

COST OF THE DIET

Pathway Component: food prices; food access; diet

Date of Design: 2007. Updated 2018.

Designer: Save the Children UK

Search Category: food access; consumption; value chains & market systems

Contact Institution: hungerreductionteam@savethechildren.org.uk

URL: <http://www.heawebsite.org/about-cod>

CONTENT SUMMARY

Brief Description: The Cost of the Diet (CoD) is an assessment tool that uses software to estimate the amount and combination of local foods needed to provide a typical family with a diet that meets their averaged needs for energy and recommended intakes of protein, fat, and micronutrients. The tool aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the minimum cost of foods that meet the nutrient needs of a typical household?
2. Can a nutritious diet be achieved using locally available foods?
3. Is this diet affordable?
4. If not, what could be done?

Tool Components: The document provides step-by-step guidance to conducting a CoD assessment:

1. Planning a CoD assessment
2. In-country preparation
3. Data collection
4. Running the linear programming software
5. CoD results & how to use them

Uses: The CoD is most useful when chronic undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies have been identified as nutritional problems, and when the availability or affordability of nutritious foods are likely to be among the underlying causes.

Using the CoD tool allows for modeling of potential interventions to estimate impact on improving the quality and affordability of the diet. Results can also be used to influence food security and nutrition policies and programs, and contribute to advocacy. Results can also be used as an early warning indicator if the CoD is run regularly.

OPERATIONS

Number of Staff Required: One advisor of lead training, analysis and report writing; four-to-six data collectors from the target area; one country administrator to manage logistics.

Time: Estimated total time required is six weeks.

Cost of Assessment: Not specified; the cost will vary according to context.

Training: The individual who leads the CoD assessment should be previously trained and experienced. Training of data collectors should take at least 2-3 days. An example training schedule is provided in the CoD guidelines.

Geographic Targeting: A CoD assessment can be conducted in any location but it is important to ensure that assessments are conducted in regions where price and availability of food and income are reasonably homogenous. A simple approach is to confine the CoD assessment to a livelihood zone. Depending on the objectives of the study, the interviews and focus group discussions should be conducted in a minimum of four villages.

Type of Data Collection: CoD assessments include secondary data collection, market surveys, household interviews, and focus group discussions.

Degree of Technical Difficulty: Leading a CoD assessment and analyzing the results is complex and requires expertise and previous training.

Complements other Resources: The household economy approach (HEA) and the Cost of the Diet are interlinked and complementary. The CoD relies on the HEA for a variety of information such as livelihood zones, wealth group divisions, and income data. Combining the CoD with the HEA can identify the wealth groups most at risk of insufficient access to a nutritious diet and therefore most in need of food security or nutrition interventions.