



Strengthening municipal governance to tackle the drivers of child malnutrition

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Nutritional improvement for children living in urban Chile and Kenya (NICK)

- User engagement strategy
- Challenges
- Lessons learned

AIMS of the NICK study

- To establish multi-sectorial, urban nutrition working groups (UNWG) and to facilitate PAR to build capacity
 - to strengthen municipal governance
 - to plan, implement and evaluate inter-sectoral actions to change social determinants of child malnutrition at municipal and community level.
- To reduce child malnutrition in the low-income, intervention areas.

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The NICK research team₄



- **Open space meeting** for those with a mandate to improve nutrition – to introduce the study and explore new inter-sectoral approaches.
- **Establishment of the Mombasa urban nutrition working group (UNWG).**
- **Facilitation** of four six-monthly cycles of participatory action research.

Engaging practitioners

Government: Ministries of Health (Public Health & Sanitation and Medical Services), Education; Water; Agriculture; Social Development; Mombasa Water and Sewerage Company.

Mombasa-based INGOs: ICRH legal and gender specialists; APHIAplus; Coast Development Authority.

Mombasa Municipal Council nutrition officers.

Chief of the study area.

Elected convener: District Nutrition Officer.

Membership of the Mombasa, UNWG



UNWG 17 member (a core of 12)



The first PAR workshop – challenging 'silo' mind-sets and locating ownership with the UNGWA members

The NICK researchers used the four 6-monthly PAR workshops to

- stimulate new ways of thinking about malnutrition and shift mind sets from individual to structural/social determinants;
- agree on new ways of working together and to plan, trial and evaluate small-scale, co-ordinated, inter-sectoral actions;
- reflect and re-plan, identify emerging opportunities for improvement and refine their action plans for the next cycle according to their area of expertise.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

- **STEP 1: REFLECT AND LEARN**

- **Critical reflection:** What are we doing already? Why haven't our actions worked so far? What can be added? How can our efforts be different when others have failed? What are our beliefs, values and priorities re nutrition? What can we learn from other experiences? What were the seeds for success?
- **Systematic, rigorous enquiry** to identify the main social determinants of child malnutrition in the study area through literature reviews, interviews and sharing experiences.

First cycle of action and reflection

Developing problem trees and solution trees.

- What are the main pathways to improved nutrition and the entry points?
- What are the interrelationships involved?
- What needs to change ?
- What are the possible limitations and sources of resistance to change?
- What is the potential for replicability scalability, political/ economic/ technical feasibility?

STEP 2: PLAN

- How can we deal with complexity?
- How can we promote institutional learning?
- What resources do we manage?
- What habits or ways of working do we want to change or transform?
- How can we shift perceptions of malnutrition as an individual health problem to a structural, social problem?
- What new governance arrangements must be met (collaboration, citizen engagement etc.)?
- What do I/my institution have to do to make these changes?
- What are the challenges for public policy on nutrition?

STEP 3 - ACT

- Implementation of action plans to change social determinants.
- Data collection to monitor activities, document the implementation process and inform learning histories.

STEP 4: EVALUATE

- Data analysis.
- Feedback on learning histories.
- Identify the emerging issues.



2nd and 3rd cycles of action/reflection, data collection evaluation and dissemination

- THE UNGWA decided to engage with 3 existing community networks in the study area (young mothers/youth/CHWs).
- The community Chief (a civil servant appointed by the government) organised meetings with the community.
- The UNWG trained community group members according to their own specific skills. These community groups then carried out activities and passed on knowledge and skills to other community groups.
- The leaders of the initial 3 community groups participated in the PAR workshops.

Engaging with Communities

- **Communities** contribution → their own time and energy and meeting venues.
- **Local authority** → Provided land for demonstration of the kitchen garden.
- **Line ministries** provided resources → technical and in kind.
- **Partners** provided resources → monetary and in kind.

UNWG Strategy for Resource Mobilization

The Shiners Young Mother Group, urban farming

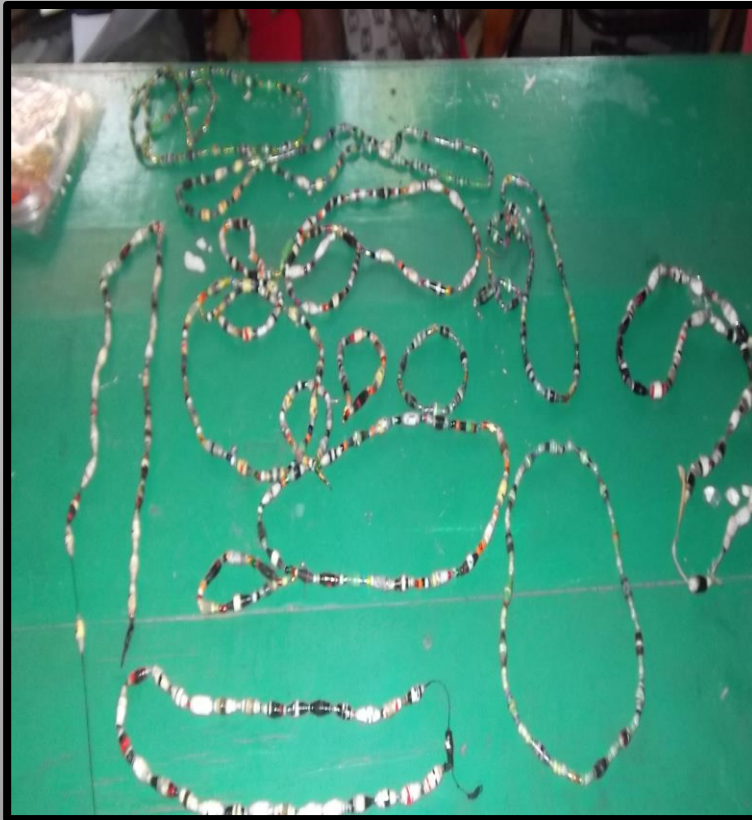
Improving living conditions, managing domestic waste and composting



Community led activities

Bead-making, from recycled waste paper

Training CHWs on child nutrition



Some community group activities

- Managing expectations and fostering ownership.
- Raising awareness when stunting is invisible to parents.
- Transfer of technical officers.
- Limited capacity in costing of the action plan
- High poverty levels in the informal settlement intervention study area

Challenges for the UNWG

- At the proposal writing stage
- During the life of the study
- At the final dissemination stage
- After the study finished

Engaging with Academics, policy makers and donors

- Dr. Sharif, Director of Public Health, Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation, Kenya (MPHS)
- Dr. Anisa Omar Ag. County Health Coordinator – Kilifi County (MPHS)
- Dr Aryn Lakhani, Director Aga Khan Health Service, Mombasa, Kenya

- Prof. Marleen Temmerman, Chair of the Board of ICRH Kenya and Director, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, WHO.
- Dr. Kirsten Havemann, Counsellor, Health Team, Danida, Tanzania,
- Anna Taylor, Senior Nutrition Adviser, Department for International Development, UK.

More members were added to meet emerging needs and members were invited to the half yearly dissemination events in Mombasa.

- Two UNWG members were invited to join the task force to draft the Kenyan (National) Urban Nutrition Strategy which NICK is cited; and to provide significant input to the Mombasa Country Nutrition Plan (2013 -2017).
- UNGWA members targeted their line managers to influence institutional change at a higher level and invited them to review meetings and dissemination events.

During the life of the study

- All NICK team researchers disseminated findings nationally and internationally drawing on the literature reviews, interviews, the base-line and follow up anthropometric and household surveys, and learning histories.
- We also disseminated progress and findings through our newsletters, website, annual team workshop reports and PAR workshop reports, briefing papers, conference presentations and social media.



The final handover of the UNWG by the convener to the county nutritionist representing the county government (MOH)

The NICK study has attracted follow on funding from the ESRC-DFID Impact and Engagement Fund

- to respond to requests from the Mombasa UNWG to further broaden stakeholder participation and work with the newly formed county level groups inspired by the NICK research
- for an ethics case study and an ECORYS Case study.

It has also been used to inform a MQSUN study funded by DFID.

After the study finished

- The study has had a sustainable impact on the community groups supported by the UNGWA in Mombasa which continue to flourish 2 years after the study ended.
- Two weeks ago the Kenyan National Nutrition Information Working Group agreed to validate the NICK data and specifically requested that the Scaling-up Nutrition Co-ordinator use the evidence from the NICK study on how to make multi-sectoral planning work in urban informal settings.

- The importance of having in-country researchers and selecting all researchers strategically, to gain credibility for the research and deliver the skill base needed;
- The need to recruit advisory group members strategically and add new members in a rapidly changing environment.
- The value of having a policy mandate and delivering results when they are needed for policy development.
- The importance of supporting and motivating junior researchers –in this case through linked doctoral scholarships.

To recap: some lessons learned

- The need to bring policy-makers, practitioners, community members and the whole research team together regularly throughout the study to learn from each other and disseminate findings;
- The need for an effective exit strategy to enable the UNWG to continue after the study ends;
- The need to disseminate findings widely in many different formats– there are 34 NICK outputs on researchfish with authorship from all team members and data available in the UK data archive.

Thank you

Further reading:

Pridmore, P. et al (2015) Tackling the urban health divide through enabling intersectoral action on malnutrition in Chile and Kenya. *Journal of Urban Health*, Vol.92, No 2, pp313-321.