Guiding Questions for Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Practices

The Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) project originally developed this exercise for the Accelerating Behavior Change in Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture (ABC) training, with the support of Feed the Future. We have since adapted this exercise to work with nutrition-sensitive agriculture projects in Bangladesh, Kyrgyz Republic, and Rwanda to help them identify and prioritize nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices to promote through behavior change interventions. This exercise has been used for facilitating large group discussions and small group exercises, and has formed the basis of a supportive tool for community video mediators recently rolled out in the Sahel.

Please explore the ABC training to learn more about how this exercise fits into a wider social and behavior change (SBC) design process for nutrition-sensitive agriculture. For a broader introduction to nutrition-sensitive agriculture, please see the Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Training Resource Package.

Exercise: Identify agriculture practices currently being promoted for different target groups and determine whether they are nutrition-sensitive

The purpose of this exercise is to identify to what extent a project is already nutrition-sensitive, and where there are opportunities to make it more so. It is an exercise based on the agriculture-to-nutrition pathways and principles (see page 8). The participation of consultants or team members with agriculture, nutrition, gender, social and behavior change, and/or monitoring and evaluation experience may make the exercise more productive. Follow steps 1-4 to complete Table 1. The time taken to complete this exercise will depend on how many practices the team wishes to work with, how many people are working on it, and whether the team needs additional data to complete it.

Note: Not all practices promoted by the project are or should be nutrition-sensitive, but many practices will or could be with small modifications. Not all of the guiding questions used in Step 3 will apply in your context. Feel free to skip any which are not relevant.

Step 1: Brainstorm a list of agriculture and/or marketing-related practices the project is promoting to reach its objectives. Table 1 organizes these by value chain function within the production and marketing cycle(s), but you can organize them by project objectives or intermediate results if it is more helpful. Enter these into Column A.

As you fill out Column A, remember that a practice is a concrete action that a specific person or group does at a specific time and place. Practices have characteristics that include whether they are observable or hidden (private); specificity (time, place, quantity, duration, and/or frequency); whether they are easy or hard to measure; and whether they are feasible to adopt and maintain over time.

This table refers to practices that your team would like project target groups to do. The activities that your project does in order to facilitate more people doing the practices are "interventions" or "project activities". These should not be listed in this table.

Try to be consistent and balance the level of complexity so each of the practice statements are, to the extent possible, of equal specificity. For example, "diversifying production" is too broad to be very descriptive, but a list of every potential crop/livestock production practice that participating farmers might engage in would be too specific to be useful in this exercise. A balance between these extremes would be more useful. For example, intercropping maize and beans might be a practice to include as a level between "diversifying production" and the listing of every detailed practice associated with producing a diversity of crops. Brainstorm and list as many key practices as practical in this first step. Later steps will prioritize which practices can most benefit from applying an SBC approach.

Step 2: For each practice listed, describe which group or groups the project is targeting for use of the practice according to demographic, geographic, or other variables. Target groups can include individuals, firms, or other groups. If there are specific groups, institutions, or individuals who influence – either positively or negatively - the actions of the target groups, list those as well. When describing these groups, think about coverage targets that have already been set. Enter these into Column B.

Step 3: For each practice, review each guiding question below, checking on opportunities at each level of influence and participation noted in Column B. Determine whether the practice can be adjusted to be more nutrition-sensitive by addressing some aspect of food access, food quality, health, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), or care. Not all questions will be relevant to each practice or the project. If a question is not relevant, skip it. For the questions that are relevant, note the responses for each in Column C.

Step 4: Based on the responses to the relevant guiding questions for each practice, think through whether any modifications can be made to the practices or target/influencing groups to enhance their nutrition sensitivity. Record the modified practices in Column D. If, in responding to the guiding questions, the team finds that a practice in Column A does not require modification to be nutrition-sensitive, enter N/A into Column D.

After filling out the table, it is a good idea to think through whether there are any additional agriculture practices, besides those already being promoted, that the project might promote to improve nutrition-sensitive outcomes related to project objectives.

Table 1. Practices Currently Promoted and Responses to Relevant Guiding Questions

A. Practice as it is currently promoted, under the relevant value chain function (What does the project want the target group to do?)	B. Target group/influencing group (Who should do the practice, and who influences them?)	C. Relevant question number(s) and response (if any)	D. Modified nutrition-sensitive agriculture practice, under the relevant value chain function (or repeat the practice from Column A in if no modification is needed)
Farm management			
Plan gardens to improve access to vitamin A- and iron-rich produce throughout the year.	Target group A/ Influencing groups X and Y	**Question 1: response** **Question 5: response, etc.**	
Firm management			
Input supply systems			

Production			
Post-harvest handling, processing, and storage			
Marketing			

Consumer purchases			
Consumer consumption/waste management			

Guiding Questions for Improving the Nutrition Sensitivity of Agricultural Practices

Women's Empowerment Pathway

1. Does this practice support women's access to and control of productive assets (either jointly with their husbands or other family member(s) or independently)?
2. Does this practice support women's access to and control of income (either jointly or independently)?
3. Does this practice place additional time demands on women?
4. Does this practice place additional labor demands on women?

Production Pathway

5. Does this practice increase the quantity of food available within the household over time? (Note: There is need for the agriculture value chain to consider at least two or three nutritious crops. Given the change to the climate (rainfall) and natural hazards, there is a high risk and nutrition consequence if the livelihood intervention supports a single crop intervention.)
6. Does this practice increase the diversity of foods available within the household?
7. Does this practice mitigate environmental or health risks to household members?
8. Does this practice reduce risk by, for example, mitigating effects of climate change, addressing variability of production, or mitigating effects of pests or disease?

Income Pathway

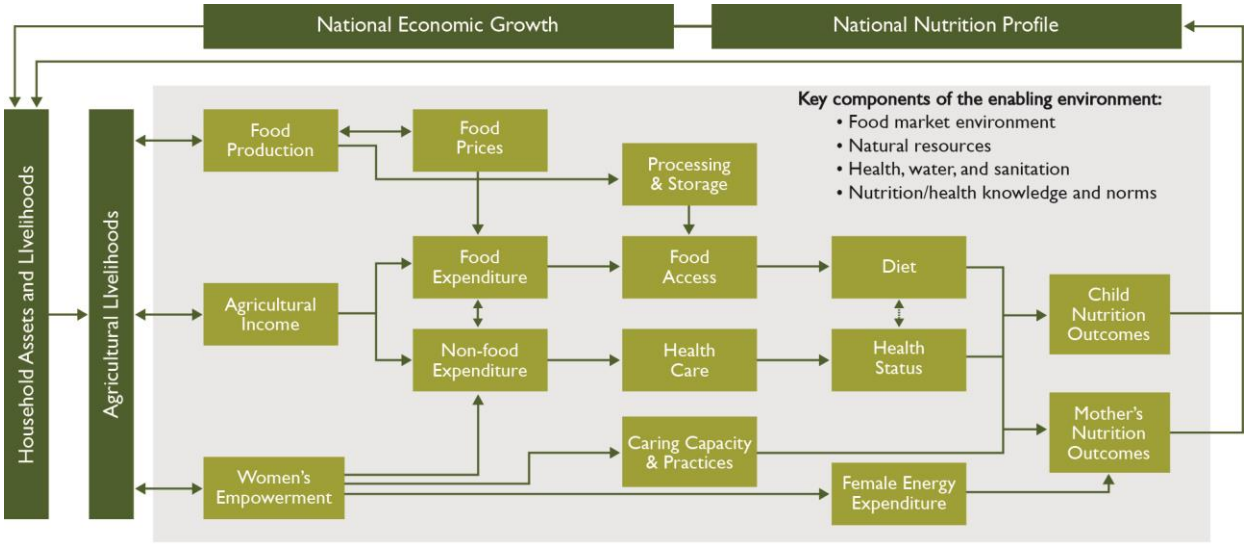
9. Does this practice (e.g. increase mechanization) increase local seasonal employment opportunities for some groups, thus increasing their incomes?
10. Does this practice increase the purchasing power of households in the implementation area that are net food buyers (e.g., by decreasing costs of key food products)?
11. Does the practice enhance the ability of smallholder or other vulnerable households to invest in food, WASH, care, and health (e.g., via improved planning and decisions about proportion of income going to those investments)?
12. Does the project promote participation in social protection or insurance schemes to mitigate risks and/or compensate in the event of shocks for target groups?
13. Does the practice improve business cash flow or liquidity or reduce up-front investments required by target market actors (e.g., smallholder producers or suppliers)?

Enabling Environment

14. Does this practice contribute to the diversity of foods available for purchase in markets across the implementation area?
15. Does this practice help generate market-level demand for diverse diets and/or nutrient-dense foods?
16. Does this practice facilitate participation in value chains at multiple levels for women, smallholders, or small-to-medium enterprise?
17. Does this practice facilitate firms improving worker rights, safety, and health through policies or programs?

18. Does this practice sustain natural resources by doing no harm to the environment, ensuring food quality/safety, and considering water, hygiene, and human health?
    - Are pregnant or lactating women exposed to any risks from this practice? If so, what might be done to mitigate this (these) risk(s)?
    - What risk(s) might this practice pose to household members, especially young children? What might be done to mitigate this (these) risk(s)?
    - What risk(s) might this practice pose to sustainable production (e.g. soil health)? What might be done to mitigate this (these) risk(s)?
    - What risk(s) might this practice pose to water resources? What might be done to mitigate this (these) risk(s)?
    - What risk(s) might this practice pose to food quality and safety? What might be done to mitigate this (these) risk(s)?

Conceptual Pathways Between Agriculture and Nutrition



Adapted for Feed the Future by Anna Herforth, Jody Harris, and SPRING, from Gillespie, Harris and Kadiyala (2012)[i] *and Headey, Chiu, and Kadiyala (2011)*[ii].

For more information on the conceptual pathways between agriculture and nutrition, see SPRING's *Improving Nutrition through Agriculture Technical Brief Series,* online here: https://www.spring-nutrition.org/publications/series/improving-nutrition-through-agriculture-technical-brief-series.

[i] Gillespie, Stuart, Jody Harris, and Suneetha Kadiyala. 2012. *The Agriculture-Nutrition Disconnect in India: What Do We Know?* IFPRI Discussion Paper 01187. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.

[ii] Headey, Derek, Alice Chiu, and Suneetha Kadiyala. 2011. *Agriculture's Role in the Indian Enigma: Help or Hindrance to the Undernutrition Cause?* IFPRI Discussion Paper 01085. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.

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