How to Ask the Right Questions

Designing a qualitative research approach to support the scale up of biofortification

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• Tackle global hidden hunger through biofortification
• Enrich everyday staple food crops with essential vitamins and minerals
• Work with partners
Recent highlights:

• HarvestPlus Founder, Howdy Bouis, World Food Prize Laureate, 2016

• Semi-Finalist in the MacArthur Foundation’s $100 M grant competition

MacArthur Foundation Picks Eight Projects That Could Change the World
Biofortification

“Getting plants to do the work”:

• Crops are high-yielding and climate smart, bred to be pest-resistant and drought-tolerant
• Targets vitamin A, iron, and zinc deficiencies
• Complements fortification, supplementation, and other nutrition interventions
• Sustainable food-based approach to improve nutrition and livelihoods
BIOFORTIFIED STAPLE FOOD CROPS: WHO IS GROWING WHAT?

These crops have been conventionally bred to be rich in essential vitamins and minerals that are needed for good health.
HarvestPlus’ goal:

To scale-up, we need country- and context-specific strategies that are informed by formative research.
• To encourage people to eat more nutritious food
• Requires understanding of underlying socio-cultural factors
Designing formative research

- Filling gaps in existing research: we’re missing a contextual basis for some of our quantitative data.

What can we do to rapidly and systematically understand the underlying factors that influence food choices of farming households?
Collaborating with SPRING

- Overlapping areas of interests
- Complementary skill sets: research and implementation
What are the practical requirements?

What will it take to make it work?

- Bite-sized questionnaire
- Narrow in focus
- Cost-effective
- Adaptable for multiple contexts
- Easy to use for non-specialist staff
What questions will it answer?

Key research questions
1. What factors impact farmers’ motivation to sell vs. eat their crops?
2. What influences what foods farmers buy?
3. Who eats what within the household and why?
4. Are gender roles associated with growing and consuming biofortified foods? If so, what are they?
Initial reflections:
• SPRING had tool to look at food choice in households
• Don’t try to ask everything
• Make it biofortification-specific
• Staple foods vs. all foods
Adapting SPRING’s methodology

Specifics that we considered when adapting the tool:
• Pilot countries
  – Rwanda: iron beans
  – Zambia: orange (vitamin A) maize
• Pilot district
• Country-specific challenges or questions
Adapting SPRING’s methodology

- Language; literacy
- Key informants
- Population segmentation
- Timing
  - Program schedule
  - Agricultural schedule
  - Local cultural events or sensitivities
## Methods and why we chose them

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<td><strong>In-Depth Interviews</strong></td>
<td>Preparatory step for pile sort and FGDs</td>
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<td>Identify key factors that influence what people eat: i.e. preference, affordability, ease of preparation, availability, health</td>
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<td>Confirm all the local varieties of beans</td>
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<td><strong>Pile Sorts</strong></td>
<td>Rapidly compare common varieties vs. biofortified</td>
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<td>Uncover how a variety ranks for certain characteristics</td>
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<td><strong>Focus Group Discussions</strong></td>
<td>Explore factors that influence the food choices of farming households</td>
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<td>Capture exceptions to the rule; identify what needs further exploration</td>
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How will we use the findings?

• **HarvestPlus:**
  – Program monitoring and development
  – Social and behavioral change communication messages and activities

• **Partners:**
  – Integrate biofortification into new and existing programs and policies
  – Scale up successfully in different markets
Next steps: Pilots

1. Rwanda: iron beans
2. Zambia: orange maize
What do you think?

I look forward to your feedback and hearing about your own experiences.

Thank you!