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Food Security, Improved Diets, Healthy Children

Improved Complementary Feeding Practices Newsletter

No. 6 May 2014

Cambodia

Malawi

Highlights of food security and nutrition education interventions: January - April 2014

- Complementary feeding campaigns were conducted in 35 villages with 1,080 participants, including 818 caregivers with young children
- A night video promotion event to promote enriched *bobor* (porridge), targeting men and older people was conducted in 19 target villages with 1,461 participants
- A new round of Farmer Field Schools (FFS) to diversify food production and improve food availability is currently being implemented
- Graduation ceremonies were held for 1,819 caregivers who successfully completed the 10 community-based nutrition education sessions '*Kupititsa Patsogolo Kadyetsedwe Koyenela Ka Ana*' (KPKKKA: Let us Improve Child Feeding) in March and April 2014
- As part of M&E, 10 nutrition education sessions and meetings with 22 District Nutrition Supervisors were observed in January 2014

Highlights of IMCF¹ research: January - April 2014

- The third data assessment of the longitudinal study cohort in intervention and control areas was completed in January 2014
- The fourth data assessment of the longitudinal study was conducted in March 2014
- Data analysis of focus group discussions (FGDs) was completed on perceptions of, and attitudes to, exclusive breastfeeding

Overview of FAO interventions and IMCF research

Improving Complementary Feeding Practices

FAO supports governments to develop and implement projects to explore the synergies between food security and nutrition education, and to ensure they have a positive impact on the lives of chronically poor, rural household members. In Malawi and Cambodia, food security activities are linked to nutrition education through the promotion of locally available food use and provision of advice on complementary feeding. Project activities aim to improve family and young children's diets as well as the nutritional status of children aged 6-18 months, and are being evaluated by the IMCF research project.

IFSN² in Malawi

Objective: Contribute through policy and programme advisory services to the achievement of the Malawi Government's Development Goals by improving food security and nutrition of vulnerable populations in Mzimba and Kasungu Districts.

MALIS³ in Cambodia

Objective: Improve the food security and nutrition of vulnerable rural families who depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood in Otdar Meanchey and Preah Vihear Provinces.

Food Security⁴

- Farmer Field Schools (FFS), Farmer Business Schools (FBS)
- Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS)
- Agricultural inputs

Interventions

Nutrition Education

- Training sessions on complementary feeding practices
- Cooking demonstrations
- Cooking equipment

Research: The IMCF project

The IMCF project is implemented by Justus Liebig University (JLU) in Giessen, Germany. The objectives are to: 1) determine the nutritional status of mothers and children under two years of age with a focus on child growth and micronutrient status; 2) collect data on the knowledge of mothers/caregivers on child health care and feeding practices; 3) understand living conditions, socioeconomic status and dietary diversity of households.

¹ IMCF: Improving the dietary intakes and nutritional status of infants and young children through improved food security and complementary feeding.

² IFSN: Improving Food Security and Nutrition Programme Outreach in Kasungu and Mzimba districts.

³ MALIS: Improving Food Security and Market Linkages for Smallholders in Preah Vihear and Otdar Meanchey.

⁴ FFS and agricultural inputs are part of the interventions in Malawi and Cambodia; however, JFFLS and FBS are only implemented in Cambodia.



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2nd Technical Advisory Committee meeting for the IMCF project, 24-26 February 2014

Three years after the 1st Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting was held to launch the IMCF project in March 2011, the 2nd TAC meeting took place at FAO Headquarters in Rome on 24-26 February 2014. The objectives were to review preliminary research findings, identify data gaps, and propose methodologies for additional data collection and the impact assessments in August/September 2014. The 29 TAC participants comprised technical experts from universities and nutrition institutes in Canada, Germany, Ghana, Norway and Peru; WorldFish in Bangladesh; IMCF researchers from JLU in Germany, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) in Malawi and Mahidol University in Thailand; and FAO staff members from HQ/ Rome, Malawi and Cambodia.

Presentations by FAO reviewed the food security and nutrition education interventions of the IFSN project in Malawi and the MALIS project in Cambodia. These projects aim at creating synergies between agriculture and nutrition by linking improved household food production and access with practical nutrition education to enhance families' dietary intake, with a special focus on improving complementary feeding of children aged 6-23 months.

Research has been ongoing since 2011 in Malawi, and 2012 in Cambodia through the IMCF project to evaluate programme effectiveness. The JLU research team presented preliminary findings from baseline and mid-term (Malawi only) cross-sectional surveys, and from the one-year longitudinal study of cohorts of children in Cambodia and Malawi. The findings show significant improvements in children's dietary diversity as well as in community workers' and mothers' knowledge scores. Expert Working Groups reviewed the adequacy of available data and identified data gaps relative to the expected research questions and outputs. They proposed statistical, quantitative and qualitative methodologies to address the gaps through additional data collection in the remaining 6 months of the IMCF research. They also reviewed the protocols for the impact assessments for Malawi and Cambodia which will take place in August and September 2014, respectively. Based on the Working Group recommendations, JLU presented the revised research protocol for the impact assessments. During the final discussion, TAC participants were asked to consider whether the revised protocol maximizes the chances of providing answers about the impact of a synergy of food security and nutrition education interventions on children's diets and nutrition, compared with food security interventions alone. It is hoped that the IMCF research results can help to validate the effectiveness of nutrition-sensitive agricultural programmes and inform future policies that enhance household food security and child nutrition outcomes.



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Opening session of TAC meeting with Anna Lartey welcoming participants



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Malawi Update

The role of Master Trainers in the IFSN project

The IFSN project's nutrition education programme is led by a multisectoral team of 30 Master Trainers (MT) comprised of government nutritionists from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, and the Ministry of Health. MTs coordinate District Nutrition Supervisors and Community Nutrition Facilitators (CNFs), implement "training of trainers" sessions on the 'KPKKKA Training Guidelines', give technical support to community-based nutrition education sessions, and provide feedback on the performance and practice of CNFs to ensure improvements in the quality of KPKKKA nutrition education sessions. Hence, the MTs are key to the long term sustainability of the nutrition education intervention. However, the project faces some challenges including the relatively high drop out of CNFs, who are volunteers chosen by the community. Also in view of the SUN roll-out to the districts, there is a need to improve coordination among development agencies and adoption of the new Government Guidelines on Harmonization of Daily Subsistence, Fuel and Transport Allowances.

Understanding the role of different family members to improve IYCF

During March 2014, a questionnaire was piloted for a qualitative study in Malawi, entitled "Exploring how intra-household gender relations influence infant and young child feeding practices in Kasungu and Mzimba districts".



Participatory methods are used to develop a village map with community members

Data collection will be carried out in May – June 2014 on a sample of selected households in two villages that received both nutrition education and agricultural inputs (including maize and vegetable seed, fruit tree seedlings and small livestock) from the IFSN project. Different household members including the mother, father, girl child, boy child and grandmother will be interviewed about their participation in the community-based nutrition education sessions, how decisions are made regarding household resources, such as time, money, labour, land and livestock, and how these influence infant and young child feeding practices at household level.



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A Master Trainer discusses ways to improve children's complementary food by using local ingredients

A beneficiary story from Mzimba, January 2014

"My name is Chikonde Ndengu and I am 79 years old. I am one of the grandfathers who is participating in the [nutrition education] sessions in Mphere Village. Apart from learning [about] good care and feeding practices for children, I have also learned how good nutrition can improve the health of my body and I have asked people whom I stay with to cook enriched porridge for me and I am feeling strong now. Before the programme was introduced in the village I [had] never heard of any nutrition programme within the village. All my children were raised using [...] traditional [complementary feeding] practices. I have now learned that [some] practices [can be harmful] for children. This is because we did not have this knowledge. I have now seen that caregivers in the village are giving the children enriched porridges that contain [different kinds of] food and children are gaining weight and are not getting sick often. I have also realized that if I eat well I will [feel stronger and] not get sick [so] often."



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Cambodia Update

The MALIS Nutrition Education intervention

The nutrition education intervention of the MALIS project commenced in July 2013 with training of trainers and volunteers. In August 2013, the nutrition education sessions started in 16 villages of Preah Vihear (PVR) and 19 villages of Otdar Meanchey (OMC) provinces. A total of 449 mothers/caregivers with their infants and young children aged 5-18 months were enrolled in the first round of seven facilitated sessions, and trained by 91 community nutrition promoters (CNPs). The final sessions and graduation ceremonies took place in January 2014.

An interim review was conducted with 60 selected mothers/caregivers from OMC and PVR in December 2013. Of these, 72% reported to have learned how to prepare the thick and multi-ingredient porridge (*bobor khap krop kroeung*) and 33% prepared it every day for their child. Frequently reported constraints for cooking the enriched *bobor* were “lack of time” and the belief that the “child does not like to eat the porridge”.

Hence, to combat the perception that the children do not like the enriched *bobor*, a complementary feeding campaign was conducted in 35 villages during February and March 2014. The campaign consisted of a cooking demonstration and tasting of the enriched *bobor* and was attended by 1,080 mothers/caregivers with their children, pregnant women and other interested people from the communities. The campaign was followed by a one-week porridge distribution activity in which children were given the enriched *bobor* three times a day. As a result, caregivers from 12 villages formed self-help groups to cook the enriched *bobor* together on a regular basis for their children.

MALIS field work in focus

The MALIS project aims to achieve improved agricultural productivity and profitability, greater resilience of farming systems and improved food security and nutrition. During the final year of fieldwork, the emphasis is on demonstrable differences to the lives of members of approximately 7,500 smallholder households. Efforts will focus on Community Based Organizations (CBOs) which have a successful record of performance over the past 18 months with the MALIS project, with some having participated in FFS and FBS. Season-long FFS have helped farmers experiment with new techniques to improve agricultural productivity. The FBS introduced an input credit scheme that enabled motivated farmers to purchase inputs and make repayments to their CBOs, which facilitated business success for the CBOs, and reached approximately 1,500 households. Currently, the 20 CBOs selected for the FBS are the focus of the agricultural systems improvements through FFS (representing approximately 3,500 households), with other strong groups also eligible for assistance through the FFS and input credit. The nutrition education intervention will work through the same engagement process to locate caregivers in the target population. Communities selected for the first round of training in complementary feeding will be covered again in order to identify any new mothers, and reinforce changes in complementary feeding practices.



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A mother feeding her child bobor khap krop kroeung



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The crucial role of FFS in linking agriculture and nutrition is well recognized. Hence, the integration of nutrition education in the FFS is being strengthened, and will cover the importance of dietary diversification, the benefits of home gardening and the selection of nutritious crops for home gardens to improve the diets of adults and young children. In addition, caregiver groups will be formed from FFS to provide a forum for discussion and learning that supports behaviour change. Due to challenges with capacity of CNPs delivering the complementary feeding training sessions, partner NGOs will take on the role of village level trainers using a more consultative approach with the mothers/caregivers. Hence, child feeding and rest breaks will be included in the training sessions, so that mothers can maintain their attention for the time required. In addition, caregivers will be given educational materials to take home, in order to reinforce important complementary feeding messages.

IMCF at the International Green Week

The IMCF project was presented at the special exhibition of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) at the International Green Week in Berlin from 17-26 January 2014. Visitors at the stand learned about the nutrition education intervention on improved complementary feeding practices in Malawi and Cambodia, and complementary feeding recommendations in Germany. They were able to take part in a quiz about the similarities and differences of complementary feeding practices, and the different kinds of food used in Malawi, Cambodia and Germany. They also had the opportunity to learn about the inter-generational aspects of malnutrition, which include the impact of women’s nutritional health and the dramatic consequences for women, children, families and societies. The stand was organized by BMEL with support from JLU staff members: Angelina Balz, Kathrin Demmler, Isabelle Hirschmann, Irmgard Jordan and Lydiah Waswa.

Upcoming Events featuring IMCF

Vienna, 26-29 May 2014: International Symposium on Understanding Moderate Malnutrition in Children for Effective Interventions. Ellen Muehlhoff will give an oral presentation on FAO’s approach to addressing malnutrition, and Irmgard Jordan will present a poster.

London, 3-4 June 2014: 4th Annual Research Conference of ‘Leverhulme Centre for Integrative Research on Agriculture and Health’ (LCIRAH) on “Agri-food policy and governance for nutrition and health”. IMCF posters will be presented by Anika Reinbott and Judith Kuchenbecker featuring research findings from Cambodia and Malawi, respectively.



© Irmgard Jordan

Lydiah Waswa responds to questions related to the IMCF project



JUSTUS-LIEBIG-UNIVERSITÄT GIESSEN



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Welcome to

Elizabeth Westaway joined FAO HQ as a Nutrition Consultant in January 2014. She is responsible for support to the FAO MALIS and IFSN project teams in Cambodia and Malawi, and liaison between FAO HQ and IMCF researchers at JLU. Prior to commencing at FAO HQ, Elizabeth worked as a Postdoctoral Research Assistant at the University of Central Lancashire, UK, as a Nutritionist for Médecins Sans Frontières in Ethiopia and a Nutrition Project Manager for Save the Children UK in Afghanistan, amongst others. She has a PhD in International Development from the University of East Anglia, UK, an MSc Public Health Nutrition from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK, and a MPH from the University of Wales College of Medicine, UK.



Julia Garz joined FAO HQ in April 2014 and is providing support on complementary feeding-related project activities. She holds an MSc in Nutrition from JLU and a BSc in Molecular Medicine from Ulm University, Germany. For her MSc thesis, she conducted a study in Malawi entitled “Community-based School Meals Programs” for the Malawian Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) which was funded by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). The study examined the quality of donor-independent school farming and school feeding activities at primary schools in Kasungu District.

Melissa Vargas joined FAO HQ in September 2013 and she has been supporting IMCF-related project activities. Melissa holds a BSc in Nutrition and Dietetics from the University of Costa Rica, and will obtain her European MSc in Food Science, Technology and Nutrition in July 2014. The working title of her thesis is “A qualitative study of African students’ perceptions of effective nutrition education”. Before joining FAO, she was involved in clinical and health promotion work for two years.



Mr Yoeum Phorn joined FAO Cambodia in April 2014 as Household Food Security and Nutrition Assistant and is leading the nutrition education component of the MALIS project. Previously he worked for WFP as a Field Monitoring Assistant, and has nine years experience of Maternal and Child Nutrition, and Reproductive Health. Mr Yoeum graduated as an Associate Nurse in Health Management, holds a BA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, and is undertaking a MA in Education at the Build Bright University in Siem Reap.

Kenan Kalagho joined FAO HQ in October 2013 as a consultant to undertake a qualitative research study of intra-household decision making on IYCF practices. He holds an MSc in Rural Development and Gender from Wageningen University in the Netherlands, and a BSc in Human Development, Human Nutrition and Household Resource Management from University of Malawi – Bunda College. Prior to commencing at FAO, he worked as Principal Women’s Programme Officer for the Malawian Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.





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Jennifer Arlt joined the IMCF project Malawi team as Junior Research Assistant in April 2014 and will stay in Kasungu until August to support data collection. Jennifer holds an MSc in Nutrition from JLU and her thesis, entitled “Determinants of malnutrition in Karamojong infants of Napak District, Eastern Uganda,” was conducted in a German Agro Action (Deutsche Welthungerhilfe) project. Previously, Jennifer was a GIZ volunteer in Zambia working on nutrition programmes implemented by the Italian organisation Centre for Cooperation and Development.

Frank Kumwenda is a Research Assistant on the IMCF project Malawi team. His main roles are assisting with transcription of audio tapes, translating questionnaires, helping organise mid-term and end-term surveys, and collecting anthropometric data. Frank graduated from Bunda College of Agriculture in 2011 with a BSc in Nutrition and Food Science, and worked for Gill Consultants before joining the IMCF project.



2nd International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)

The ICN2 will be held at FAO HQ in Rome on 19-21 November 2014. It will review progress made towards reducing hunger and malnutrition since the first conference in 1992, and will address global nutrition challenges covering both over- and undernutrition. Participants include Government leaders and high-level representatives from agriculture and health sectors, as well as leaders of UN agencies, researchers and representatives of civil society. ICN2 seeks to establish a framework for action to guide its implementation and develop cutting-edge approaches for better international and inter-governmental co-operation with regard to improved nutrition throughout the lifecycle. Additional information can be found on: www.fao.org/ICN2

ICN2
Second International
Conference on Nutrition





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