization, participatory needs analysis, and passing on learning;
- NEAC training is rare, sometimes non-existent. In university degrees it may be a small element (often elective), almost always with an academic lecture-based approach; in-service NEAC training is mostly occasional or ad hoc, designed for specific interventions. There are almost no qualified instructors and the design framework generally lacks formative research and evaluation. In some places, however, NEAC training for extension workers is under way;
- groups most in need of NEAC were said to be (in order) pregnant women and mothers, schoolchildren and the general population. Those most in need of NEAC training were health professionals, school teachers and extension workers in agriculture and community health.

The reports indicated a general consensus on desirable curriculum content, on the need for a practical work-oriented skills-based approach and on the importance of cross-sectoral

participation. Three proposed courses attracted almost equal support: an undergraduate/basic NEAC course; a postgraduate/in-service course with a management emphasis; and an extension course. Several suggested that capacity needs might best be met through a framework of all three, which would extend and reinforce each other.

**Target groups, platforms and partners** All case study respondents preferred a blended learning format: some distance-learning (on CD) and some face-to-face instruction. The project also found a developing international market in online learning for health professionals at all levels. To meet both needs, course provision needs to be adaptable to most formats: online or face-to-face; self-study, group study or formal courses. Guidelines and training on the adaptation of materials to different contexts should be available.

Possible future partners, national, regional and international, were identified for trialling course materials and eventual adoption of courses, and for developing and permanently hosting a related training of trainers course.

**Discussion and conclusions** The threads of the needs assessment came together to demonstrate that NEAC is of critical value in improving nutrition status, that NEAC training is needed to make it effective, and that both are lacking. Professional skills training resources are needed which will produce competent practitioners capable of handling NEAC effectively in all local settings. These resources should be comprehensive, adaptable, action-oriented, skills-based, economical, accessible and widely available.

Although capacity building evidently requires training at several levels, the least problematic entry point was felt to be the undergraduate-level module, which can also be offered independently as a course in BASIC NEAC. In addition, the essential cross-sectoral orientation will mean making some training in basic nutrition available to non-nutritionists, and there will also need to be some training of trainers to enrich existing “information transmission” approaches. A project proposal incorporating these and other elements has been made.







# CHAPTER 1.

## INTRODUCTION

Effective education is an important factor in improving nutrition and health; however, nutrition education continues to be overlooked in health and food security interventions, and is often weak or absent in professional training. In response to this gap, the “Nutrition Education and Communication” (NEAC) project was initiated by FAO’s Nutrition Education and Consumer Awareness Group (AGND) in September 2010 to assess the need for professional training in NEAC, with a focus on Africa. This assessment is seen as a preliminary to developing one or more learning modules in nutrition education and communication to be made available both locally and internationally.

### 1.1 THE ASSUMPTIONS

The main assumptions underpinning FAO’s initiative are that:

- *There is a great need for more NEAC* Nutrition education enhances the impact of nutrition and food security interventions and is often critical to their success. Long-term nutrition education develops popular capacity to make good dietary choices and builds self-reliance.
- *There is a need for more effective NEAC* Much “education” in healthy eating, based on inadequate concepts of how practices change, has failed. These concepts remain widespread in the related professions, while inadequate evaluation and impact assessments perpetuate failure. At the same time, a growing body of research and practical experience is demonstrating the factors that make for long-term success in improving dietary habits. Organized nutrition learning needs to take account of this in its design and methodology.
- *There is therefore a need for more, and more effective, NEAC training* Many of those who are charged with promoting healthy eating have no training as “nutrition educators” and often their induction consists mainly of learning about nutrition, or sometimes about communication theory. To build countries’ capacity for tackling nutrition issues, there is a need for professional training in how to promote healthy diets and eating habits.

(See also [Rationale](#) on the project website.<sup>1</sup>)



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nutritionlearning.net/moodle1/course/view.php?id=5&username=guest>





## 1.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the needs assessment were to:

- explore the need and demand for effective NEAC and NEAC training in Africa, looking at existing practices, attitudes, achievements and constraints;
- develop models of effective NEAC and NEAC training content, approaches and best practices to act as assessment yardsticks and as a basis for eventual curriculum and course development;
- review the NEAC training available both nationally and internationally, its accessibility, probable effectiveness, and applicability to learners in developing countries;
- identify and prioritise target groups and settings for NEAC training, national and international;
- identify suitable delivery methods and platforms (online, face-to-face or blended);
- identify suitable partners in course development and trialling of materials;
- develop a project proposal for course development, with (a) provisional course outline(s).

## 1.3 ACTIVITIES

The needs assessment was carried out from September 2010 to June 2011 by a team of five consisting of the FAO team leader, three part-time consultants and an intern.

The main activities were:

- conducting exploratory interviews with experts and possible partners;
- carrying out a literature review;
- collecting and analysing available courses and learning materials;
- developing course outlines;
- carrying out case studies in African countries;
- drafting a project proposal for course development.

Supporting activities were:

- setting up a work sharing and promotion website, using Moodle software, which has the potential to be developed into a learning platform;
- establishing databases for the literature and course information/materials;
- writing reports and support documents.

# CHAPTER 2.

## THE QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED

The specific questions to be explored in the needs assessment were:

### 2.1 THE NEED FOR NUTRITION EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION (NEAC)

#### GENERAL

a) *Is there a demonstrable need for NEAC?*

- as a complement/support to other nutrition, health and food security interventions;
- independently, as opposed to other ways of improving nutrition.

#### LOCAL

b) *What importance/value is given to NEAC within countries? - as evidenced by:*

- the profile of NEAC in national food security, health and education policy;
- the importance given to NE by national movers and shakers;
- its presence in projects/programmes of different kinds (nutrition, food security, health promotion);
- its presence in school and teacher education curricula;
- its presence in professional training for various groups;
- its profile in undergraduate and postgraduate education (health, agriculture, nutrition, education);

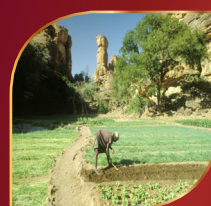
c) *In which groups and settings is NEAC mainly focused?*

d) *What are the problems?*

### 2.2 THE NEED FOR MORE EFFECTIVE NEAC

#### GENERAL

- what is effective NEAC? – i.e. what is the yardstick?
- what are the criteria for assessing effectiveness of NEAC interventions? (e.g. biological effects, knowledge gain, changes in practice, long-term understanding/nutrition literacy, sustainability of these effects)?
- what are the prevailing models of NEAC and how well do they work in terms of these criteria?
- what are the generic features and the core processes of effective NEAC?
- what is the essential design process?





### **LOCAL**

- a) *How effective is current NEAC?*
  - what NEAC approaches are prevailing in the countries surveyed? Are they likely to be effective?
  - what evaluation has been carried out?
  - how are prevailing NEAC approaches perceived by planners/educators/targets?
  - is there a need for paradigm change?
- b) *what are the problems?*

## **2.3 THE NEED FOR MORE AND MORE EFFECTIVE TRAINING IN NEAC**

### **GENERAL**

- (a) *What are the generic features and the essential design of effective NEAC training? (models, best practices)*

### **LOCAL**

- (a) *What NEAC training is being done, where, by whom and for whom?*
- (b) *What is the quality of existing NEAC training? How fit to purpose? What needs strengthening?*
- (c) *Who should be trained? Which professional groups have most influence on the nutritional behaviour and outlook of the population?*
- (d) *What demand is there for more and better NEAC training?*

## **2.4 THE NEED FOR NEW COURSES**

### **GENERAL**

- (a) *What NEAC training is available nationally and internationally?*
  - how does it measure up to the criteria and best practices?
  - how suitable is it for developing country professionals? (fit to context, accessible)
  - is there a general need for new NEAC training courses?

### **LOCAL**

- (a) *What NEAC training courses are most needed within the countries?*
- (b) *What kind of support is needed? (e.g. attitudes, policy, funding) What advocacy is needed?*
- (c) *What are the problems?*

### **BOTH GENERAL AND LOCAL**

- (a) *What partnership arrangements can be set up?*
- (b) *What format/platform/delivery systems will work best?*

# CHAPTER 3.

## DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Some considerations which shaped the project's approach were:<sup>2</sup>

- a focus on university courses, including modules in undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and professional in-service training at management and extension levels;
- a hierarchy of needs: for better nutrition; for more effective nutrition education (NEAC); and for effective NEAC training (educating the educators);
- the need to address multi-sectoral settings (health, education, agriculture);
- the importance of focusing on working practices, looking at what is done and what is recommended;
- the effect of national awareness, policy, strategy and capacity on NEAC provision;
- allowing for both national and international provision and delivery possibilities.

The main activities are described below. For more detailed information see the [project website](#)<sup>3</sup> and the Supplementary Documents linked to this report. The findings are outlined in Section D.

### 3.1 PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEWS

A short preliminary questionnaire was devised as a general probe (see project website: [INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE](#))<sup>4</sup> and circulated to several events and associations. Although few replies were received, they helped to establish further contacts and the answers confirmed that NEAC training was not widespread. Telephone interviews were carried out with academics and course providers to get background orientation and details of existing courses, identify suitable countries for case studies and possible surveyors, and explore partnership possibilities (see [SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS](#) on the project website).

### 3.2 THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND COURSE OUTLINES

The literature review aimed to explore global needs for NEAC and NEAC training, identify best practices and develop templates of recommended NEAC approaches and NEAC training. It was also useful for identifying potential course resources and relevant organizations.

<sup>2</sup> For some models and terms of formative research, see MODELS OF FORMATIVE RESEARCH in REFERENCE DOCUMENTS on the project website <http://www.nutritionlearning.net/moodle1/course/view.php?id=5&username=guest>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nutritionlearning.net/moodle1/course/view.php?id=5&username=guest>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nutritionlearning.net/moodle1/course/view.php?id=5&username=guest>





A search was carried out (for details see project website: [Questions, search terms, databases and journals](#)). Important points were gathered into five summaries (see website: [Summary reports on the literature](#)). This literature and other relevant materials were then reviewed in order to produce:

- a review of NEAC theory and practice, with a template of generally approved processes and features (see Supplementary Document [NEAC NEEDS IN THE LITERATURE](#) in this folder);
- a review of “ideal” NEAC training, with a checklist of desirable features (see Supplementary Document [NEAC TRAINING NEEDS IN THE LITERATURE](#) in this folder);
- four course outlines, based on the principles and practices identified, to be proposed to the case study respondents (an undergraduate-level module, a postgraduate/in-service course with a management orientation, an extension course and an advocacy workshop) (see Supplementary Document [Course Outlines](#) in this folder).

By-products of the review (information about course resources, organizations active in the field, important websites etc.) were collected in the website glossary for future reference.

### 3.3 THE COURSE SEARCH

The course search focused on obtaining information about available NEAC training in Africa and internationally, to show what is typically available and accessible, what learning models are most prevalent and (hence) how effective such training is likely to be.

A web search was carried out to find university degrees in nutrition or allied subjects (Home Economics, Health Promotion, Community Health) with NEAC elements. Internationally the search was limited to courses targeting developing countries, including those developed by major NGOs and aid agencies. Follow-up e-mail and telephone contacts were made to obtain further information on resources (see [Review of literature and training courses: Methodology](#) on the project website).

The materials gathered were entered in a database and then analysed. This process is not yet complete, but some general findings have emerged (see Chapter 4).

### 3.4 THE COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

Case studies were carried out in seven African countries (Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria and Tanzania) during February-April 2011. The studies aimed to explore the need for NEAC and NEAC training, looking at nutrition interventions, ongoing NEAC activities, NEAC training and perceptions of needs (see [Country case studies](#) on the project website).

**Choice of format, surveyors and countries** For reasons of cost and coverage, the format chosen was a “dispersed expert consultation”: a surveyor in each country carried out interviews with local experts, gave a questionnaire to NEAC trainees, reviewed one week’s media coverage for nutrition issues, and produced a report. Surveyors were selected





on the basis of their wide knowledge of their country's nutrition issues and activities, their reliability in communications and their personal interest in developing NEAC training (a list can be found in [Country Surveyors](#) in this folder). With supplementary funds from FAO, the number of countries was extended from three to seven to get a more representative picture, with a good spread in terms of size, relative wealth and geographical distribution.

**The survey protocol** The survey documents developed were an interview questionnaire, including four notional course outlines; a questionnaire for students; a Surveyor's Guide; a briefing sheet for informants; and a report form to guide surveyors (see [COUNTRY CASE STUDY SURVEY DOCUMENTS](#) on the project website). It is hoped to revise these documents and make them available for use in other countries which wish to carry out a relatively inexpensive needs analysis.

**Interviews** Each country surveyor selected for interview:

- two key informants with an overview of national nutrition issues
- relevant officials from the ministries of health, agriculture and education
- as far as possible, four "nutrition educators" and four "NEAC trainers" for information about specific learning activities (not all countries could find enough of either group).

The interviews covered the following ground:

- A Background and overview: nutrition issues and interventions; history of NEAC
- B The need for nutrition education
- C/D How NEAC is being done: common processes and approaches; specific programs
- E The need for NEAC training
- F/G How NEAC training is being done: general perceptions of processes and approaches; specific programs
- H NEAC training: desirable content and approach
- J NEAC training needed
- L Further participation: interest in participating in course development.

**Piloting, monitoring and troubleshooting** The draft questionnaires were piloted on a small sample at FAO HQ and were circulated to prospective surveyors for comments. The first interview by each surveyor was posted on site as a model for others. The website forum and e-mail was used for monitoring and troubleshooting, with each member of the NEAC team responsible for two or more of the surveyors.

**Country backgrounds and NEAC issues** The project team contributed by researching nutrition and NEAC activities in the survey countries (see [Country Background](#) on the project website). A number of NEAC issues were also posted on the project website forum. Surveyors were asked to initiate a forum discussion and to encourage interviewees and students to take part.

**Revision of reports; extra documentation; summary of findings** Surveyors' final reports were read and commented by the project team, revised by surveyors, edited and posted on the website. The completed questionnaires were returned to the project team, who entered the data in a database. A conflation of all the case study reports was produced (see Supplementary Document [NEAC Country Case Studies Report](#) in this folder).



### 3.5 SEARCH FOR PARTNERS

The needs assessment looked for possible future “piloting partners”, both national and international, for trialling materials and eventual adoption of courses. At national level, questions were included in the survey interviews about which proposed courses would be most valuable to the respondent’s institution, and what participation respondents were interested in. Potential international partners were sought among online course providers dealing with work-oriented, practice-based training for health professionals in developing countries, especially those with modular programs which could accommodate an extra or alternative module. Other criteria considered were:

- good contacts with appropriate markets;
- an established reputation in health education for developing countries;
- IT expertise;
- experience in materials development for effective professional skills training;
- efficient administration for organizing piloting and feedback;
- willingness to discuss and experiment.

A well-known regional partner was also sought for developing and permanently hosting a related training of trainers course during the next phase of the project, and generally to act as a regional centre for NEAC capacity development once the project is over, through providing courses, training trainers, running curriculum development workshops or advocacy events, and possibly developing further courses for other target groups.

The partners identified are discussed in 4.4.

### 3.6 RESEARCH INTO COURSE DELIVERY PLATFORMS

Recognizing the attractions and the obstacles of distance-learning (DL), the needs analysis looked into its feasibility and effectiveness in the African context. The study considered several forms of DL:

- paper-based, as in traditional correspondence courses, still in use in Africa
- offline e-learning, similar to paper-based, with learning materials on CD-ROM or USB drive
- online learning with internet, in Africa often through an internet point, in a student resource centre, or through mobile devices (“m-learning”)

Distance learning and face-to-face learning are seen not as alternative modalities but as lying on a continuum of various forms of “blended learning” (SAIDE 2000).

**Questions explored** were the state of connectivity, the level of internet use, the reliability and coverage of electricity supply, the level of computer literacy of teachers and learners, DL formats in current use in Africa, and the acceptability/attraction of distance learning. Also explored was the existing international market in on-line education for health professionals.

**Approaches adopted were:**

- assistance learning materials currently in use in Africa were collected: for example, AMREF provided Units 6 (Health Education, Promotion & Counselling) and 7 (Nutrition) of their Child Health Course. Other courses reviewed are listed on the project website;
- in all preliminary interviews, informants were asked to give their personal opinions and experience of distance learning in Africa;
- a section of the country case studies questionnaire gathered informants' views on the feasibility of different forms of face-to-face and distance learning, including capacity and preferences.

### 3.7 DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT WEBSITE

A project [website](http://www.nutritionlearning.net) ([www.nutritionlearning.net](http://www.nutritionlearning.net)) using the Moodle open-source LMS software was created in September 2010 as a work-sharing site for the NEAC team. The site was made public in January 2011 with the working discussions hidden and linked to the official FAO website on 24 March ([HTTP://WWW.FAO.ORG/AG/HUMANNUTRITION/NUTRITIONEDUCATION/69725/EN/](http://www.fao.org/ag/humannutrition/nutritioneducation/69725/en/)).

The website supported the project activities in a variety of ways. It was used in particular for group working, via the use of the wiki facility for collaborative document writing, for communication with country surveyors via the forums, as an archive for minutes of meetings and working records and to display information and advocacy materials. Moodle, which is designed for educational use, is particularly rich, flexible and easy to handle, and has further potential for advocacy, delivering courses and supporting course development work. For some data on public access to the website see 4.6.



# CHAPTER 4.

## MAIN FINDINGS

Some of the data from the questionnaires can be found in [Graphs from Questionnaires](#) (in this folder).

### 4.1 LITERATURE REVIEW: WHAT DOES THE LITERATURE SAY?

#### NEAC NEEDS IN THE LITERATURE

The evidence of the need for nutrition education and communication, as represented in the literature, is presented in the Supplementary Document [NEAC Needs in the Literature](#) (in this folder), of which the following is a summary.

**The need for nutrition** It is increasingly recognized that good nutrition is essential to development, yet nutrition has been poorly funded, thinly represented in public health courses and qualifications, and has had a low profile in government policy, strategy and national capacity, and in food security interventions.

**The need for NEAC** The value of education in tackling nutrition issues is strongly supported by the literature, both as a complement to other interventions and as a stand-alone alternative to other ways of improving nutrition status. NEAC has been found critical in food security initiatives, in direct nutrition interventions such as food supplementation and food fortification, while well-conducted NEAC is effective both on its own and embedded in normal health care routines. Yet there is a paucity of NEAC activities worldwide in all sectors (health, education, agriculture).

**The need for more effective NEAC** Broadly, the literature discusses three models or approaches:

- **Knowledge-based approaches** Pure information delivery, which is the least effective instructional strategy for promoting dietary change, remains the most common approach in nutrition education.
- **Behaviour change approaches** aim to develop practical behavioural messages and to spread them wide. Social marketing focuses on formative research, development and dissemination of appropriate messages for a segmented audience. Behaviour change communication (BCC) has been extensively operationalised and evaluated and has opened up social and participatory dimensions.
- **Health promotion** has provided some defining principles for a parallel evolution in nutrition education, emphasising self-determination, life skills, participatory approaches, the need for a conducive policy environment and supportive networks to encourage and sustain behavioural changes.







**Generic features and core processes of effective NEAC** Since the main behaviour-oriented movements in NEAC have strong shared interests, it is possible to assemble a common core. The following three protocols were developed from the literature review and were used to determine questions asked in the country case studies. They can also be used in curriculum development and as checklists for assessment of NEAC interventions:

- a process diagram integrating the main essential features of current models;
- lists of empirical “meta-strategies” for success in NEAC;
- appropriate economical and user-friendly design processes in formative research, learning design and evaluation.

#### *NEAC TRAINING NEEDS IN THE LITERATURE: A CHECKLIST*

The separate document [NEAC training needs in the literature](#) (in this folder) reports on opinions in the literature on what kind of NEAC training is needed to ensure that NEAC will be effective and sustainable. The main findings were assembled into a summary checklist of recommended features of NEAC training, summarized below. The checklist formed the basis for some of the questions in the country case study questionnaires and for the evaluation of available NEAC training courses and materials, and will be a formative element in curriculum design.

### **4.1.1 SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR GOOD NEAC TRAINING**

**General framework** The course should have an applied orientation, draw on theories and experiences of work-related learning and be seen as a behaviour change intervention.

**The course design process** should include needs assessment, objectives, evaluation and revision and should align learning objectives and activities. The situation analysis should explore aspects of audience, work and context. These enquiries should also be pursued by the learners, so that the analysis is ongoing and participatory.

**Objectives/learning outcomes** should:

- reflect capacity needs across several sectors;
- reflect the challenges of the working situation;
- respond to existing professional knowledge, attitudes and practices, with special attention to misconceptions and unproductive practices;
- aim at working competence, i.e. expert practice, and express action/practice targets
- include communication objectives (e.g. counselling skills, advocacy);
- be discussed, understood and agreed at the beginning of the course and during it.

**Course content/curriculum** Target competences may include these capacities:

- understanding nutrition issues and own nutrition context; recognizing challenges and ways of tackling them;
- recognizing the need for NEAC in relevant settings; evaluating NEAC activities;
- developing curriculum; designing and managing NEAC programs and training others to do so;
- developing NEAC policy and advocating for NEAC;



- being familiar with the field of nutrition education and its best practices;
- understanding and applying social concepts, principles of behavioural learning, and principles of adult learning;
- participating in communities of practice.

## 4.2 COUNTRY CASE STUDIES: WHAT IS THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND?

### BACKGROUND

The country case studies took place in Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, over a two-month period in early 2011. These studies formed an integral part of the complete NEAC needs assessment project and surveyors were carefully selected to carry out the assignment (see Supplementary Document [Country Surveyors](#) in this folder).

Seven country case study reports were produced along with a final report which provides a unified account of the seven countries. Findings are fully reported in the individual country reports on the website and the [NEAC Country Case Studies Report](#) (in this folder). Tables from some of the data gathered from the questionnaires can be found in [Graphs from Questionnaires](#) (in this folder). The following summary outlines the objectives, the main findings and the associated challenges.

### OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the country case studies were to understand better who needs NEAC training and by whom it could and should be done; and how, specifically, to explore needs relating to NEAC and NEAC training in order to:

- assess the need for more and better NEAC, and hence the need for more and better NEAC training;
- gather opinions on what kind of training is most needed and for whom;
- collect suggestions for course content and approach;
- collect perceptions of desirable format and delivery;
- identify institutions interested in using some of the possible products;
- identify experts interested in helping to develop the course by providing information, experience and case material, reviewing the materials and (possibly) piloting them.

### MAIN FINDINGS

Surveyors and respondents endorsed a strong need for nutrition education, nutrition educators and nutrition education training. The main findings include:

#### The nutrition picture

- malnutrition persists with alarmingly high rates of under-nutrition in the surveyed countries, particularly in the under-five age group, with increasing prevalence of overnutrition;
- national strategies tend to prioritise direct nutrition interventions such as food



fortification and supplementation. Health sector activities commonly focus on IYCF and growth monitoring but also on clinical rehabilitation of malnourished children and support for PLWHA. A nutrition emphasis in food security interventions is rare.

### The situation of NEAC and NEAC training

- NEAC has had and continues to have a weak presence, even sometimes apparently a declining one. It remains largely uncoordinated between initiatives and sectors, and seldom validated;
- NEAC and NEAC training approaches are largely top-down and based on information transfer. Learning approaches, especially in universities, are largely academic: all respondents expressed preferences for more active and interactive approaches with a more practical orientation;
- NEAC training is reportedly difficult to find, partly because it is rare (some said non-existent) and partly because it is embedded in a variety of curricula and settings under a variety of names. In academia it can be found as elements of nutrition and dietetics degrees, Home Economics degrees or health promotion training. In-service NEAC training is largely occasional or ad hoc, designed for specific interventions, although in several countries some NEAC training for extension workers and teachers is institutionalized, or about to be;
- almost no NEAC trainers/lecturers have specific NEAC qualifications and some universities are having to import instructors;
- respondents agreed that the process framework in existing NEAC training typically lacks preliminary formative research and follow-up evaluation.

### Need for NEAC and NEAC training

- the overwhelming perception is however that more and better NEAC training can play a valuable role in addressing malnutrition issues;
- groups most frequently said to be in need of NEAC are (in order) pregnant women and mothers, schoolchildren and the general population, while professionals who most need nutrition understanding and NEAC skills in order to be effective nutrition educators are health professionals, school teachers, agricultural extension workers and community health workers (see data analysis from Questionnaires on the [project website](#));<sup>5</sup>
- it was stressed that NEAC must be implemented clearly and constructively in national nutrition policies, programmes, institutions and curricula.

### Course choices and participation

- interest was spread almost equally between three of the four course choices presented (an undergraduate/basic NEAC course; a postgraduate/in-service course with a management emphasis; a cross-sectoral extension course), with considerable interest also in the fourth, an advocacy training course,<sup>6</sup> suggesting that capacity needs can best be met through a framework or suite of training courses which extend and reinforce each other;

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nutritionlearning.net/moodle1/course/view.php?id=5&username=guest>

<sup>6</sup> Outlines of these courses can be found in the annex to the Interview Form used in the survey, on the project website under COUNTRY CASE STUDY SURVEY DOCUMENTS.



- overwhelmingly, respondents opted for a blended learning approach with some distance-learning materials mixed with face-to-face sessions: interest was expressed in e-learning but the practical difficulties were seen as decisive for the moment;
- most respondents were interested in participating in the development of one or more of the courses in some way, for example in supplying learning resources and stories, reviewing materials etc. Considerable numbers expressed the desire to be involved in piloting.

## CHALLENGES

In line with the findings, respondents mentioned a number of recurring challenges:

### National

- lack of nutrition and NEAC awareness at policy level;
- inadequate funding for nutrition and NEAC interventions;
- poor institutional presence of NEAC and lack of prioritisation from professional associations;
- poor employment opportunities for nutritionists;
- thin coverage in school curricula;
- lack of distinction made between food security and nutrition security;
- lack of a multi-sectoral approach: for example, absence of nutrition posts or policy in the MoA and MoE; nutrition-insensitive agriculture interventions; nutrition interventions which do not integrate related sectors/disciplines. Co-ordinating nutrition-related activities between the ministries, governmental organizations and NGOs is critical to economy of effort, spreading good strategies and gauging how the country is tackling malnutrition.

### National context

- poor social awareness of nutrition and the lack of appreciation of its importance among all groups and all levels of society;
- competition from commercial marketing products and services that allegedly improve health.

### Capacity

- lack of professional nutrition educators; lack of competence in NEAC;
- lack of professional nutrition education trainers with competence in NEAC;
- traditional training e.g. information delivery (talks, lectures) rather than participatory and skills-based.

### General fragmentation/lack of coordination

- fragmentation of nutrition activities at community level due to lack of co-ordination between NGOs, International organisations and local government

### Management/Logistics/Funding/Resources

- challenges in coverage, particularly in rural communities, or limited channels such as health clinics;
- lack of resources, e.g. for scale up of successful project interventions, for program development at community level;
- duplication of efforts, misuse of resources and underutilised human resources.



### 4.3 COURSE SEARCH: WHAT'S AVAILABLE?

Since the materials database and analysis are not yet complete, the following findings are provisional, although they are generally upheld by the findings of the case studies:

- *NEAC training is generally lacking* Many major international course providers dealing with health issues for developing countries do not cover nutrition, and many which deal with nutrition do not touch on NEAC. A large proportion of university Departments of Public Health, both international and African, have no nutrition or NEAC courses; many nutrition degrees have no NEAC or "community nutrition" component, while in most others it is an elective module.
- *There is very little purpose-built NEAC training* The "relevance to NEAC" column of the database produced a small number of "spot-on" entries, a few "very relevant" and many "fairly relevant", including, for example, reference materials; manuals and guidelines; materials targeted at very specific countries, issues and settings; manuals focusing on specific parts of the educational process; and programs with a wider brief (e.g. health education).
- *Information is lacking* For the vast majority of course outlines and learning materials collected, there was not enough information to make it possible to assess whether they fulfilled the main criteria for "good NEAC training" in respect of course development, content and approach (see Summary Checklist for good NEAC training in 4.1.1 above). Some met one criterion, but not others; some sounded promising but did not give enough detail; some were excellent but had a very specific focus and target group. The vast majority were thin on practice and real-life application.

The tentative conclusion is that the gaps in nutrition educator training cannot easily be filled with existing resources, even if they were cheap and easily accessible. The search was unable to track down comprehensive, action-oriented, skills-based, economical, available, professional skills training which will produce a competent practitioner capable of handling NEAC effectively in all local settings.

### 4.4 SEARCH FOR PARTNERS: WHO CAN WE WORK WITH, AND HOW?

At national level the case study questionnaires identified a good number of potential partners interested in both adopting a course and piloting it: for example 18 institutions expressed a need for undergraduate-level course and said they would be willing to pilot learning materials. Of these ten were universities, with some special pleading on behalf of particular universities in Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Botswana.

Three international partners were found who were interested in participating in piloting NEAC course materials: The People's University,<sup>7</sup> AMREF (the African Medical and Research Foundation) and McGill University (Grace Marquis, professor of International Nutrition), all concerned with health education, all aiming at developing countries and all interested

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<sup>7</sup> The People's University is an international internet-based online learning organization using Open Education resources and dealing with public health capacity building in low- to middle-income countries. It already offers a module in Public Health Nutrition.





in professional training. It is also planned to invite interested international organizations and NGOs to nominate individual guinea pigs to try out the course individually on the project's own platform. This should excite some international interest, provide expert feedback and test the course for the wider market.

As potential regional partners, both AMREF and SAIDE (the South African Institute for Distance Education) were well qualified to develop a training of trainers course and both were interested in collaboration. AMREF, which is concerned with the education of health professionals, is particularly well placed also to act as a permanent regional centre for NEAC activities.

#### 4.5 PLATFORM: HOW SHOULD THE COURSE BE DELIVERED?

In general, internet access is poor and costly in Africa. In many countries electricity supply is unreliable and intermittent, with the consequence that the internet cannot be accessed even where a good broadband connection is available. However, the situation is likely to improve dramatically over the next few years, with the opening of large undersea cables to East, West and Southern Africa.<sup>8</sup> The improved supply and the strong demand for more competitive prices (particularly for smart phones) is expected to drive the cost of internet access gradually down. These developments have already had an impact on education. One informant reported that for graduate students in Nigeria, "having a PC is more important than getting admission",<sup>9</sup> especially for accessing online information. Various organizations, notably AMREF have experimented large scale e-learning programs with success (Accenture 2011).

There is also a growing international market in online health professional training targeted at developing countries: some examples of online course providers are AMREF, the People's University, Maastricht University, LIDC (London), Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, UNISA/SAIDE and the HEAT distance-learning program for extension workers in Ethiopia.

**Levels of IT use** vary dramatically from country to country, however, standing at over 10% in Nigeria and under 1% in Ethiopia,<sup>10</sup> with low levels of IT literacy among some teachers and many students. Personal computer ownership is low, and access is often available only through expensive internet cafes, which restrict user time and limit skills development. (AMREF's large program for online training of nurses in Kenya relies on substantial input of IT resources and skills by Accenture, their partner in this project.)

**Format preferences** Partly for these reasons, and partly out of an appreciation of the value of face-to-face interaction, most respondents in the case studies (44 out of 82, or 54%) indicated that some form of blended learning would be most suited to their institutions. The second most popular option (30/82) was a traditional face-to-face

<sup>8</sup> See map (updated May 2011) at <http://manypossibilities.net/african-undersea-cables/>

<sup>9</sup> Juliet Oluchi, University of Ibadan, telephone interview in October 2011

<sup>10</sup> See Africa Connectivity Map reproduced at <http://www.nutritionlearning.net/moodle1/course/view.php?id=5>



format. The remaining eight respondents chose pure distance learning, whether paper or electronic based, online or offline. Demand for online learning was considered “low” by 50% of respondents and “medium” by 37%, while technical and human capacity (in terms of internet coverage, bandwidth and cost, electricity supply, availability and distribution of computers, learner and teacher computer skills) was considered “low” by 75%. Many respondents felt that the advantages of blended learning outweighed the risks, but that a course based entirely on distance learning materials would not have a good chance of success.

#### 4.6 STATISTICS ON THE PROJECT WEBSITE

In mid-March 2011 the project site was registered with Google Analytics, which began to collect data on visitors. In the following 3 ½ months, 626 visits to the site and 4,699 page views by a total of 150 unique visitors were recorded, with an average of 7.5 pages viewed per visit. Visitors came from a total of 33 different countries in all parts of the world, including five African countries not involved in the survey (Cameroon, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa and Uganda). Excluding the FAO NEAC team, the highest numbers came from Egypt, Ethiopia, Germany, Tanzania and Brazil, in that order. With the exception of direct access to the URL by members of the FAO NEAC team, the most frequent route to the site (244 visitors) was via the FAO nutrition web pages. A breakdown of this information is available on the [home page of the website](#) itself (“Statistics on website access”).

# CHAPTER 5.

## LIMITATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

A built-in limitation of the needs assessment was the restriction of the enquiry to courses which could be offered by universities. It was clear from the country case studies that other sectors also had high-priority needs, in particular education (schools and teacher education) and professional training for health professionals (doctors and nurses).

### 5.1 LITERATURE REVIEW AND COURSE SEARCH

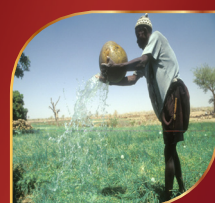
**Limitations of the literature review** A great deal of nutrition education is below the search radar, covered under other terms or not acknowledged in article titles or abstracts. It is probable that much slipped through the net of search terms; moreover the search by keyword did not easily uncover negative evidence of nutrition education missing where it might have been expected. The literature needed also to be supplemented by information on educational models and trends.

**Limitations of the course search** The search encountered several challenges due to various locations of NEAC in the curriculum, varied terminology and poor communications. It produced a large number of courses and training materials but seldom enough key documentation to allow courses to be assessed. It is possible to draw some general conclusions, and it will be useful to collect valuable elements into an archive for use as models and references in course development. This process is still ongoing.

### 5.2 CASE STUDIES: LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS

**Strengths** It was illuminating to look at the representative work of national professionals on the ground rather than at published articles. The study brought out individual perceptions well and the small sample allowed for individual attention to problems.

**Drawbacks and remedies** There were some delays in completion. One survey was interrupted by a revolution (viz. Egypt) and finished late. Some countries had very little NEAC or NEAC training activity to report. Although there was a common report format, some reports had a statistical approach and some were more subjective. The qualitative orientation of the survey invited some impressionistic and unsupported statements, omissions and distortions. However, all the questionnaire responses were analysed to support the general conclusions of the survey reports.





In spite of our best efforts the main terms used created confusion, which mingled with a confusing picture on the ground; however, it was generally possible to identify and classify the activities described.

These points will all be in borne in mind in the revision of the survey documents.

# CHAPTER 6.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Some of the key questions which should determine future action are discussed below.

### 6.1 IS NEAC TRAINING A HIGH PRIORITY NEED?

The profiles of NEAC and NEAC training were conspicuously low in the countries sampled. However, “need” is a compound of not only lack but also value. Is this where development efforts should be made? Existing policies, strategies and activities often appear to work on the implicit assumptions (a) that there are quicker, more effective and cheaper ways of improving nutrition status than NEAC (for example, food fortification, supplementation); (b) that NEAC often does not work; and (c) that the most important capacity need is for more nutritionists rather than nutrition educators.

Well-substantiated counter-arguments are that NEAC is often critical to the success of nutrition and food security interventions, is economical and has sustainable effects; (b) that NEAC works if it is done properly and hence that training is needed; (c) that more nutritionists will not lead to more and better NEAC unless nutritionists understand education and communication with a focus on behaviour change, and that many who are not nutritionists can benefit from NEAC training. Our needs analysis strongly supports these views.

### 6.2 WHAT EXACTLY IS NEEDED?

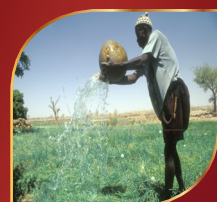
#### *MULTISECTORAL PARTICIPATION*

Many have argued in favour of multi-sectoral participation in NEAC training on the grounds that:

- qualified nutritionists are too few to provide an adequate base;
- most NEAC work is actually done by non-nutritionists;
- NEAC depends on competent practitioners at all levels;
- NEAC depends on the food cycle (from plot to pot); hence it is multi-sectoral by nature and an essential catalyst in food security interventions;
- NEAC needs a many-sided approach.

However, broadening the base demands some corollary precautions:

- non-nutritionists will need some nutrition knowledge and understanding;
- advocacy is required to reach other sectors and to affect national policy;
- institutionally the course must be both owned and shared, so that it will be neither marginalized nor dominated by a specific discipline.







### *NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TARGET GROUPS AND COURSE PLATFORM*

It is likely that demand and capacity for online learning will continue to increase in Africa, that prices will gradually fall and that more educational institutions will come to adopt blended, online and distance learning provision. With this experience, teachers and students will come to appreciate that online learning, as well as facilitating academic tasks and magnifying the resource base, can also enhance the social dimension of learning. Moreover, online resources, which can easily be adapted, modified and updated, are more sustainable. There is therefore a strong case to be made for developing both online and locally situated courses (blended or face-to-face) to meet the range of present and future situations from limited (or no) access to sophisticated IT use.

In terms of platform, there are also compelling arguments in favour of open-source software, among them low cost and constant upgrades. Large open-source learning management systems like Moodle can provide a wide range of add-ons, customisation options and extensive online support. For these reasons, it was decided to create a Moodle e-learning platform, which could be used both for pure online courses and also to contribute to blended learning in a variety of ways.

The aim is to produce generic training materials which can be used in and adapted to most contexts and formats, with guidelines and training on adaptation made available. For face-to-face or blended learning, a basic course can be downloaded and delivered in a traditional format, while offering options (further reading, extra assignments, online quizzes, forum discussions, databases and resource banks, glossaries, links to web resources, templates) which can be incorporated according to the needs and capacities of a specific group of learners.

At the same time a range of online options can be offered, from independent individual learning to a full tutored course with assignments, group work and forum discussion. Care should be taken to ensure that online participants are adequately supported, especially in the initial phases, for users with limited IT skills or for those who need to learn their way around the Moodle.

In the development and piloting of course materials it is also envisaged that web tools will be invaluable because of their potential for managing feedback and recording interactions; course developers and teachers should also be able to benefit by interacting with a worldwide community with shared interests.

### *WHICH COURSE?*

Interest in the seven case study countries was spread almost equally between three of the course choices proposed (an undergraduate/basic NEAC course, a postgraduate/in-service course with a management emphasis, and an extension course), with fewer opting for the fourth choice, the advocacy workshop.<sup>11</sup> Institutional interest in developing and hosting the courses was considerable.

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<sup>11</sup> Outlines of these courses can be found on the project website, in the annex to the Interview Form, under COUNTRY CASE STUDY SURVEY DOCUMENTS.



There was thus no clear basis for choice. Several respondents made the compelling argument that interlocking capacity needs could best be met through a suite of training experiences which extend and reinforce each other. This still left the question of where to start. Some considerations were:

- **Extension training** could have immediate impact on communities, and is most open to recognizing the value of aiming at changes in practice. Scale-up costs would be considerable. Such training, with its strong local dimension, should be designed in the country: the best way to ensure this might be to incorporate extension course design into the postgraduate/in-service curriculum, or to run extension and in-service professional courses in parallel to the benefit of both trainee groups.
- **An undergraduate module** would be a very small component in a degree, and would not have an immediate effect in the working world. However, it reaches more students and instructors than a Masters-level course; it can establish basic principles and practices and prepare the ground for higher-level training; it does not require a lengthy supervised practicum. It is relatively cheap to run and if it is a core subject it is not affected by demand or fluctuating funds. A drawback is the time required for institutional approval; however it can also stand alone, certificated independently. This choice seemed to have most to offer in terms of feasibility and institutional impact.
- **A postgraduate module / in-service course** An in-service course for working professionals offers great scope for effective learning, since it can be understood from existing experience and applied immediately. It can be instrumental in rapidly improving extension training, if the appropriate institutions are able to collaborate. Drawbacks are that the pool of professionals is small; instructors with field experience may be hard to find; in-service courses require special funding and time off from work. A module incorporated in a Masters has many of the same difficulties. This course/module should be seen as an essential target, but not necessarily the place to start.
- **Advocacy workshops** The need for nutrition advocacy is often signaled, both for developing national nutrition policy and strategy and for ensuring that policy trickles down into action. Unfortunately NEAC advocacy, which should surely partner nutrition advocacy, is rarely mentioned. Findings from the case studies and the literature indicate the need for NEAC advocacy at all levels and in all sectors. Separate workshops may however be a luxury, since advocacy activities can and should be built into other training.

### *CURRICULUM AND APPROACH*

There appears to be a foundation for consensus on outline NEAC curriculum and on the need for a practical, work-oriented, skills-based approach. However the process by which curriculum and approach are developed needs to be owned (that is, worked through) by key stakeholders (in the first instance prospective piloting institutions) and also made available to others.



At the same time, the dominance of traditional information transfer in all spheres of NEAC activity suggests that a paradigm shift in approach is called for. Some induction training for tutors/instructors may be necessary, and extensive field-testing with continuous feedback from tutors and students is advisable.

### 6.3 CAN IT BE DONE? IS THIS THE TIME?

With the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) initiative, nutrition has recently acquired new status in development activities, and NEAC is also more appreciated. There are also independent signs of progress in all the countries surveyed - in policy, strategy, capacity development and methodology, and in the enthusiasm for change and perceptions of the directions in which it should move. The development of NEAC training courses would not only address a strongly felt need but would also be a timely intervention at a moment when education is being re-valued as a key factor in improving dietary practices.

### 6.4 CONCLUSIONS

Some specific conclusions were:

#### General needs

- NEAC training can play a significant role in improving nutrition practices, yet effective NEAC training is generally lacking or inaccessible;
- what is needed are permanently available, adaptable, free training resources in practical, work-oriented nutrition education and communication;
- these should be based on the principles and approaches established by experience and research, and adaptable to local contexts and practices;
- advocacy for NEAC is essential: practice and production of advocacy activities should be included in all relevant courses and meetings.

#### Target groups and course choice

- a suite of training materials is required at undergraduate, postgraduate and extension levels, pre- and in-service, to create a mutually reinforcing capacity-building framework;
- the least problematic entry point is probably the undergraduate-level module, which can also be offered independently as a course in BASIC NEAC;
- if the BASIC NEAC course is successful it can be followed by the more demanding postgraduate/in-service module (ADVANCED NEAC). Extension courses could be developed in parallel with this;
- in the longer term, consideration should be given to the NEAC training needs of health professionals and schoolteachers.

#### Re multisectoral participation

- multisectoral participation is essential to eventual impact, should be supported by advocacy and built into nutrition and NEAC interventions;
- provision must be made for the nutrition knowledge/understanding required by non-nutritionists;



- institutional responsibility must be ensured while at the same time retaining broad ownership.

### **Re formats and certification**

- course provision should be as flexible as possible: online and face-to-face/blended; both national and international; suitable for self-study, group study and assessed formal courses;
- training materials are therefore needed which can be adapted to most contexts and formats;
- guidelines and training on adaptation should be available;
- courses can be certificated by course providers but can also be available as an FAO “own brand”.

### **Curriculum development and approach**

- the process of curriculum development should be owned by stakeholders and passed on to others;
- training should be offered for prospective tutors in active skills-based learning approaches.

### **Course development process**

- extensive piloting/field-testing is advisable;
- piloting institutions should represent the spread of target audiences and delivery formats;
- course materials should be developed in line with established principles and best practices, in particular referring to real-life experiences and applying learning to real contexts;
- interested international organizations should be engaged in the piloting process.





# CHAPTER 7.

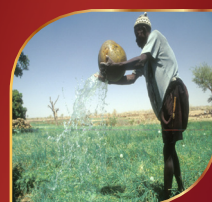
## OUTLINE PROPOSAL: COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Nutrition education and communication (NEAC) has proved to be an essential catalyst in nutrition, health and food security interventions. Yet its effectiveness depends on the approach adopted (as outlined in 4.1.1 above), which in turn depends on relevant and effective professional training. The present needs assessment has found that relevant training is lacking or irregularly available in most sectors and settings, and that the felt need for capacity development is high.

We would therefore like to develop a “BASIC NEAC certificate” at undergraduate level, as the first in a possible suite of learning materials which will implement the best practices of professional NEAC training and also satisfy local demand. The materials will be available for online, face-to-face or blended use and will be piloted in all these formats with both national and international partners, in order to adapt them to local context and consumer need and to establish adaptation processes.

The module will be accompanied by an optional course in basic nutrition for those who lack the essential entry knowledge; a training of trainers course will be developed by a regional partner and hosted permanently by them; and a further by-product will be a curriculum development package for use by others who wish to develop NEAC training. The project products will be disseminated on the project website.

A [project proposal](#) has been developed and can be found as a supplementary document in this folder.





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