

Integrating Nutrition in Systems Research

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Introducing the legacy products

The nutrition cross-cutting initiative of the CGIAR Research Programme (CRP) Humidtropics commissioned a pilot project to develop methods and tools to guide systems researchers on how to integrate nutrition in to their work. The project started in 2014 and will end in December 2016 with the closing of the Humidtropics CRP. Project components and activities were developed through a close collaboration among Bioversity International, The World Vegetable Center and Wageningen University and received support from the Agriculture for Health and Nutrition CRP. Two field sites were identified where multiple partners were engaged: Western Kenya and North West Vietnam.

Two publications have been developed to provide guidance on how to integrate nutrition into systems research, drawing from the experiences and lessons learned in Kenya and Vietnam:

1. A **compendium of tools** that sets the framework and provides the methodology necessary to conduct nutrition-sensitive systems research with a participatory approach.
2. A **technical brief** on how to adapt existing nutrition education materials to include a food system approach.



Figure 1 - Vihiga County, food biodiversity for diet diversity fair organized by the communities

Utility of the legacy products

Currently, there is limited guidance for how undertake research of local food systems for improving nutrition. These products **provide a theoretical framework and a mixed methods approach**, consisting in both qualitative and quantitative tools, together with a participatory and community based approach for systems research, as well as detailed steps on how to update existing nutrition education materials to include agrobiodiverse and seasonal foods.

How do they work?

Stemming from the cooperation among three different research centres, these products provide a broad, holistic approach to integrating nutrition into systems research including thorough participatory community action research, stakeholder engagement and modelling. In order for them to be successful and demand-driven, the engagement of stakeholders at every step of the process is crucial as it can:



Figure 2 - Participatory workshop on Dark Green Leafy Vegetables, Son La, Vietnam

1. **Lead to partnership building between communities and institutions;**
2. **Serve as a pathway to advance the effectiveness of the research;**
3. **Support scaling-up of interventions.**

Key contacts

The guidelines and the compendium of tools are due to be released by December 2016. For any further information contact [Jessica Raneri j.raneri@cgiar.org](mailto:j.raneri@cgiar.org)

Results and outputs

The main goal of this set of products is ultimately to improve research project's ability to achieve nutrition outcomes by greater utilization of locally available, nutrient-dense species. The compendium provides a set of tools, such as:

1. Household **questionnaires** on nutrition and local food production systems;
2. Guides on **FGDs, seasonal calendar, four cell analysis and market surveys;**
3. **Models** to define a **theory of change** within the examined food system, and identifying **household farm management opportunities** through modelling to maximize household nutrient production.

The brief to integrate agrobiodiverse and seasonal foods into existing nutrition education materials includes step-by-step overview to:

1. Identify local nutritious & seasonal foods to fill dietary gaps;
2. Identify gaps in existing nutrition education materials;
3. Case study examples of how to adapt existing materials.

These tools are helpful to:

- Assess diet quality & diversity
- Identify opportunities to improve diets through production, market and natural resource management strategies.

A nutrition-sensitive participatory systems research allows researchers the opportunity to directly tackle the underlying causes of poor diet quality and help design interventions that can positively impact people's livelihoods.



Figure 3 - Seasonal planting and eating calendar

Who are the legacy products useful for?

The target audience includes actors wishing to add a nutrition research component to their agriculture and/or livelihoods project to provide a more holistic, systems approach. Beneficiaries could include:

1. Practitioners who want to design agriculture projects or interventions to be more nutrition sensitive.
2. Agriculture system researchers who wish to identify projects and innovations that are locally relevant to improving diet quality and nutrition.
3. Agriculture extension officers, Non-governmental Organizations' (NGOs), Ministry of health or department of nutrition officers, nutritionists, community educators and agri-value chain actors.

Key partners

Bioversity International, The World Vegetable Center, Wageningen University.
HealthBridge Vietnam, Mai Son District Health Center, CARES, FAVRI.
Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture Vihiga County, Kenya, WeRATE.

