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The Need for Nutrition Education

- Trends and Challenges
- Why nutrition education?
- How effective is nutrition education?
- What we do in FAO



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Triple Burden

- > 900 million undernourished
- 170 million children stunted
- 2 billion people micronutrient deficient
- Obesity and NCD
- 80% of premature deaths occur in low and middle income countries
- Unhealthy diet – key risk factor



Trends and Challenges

- Low levels & quality of investment in nutrition and food security
- Poor policy alignment (ag production & nutritional needs)
- Changes in food supply and marketing
- Urbanization and accompanying changes
- Loss of skills: home gardens, cooking
- Changes in perceptions: local foods not considered nutritionally adequate
- Lack of guidance for governments on effective policies and programs

RESULT: Poor quality diets and sedentary lifestyles



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Need for Nutrition Education

- One of the answers to these problems, we believe, is education. People of all ages need information, education and skills to enable them to make good food choices and adopt healthy eating patterns.
- While the need for nutrition education seems obvious and compelling to some, others demand hard evidence (RTCs) on the effectiveness of the intervention to justify investing in it.



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Why Nutrition Education?

“For all populations, (nutrition) education and social marketing are crucial components of national, municipal and community efforts for sustained improvements in food and nutrition security. These activities are often essential to realizing the potential for nutrition improvement of many agricultural development projects and programmes. They are also important in countries where obesity and NCD are increasing“.

Sixth Report of the World Nutrition Situation, UN SCN, 2010



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Why Nutrition Education?

- Improvements in food production alone do not always translate to improvements in nutritional status.
- In spite of progress in food production, there is limited success in addressing global malnutrition.
- “Agricultural interventions that include a nutrition education component will increase the likelihood of positive nutritional outcomes” (World Bank, 2007).



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Why Nutrition Education?

-educational campaigns on child feeding practices, appropriate diets, proper hygiene, and illness prevention.
- ... addressing the causes of micronutrient malnutrition inevitably requires programs that support dietary diversification by providing education on nutritious, balanced diets. Without this understanding, the nutritional impact of programs that increase people's economic access to improved nutrition will be strictly limited.

Ecker, Breisinger & Pauw, in Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition, IFPRI, 2011



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Why Nutrition Education?

Review of Effectiveness of Nutrition Education, Shi and Zang, 2011

- Concluded that: “nutrition education does improve complementary feeding behaviors and child growth”.

Authors reviewed published results of 15 interventions

- Successful interventions were ...“ ...culturally sensitive, accessible, and integrated with local resources”.



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Evidence of Effectiveness

- Ample published evidence of the effectiveness of nutrition education on child growth and anaemia, particularly through improving BF promotion and complementary feeding practices.
- “Behaviour change communication” on infant and young child feeding is one of the 15 evidence based effective interventions to reduce global undernutrition (*Maternal and Child Unedernutrition Series, Lancet, 2008*).



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Evidence of Effectiveness

Nutrition education to encourage behavior change for healthy eating and the prevention and control of obesity and diet-related NCD, FAO,2012.

- A large no. of evaluations have been carried out to assess the effectiveness of different nutrition education actions (schools, worksites, community, gardens, F & V campaigns, labelling, etc.)
- Very mixed picture: some are effective in changing dietary practices, some are moderately effective, and others are not
- Lack of understanding why this is so: what makes nutrition education actions work when, why, how and in what way?
- What are the reasons for failure?



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More questions....

- Is it a question of design?
- Are stakeholders continuing to design campaigns and programs centered on information only?
- Or is it, as some evidence indicates, that education actions need to be accompanied by complementary changes in the food environment, as well as skills in coping with the food environment?
- In that case, is nutrition education a waste of time when implemented alone?
- Likewise, are changes to the food environment a waste of time when implemented without accompanying educational processes?



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More questions.....

- The FAO review also found that while governments are taking more actions to educate consumers about healthy diets, these moves are not concerted, strong, sustained and comprehensive.
- What is the role of nutrition education then in encouraging more concerted efforts by governments and other stakeholders?
- What are the barriers to greater engagement in policy and practice?
- And given that education tends to be less controversial than regulation, how can the education message be used to encourage more comprehensive actions?
- Finally what is needed to achieve a broader understanding of nutrition education among different stakeholders?



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FAO Mandate

- Raise levels of nutrition and standards of living
- Improve production and distribution of food and agricultural products
- Better the conditions of rural populations
- Contribute to an expanding world economy and ensure freedom from hunger



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FAO's Vision on Nutrition

- FAO's Vision is of a world free of hunger and malnutrition where food and agriculture contributes to improving the diets and living standards of all, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable way.



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FAO's Objective and Strategies

Objective:

- Create lifelong healthy eating to ensure adequate dietary intake

Strategies:

- Strengthen capacities of national institutions to develop, implement and evaluate nutrition education and consumer awareness programmes.
- Promote knowledge and skills to enable consumers to make healthy food choices.
- Create enabling environments for consumers to access nutritious foods and diets to enable healthy food choices.



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FAO Nutrition Education and Consumer Awareness Group

- 4 regular staff
- 7 consultants
- Functions:
 - Knowledge sharing (global public goods)
 - Convener (neutral forum)
 - Capacity development (direct assistance to countries)



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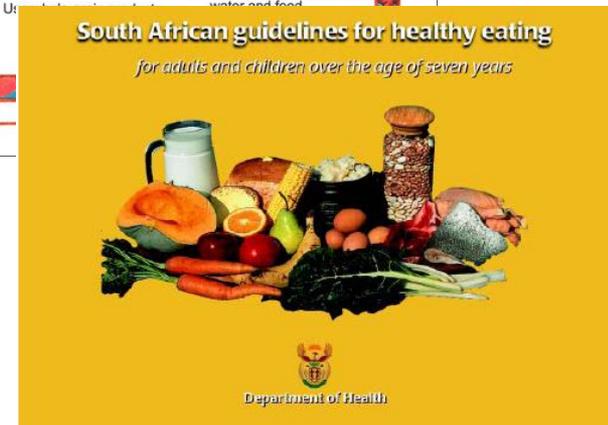
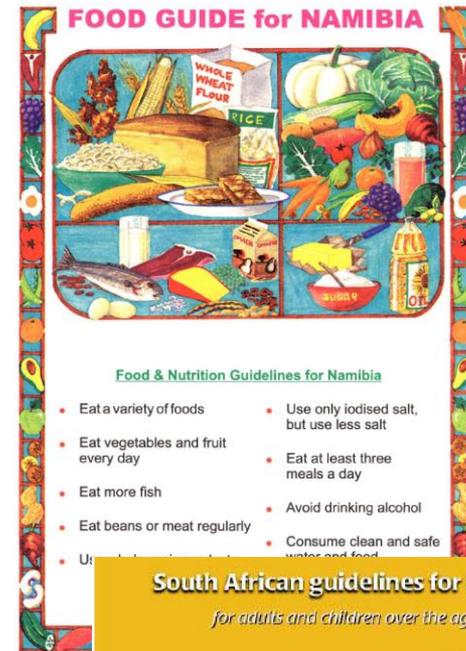


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National Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG)

- Policy tool for nutrition education, trade, agriculture and food supply
- Set dietary standards in schools, worksites, hospitals, etc
- Dedicated website
- Priorities:
 - Development of FBDG in SSA
 - Development of educational strategies alongside FBDG
 - Reorient FBDG: prevention of NCD, link with environment



Linking food security and nutrition education

- Agriculture is the main source of food and income for rural HHs
- Food security and agricultural programs offer great potential for improving HH eating
- HHs and extension staff must understand the essential connection between crop choice and dietary diversity
- Need for extension staff to coordinate their support to HHs and promote nutrition education
- Priorities:
 - Integrate nutrition into pre-service training of agricultural extension staff to learn how to promote dietary diversification
 - Integrate nutrition into FFS/JFFLS



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Improving maternal and young child feeding: focus on local foods and diets

- Critical window of opportunity for child growth – 1000 days
- Nutrition education is critically needed for teenage girls and women, mothers, grandmothers, and fathers.
- Local diets need to be improved and integrated with food security interventions to ensure access to micronutrient-rich foods

Priorities:

- Intensify support to NE at community level (recipe development, cooking demos)
- Evaluate the impact through RTCs (MLW, CMB)
- Convene expert meetings
- Advocate for the integration of treatment and prevention



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Nutrition Learning and Healthy Eating in Schools

- Primary schools are an excellent setting for NE
- Schoolchildren are current and future consumers and future parents
- Eating habits are learned early
- Focus area for FAO, improving schoolchildren's knowledge and skills on healthy eating
- Priorities:
 - Systematic integration of nutrition into national school curricula and pre-service teacher training
 - Promotion of nutrition friendly school environments (school wellness policies, dietary standards for school meals and food vendors in schools)



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Capacity Development for Professional Training in NE

- Our research in 7 African and 19 countries in LAC shows that professional capacities in NE are weak
- Needs assessment found strong interest in introducing professional training in NE at all levels, with a focus on nutrition education for action
- Priorities:
 - Current focus on Africa - ENACT
 - Expand and strengthen the development of professional capacities in NE to other regions (LAC, Near East, Africa)
 - Advocate for greater policy support



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Thank you!

- Making healthy foods and diets accessible
- Putting nutrition education within reach



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