

# Nutrition education and horticulture training in malnutrition treatment centers - Côte d'Ivoire -

## PROJECT TITLE

"Programme for the integration of nutrition education in nutrition community centers" (OSRO/IVC/602/EU, OSRO/IVC/606/CHA, OSRO/IVC/701/SWE, OSRO/IVC/702/BEL and OSRO/IVC/703/USA)

## PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Improve food security and promote food diversity through the establishment of household gardens and nutrition education.

## CONTEXT

In Côte d'Ivoire, food is available in sufficient quantities and variety throughout the year. The major problem is the access of the most vulnerable households to a sufficient variety of foods, a problem aggravated by the dependence on food aid and the 2002 crisis and the subsequent population displacements, poverty, problems of access to fields and loss of wealth, etc. Household food production is insufficient and eating habits are often inadequate, particularly in the context of weaning and feeding of young children. The regions of western and northern Côte d'Ivoire are among the most affected by acute and chronic malnutrition.

## TARGET BENEFICIARIES

Mothers and other guardians of malnourished children treated in community Nutrition Rehabilitation Centers (NRCs), including mobile NRCs.

## PROJECT

The European Union, the United Nations (through the Central Emergency Nation Response Fund), Sweden, Belgium, and the United States of America funded this project that began in July 2006 in 35 NRCs in the regions of Montagnes, Savanes, and Moyen Cavally. The implementation of activities was carried out by local NGOs:

- 1) assessment of the situation (available surveys, visits to local partners) and of local needs (interviews with beneficiaries), carried out by a nutritionist consultant;
- 2) development of training materials and organization of training sessions for partner NGOs (nutrition education, outreach, etc.), development of training tools and preparation of action plans and coordination mechanisms with partners;
- 3) setup of demonstration gardens by partner NGO;
- 4) implementation of training sessions in the NRCs, including 3 modules on:
  - o nutrition education (between 20 minutes and 3 hours, in groups of 8 to 20 people, dealing with different themes each week);
  - o cooking demonstrations on how to prepare nutritious, balanced meals (eg. incorporating legumes and vegetables) with locally available foods, following recommendations of a nutritionist;
  - o training in horticulture techniques (from 30minutes to 2 hours, in groups of 10 to 15 people, with hands-on training in demonstration gardens)
- 5) distribution of agricultural inputs (vegetable seeds, local hoe (daba), industrial hoe and watering can) to beneficiaries having completed the 3 modules of the training course.

## STAKEHOLDERS

At national level, the National Nutrition Programme of the Ministry of Health participated in the development of nutrition activities' curriculum and in the preparation of training materials (Training-for-Trainers modules and image boxes for training beneficiaries). FAO ensured the coordination and capacity development of partners, and provided nutrition education materials and agricultural inputs for distribution.

At field level, activities were implemented by several local institutions : Agence Nationale d'Appui Au Développement Rural (ANADER), Animation Rurale de Korhogo (ARK), Caritas, Croix-Rouge, Centre social de Guiglo, IDE-Afrique, as well as Organisation volontaire du développement local (OVDL) in collaboration with Croix-Rouge de Côte d'Ivoire, MSF-France and MSF-Hollande, managing the NRCs. The coordination of these nutrition, agriculture and health stakeholders allowed for an integrated approach to food security and nutrition, knowledge and practice, treatment and prevention of malnutrition.



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*Beneficiary in her vegetable garden, Côte d'Ivoire, FAO.*

## CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF INSTITUTIONS

Fifty professionals from the local institutions previously mentioned were trained on the role of vegetable gardens and cooking demonstrations for nutrition at community level, as well as on the realization of rapid qualitative surveys. Training workshops also facilitated the development of action plans for each partner, the coordination between partners for the selection of beneficiaries and the adaptation of training materials

The training included role playing, field visits and practical exercises to further sensitize partners to the different dimensions of malnutrition.

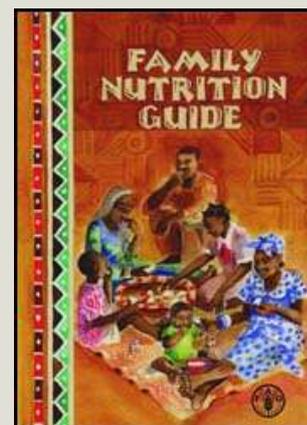
Copies of the Guide to Family Nutrition FAO were distributed to partners.

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

- Diminution of relapses
- Good impact and results of cooking demonstrations
- Improvement in mothers' nutritional knowledge and practices
- Strong appropriation by local partners, with numerous initiatives (ex. insertion of highly nutritious local seeds in demonstration gardens and distribution kits, such as leafy vegetable and fruit trees, not included in the initial inputs provided by FAO.)

## LESSONS LEARNED

- The setup of demonstration gardens was initiated simultaneously with trainings; as a result, the first batch of beneficiaries could not see the demonstration gardens completed and could not benefit from hands-on horticultural training.
- Few beneficiaries managed to setup their own vegetable garden, due to delays in delivering the inputs kits, and to difficulties in finding proper land (safe from animals, near the house, and close to a water source).
- Some difficulties were encountered in organizing the nutrition education sessions: groups were too large, with long waiting lines and inadequate premises.
- Training programmes did not take into account the average duration of malnourished children (and thus the period of presence, at the NRCs, of children's guardians). Many beneficiaries have received several times the same training and / or have missed some fundamental themes.
- Methodologies of behavior change communication were not sufficiently taken into consideration, as a result the nutrition education sessions did not always convince beneficiaries to change their food habits and practices.



Family Nutrition Guide, FAO  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5740e/y5740e00.htm>

### Monitoring and evaluation

The project's impact evaluation was done through the monitoring of relapses in NRCs, visits to beneficiaries vegetable gardens and the implementation of rapid qualitative surveys (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices - KAP) among beneficiaries to assess behavior change.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UP-SCALING AND REPLICATION

- Conduct sensitization and training workshop for partners (in nutrition, horticulture, education/training methodologies, evaluation, etc.) to develop local capacities while laying foundations for the organization of work and coordination among partners.
- Involve all available local actors to enlarge the outreach of post-training monitoring activities in villages. I.e. involve agriculture extension workers who visit villages as part of their daily functions
- Analyze food habits, their evolution in time and their regional differences, to better understand environmental and cultural constraints.
- Select adequate training location, give priority to short sessions (20min), and small groups (15 people max.).
- Strengthen project activities and staff in peaks of malnourished children's admission (i.e. lean season).
- Provide two staff for each training session: one person in charge of the training content, one person in charge of the organisation and management (to form groups, register and evaluate beneficiaries, etc.).
- Give priority to topics relevant for pregnant and lactating women, for infants and young children, and for the most vulnerable in general.
- Promote exclusive breastfeeding for infants, and complementary feeding for young children that integrates micronutrient rich foods (green leafy vegetables, yellow fruits, etc.) and protein-rich foods (fish, meat, eggs, legumes...).
- Integrate low-cost organic agriculture techniques in the horticulture trainings : ex. preparation compost-based fertilizer, natural pest-repellents, key-hole gardens and water management techniques (waste waters, water storage, etc...).
- Distribute inputs' kits under the following conditions : to receive the inputs' kit, beneficiaries must have completed the training, comprehensive of all modules (nutrition education, horticulture, etc.), have the space to develop a vegetable garden (in ground or in containers –bags, tires, etc.) and be motivated.
- Assess/evaluate the knowledge and practices of beneficiaries at their registration in NRCs and again two or three months after demission.
- Regular sum-up sessions can be organized, to summarize the main points of the training sessions held, for a better overall understanding and for beneficiaries that might have missed certain sessions.