Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women of Reproductive Age

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5th September 2016, FAO-EU Workshop, Rome

Presenting on behalf of the Women’s Dietary Diversity Project Team
Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women of Reproductive Age: Indicator definition

- The proportion of women 15-49 years of age who consumed food items from at least five out of ten defined food groups the previous day or night

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Group</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grains, white roots/tubers, plantains</td>
<td>Eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulses (beans, peas and lentils)</td>
<td>Dark green leafy vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts and seeds</td>
<td>Other vitamin A-rich fruits &amp; vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>Other vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat, poultry and fish</td>
<td>Other fruits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why measure dietary diversity?

• Strong and rising demand for simple indicators to reflect at least some aspects of food intake and/or diet quality – particularly for vulnerable groups such as women, infants.

• “Gold standard” methods for dietary data collection (repeated weighed records, quantitative 24-hr recalls) entail exceptionally resource intensive data collection, processing, analysis.

• Until recently, a critical gap in simple, feasible indicators for assessment of diet quality – MDD-W is the first simple global indicator specifically for women, that helps fill this gap.
What do DD indicators reflect?

- One important dimension of diet quality; food group diversity is embedded in/advocated by all national dietary guidelines, healthy diet patterns, and in WHO advice* on healthy diets

- Consistently associated with micronutrient density (infants) and micronutrient adequacy (women) of diets, including in multi-site studies**


What do DD indicators NOT reflect?

- DD is necessary but not sufficient to achieve micronutrient adequacy – adequacy also depends on quantity
- Does not reflect other dimensions of diet quality such as:
  - Macronutrient balance (carbohydrate, protein, fat)
  - Moderation (saturated fat, salt, free sugars)
  - Carbohydrate quality, quality of fats or protein
- These other dimensions are increasingly important as non-communicable diseases are an increasing burden globally, including in poor countries
Correct interpretation of MDD-W

• Groups of WRA where a higher proportion consume ≥5 of the 10 food groups are likely to have higher micronutrient adequacy

• Higher prevalence of MDD-W is a proxy for better micronutrient adequacy among WRA in the population

• Groups who consume ≥5 of the 10 food groups are also highly likely to consume (% across 9 WDDP-II data sets):
  – At least one animal-source food (84%), and
  – Either pulses or nuts/seeds (84%), and
  – Two or more fruit/vegetable food groups (98%)
New guide available* providing....

- “Quick start” guide
- Background, definitions
- Detailed descriptions of food groups
- Recommended methods and model questionnaires
- Guidance on adaptation and on enumerator training
- Tabulation and presentation
- Comparison to other DD indicators
- Guidance on toughest challenges
- Accompanied by FAQ – highly recommended for new users

* Available at FAO & FANTA websites
Adaptation of questionnaire

• Requires thorough knowledge of foods and cuisines in survey areas; can be refined during training

• Important decisions on foods to exclude from “counting” are taken at this level

• Key “job aids” also developed at this stage

• The guide provides suggestions for shorter and longer/more thorough processes, depending on resources

• Once well-implemented in a country or region within country, future adaptations minimal
Enumerator capacity/training

- Recommended: some post-secondary education & experience with surveys
- Ideal: knowledge of foods, food preparation
- Duration of training (exclusive of piloting/field testing):
  One to two days depending on knowledge, previous experience
How long does it take?

• In general 10-20 minutes per respondent
• Time needed depends on complexity of local diet
• As for all survey questions, also depends on rapport, and to some extent on respondent characteristics
Cautionary notes

• Indicator can only be used/interpreted at level of population/group; relatively low sensitivity and specificity

• Indicator was primarily designed as a yardstick for national/sub-national assessment

• Attend to seasonality

• Use with caution for geographic targeting, considering seasonality, and use only as part of a suite of indicators
Appropriate uses of MDD-W

• MDD-W can be used as a proxy to describe one important dimension of women’s diet quality in national and sub-national assessments

• Targets can be set and prevalence of MDD-W can be compared to previous assessments, so long as survey methods are consistent and timing accounts for seasonality

• In the context of programs, MDD-W may be useful when the program design, activities, and impact pathway indicate a potential to increase food group diversity
Acknowledgments

WDDP collaboration

Pauline Allemand, Mary Arimond, Terri Ballard, Elodie Becquey, Alicia Carriquiry, Melissa Daniels, Megan Deitchler, Marie-Claude Dop, Elaine Ferguson, Nadia Fanou-Fogny, Maria Joseph-King, Gina Kennedy, Warren Lee, Mourad Moursi, Yves Martin Prével, Marie Ruel, Liv Elin Torheim, and Doris Wiesmann

Funders

USAID through the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project (FANTA)

Food and Agriculture Organization with funding from the European Union

Institutions of all WDDP collaborators
New guide available at:

**FAO website**
http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5486e.pdf

**FANTA website**