

Bringing women's and children's nutrition to the forefront of agriculture

USAID'S INFANT & YOUNG CHILD NUTRITION PROJECT

Integrating Household Nutrition and Food Security Objectives into Proposed Agriculture Projects

ILLUSTRATIVE GUIDANCE

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IYCN USAID's Infant
& Young Child
Nutrition Project

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Introduction

The Infant & Young Child Nutrition (IYCN) Project developed this guidance for agriculture program designers seeking to build food security and nutrition objectives into agricultural interventions. This tool briefly describes how to develop objectives and determine indicators that will maximize nutritional benefits for populations most vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition.

Ensuring that food security and nutrition objectives are included in the initial planning stages of agriculture projects has a tremendous potential to improve nutrition and build healthy futures for mothers, children, and other vulnerable groups around the world. If food security or nutrition objectives are not included from the outset, at a minimum, agriculture program designers should conduct a nutritional impact assessment to estimate the project's impacts on the nutritional situation of vulnerable groups and to ensure that no adverse impacts are likely for them.

About the Infant & Young Child Nutrition Project

The IYCN Project is the flagship project on infant and young child nutrition of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Begun in 2006, the five-year project aims to improve nutrition for mothers, infants, and young children and prevent the transmission of HIV to infants and children. IYCN builds on 25 years of USAID leadership in maternal, infant, and young child nutrition. Our focus is on proven interventions that are effective during pregnancy through the first two years of life.

For more information

Contact info@iycn.org with questions about using this guidance.

Please visit iycn.org/agriculture for additional IYCN resources developed to help agriculture project designers achieve improved nutrition and food security for women and children around the world.

- Achieving Nutritional Impact and Food Security through Agriculture (fact sheet).
- Nutrition and Food Security Impacts of Agriculture Projects: A Review of Experience.
- Nutritional Impact Assessment Tool.

Household food security objective

Statement of the objective: Provide a “SMART” objective (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time bound) related to the reduction in household food insecurity of a population group likely to be affected by the project and found to be suffering from food insecurity prior to project initiation. Example: “To reduce the average household food insecurity score of functionally landless agricultural households in the Central Region of Malawi from 75 in 2011 to 45 in 2016.” If a comparison population is included as part of the project’s evaluation plan, the objective would be modified accordingly.

Indicator to be used: Provide a clearly defined indicator for household food security to be used for evaluation purposes. The indicator of choice is the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA-2) Project Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS). A generic version of the scale is included on page 6. This version should be modified for the country or region in which the agricultural project will be implemented. Explanation of the HFIAS scaling is available at: http://www.fantaproject.org/downloads/pdfs/HFIAS_v3_Aug07.pdf.

Since the development of the HFIAS, FANTA-2 has found that some elements are more valid across cultures than others. They have taken the most cross-culturally valid questions from the HFIAS and created a simpler index, called the Household Hunger Scale (HHS), with clear scoring for “little to no household hunger,” “moderate household hunger,” and “severe household hunger.” The HHS questionnaire, which can be easily inserted into surveys and administered, is below:

Recall period: 4 weeks	
Scale items	Response codes
<i>Household items:</i>	<i>Frequency categories:</i>
1. No food to eat of any kind in your household	Never, Rarely or Sometimes, Often
2. Go to sleep at night hungry	Never, Rarely or Sometimes, Often
3. Go a whole day and night without eating	Never, Rarely or Sometimes, Often

More detailed information about the development and use of the HHS is available at: <http://www.fantaproject.org/publications/tn12.shtml>.

When utilization of the HFIAS or the HHS is not possible, alternative indicators would be:

- Monthly income or expenditure data for the specified population group, and/or
- Dietary diversity scores for the specified population group. This scoring can be found at: <http://www.fantaproject.org/publications/dietdiversity1.shtml>.

Utilization of the indicators within an evaluation plan: Specify how the indicators will be utilized in the project’s overall evaluation plan; e.g., through difference-in-differences analysis using pre-post measurements in the project and comparison areas.

Nutrition objective

Statement of the objective: Provide a “SMART” objective related to the reduction in malnutrition of a population group likely to be affected by the project and found to be suffering from malnutrition prior to project initiation. Example: “To reduce the prevalence of moderate and severe stunting (height-for-age z-score >-2.0) among children aged 6-24 months in functionally landless agricultural households in the Central Region of Malawi from 34 percent in 2011 to 25 percent in 2016.” If a comparison population is included as part of the project’s evaluation plan, the objective would be modified accordingly.

Indicator(s) to be used: Provide at least one clearly defined indicator for nutrition to be used for evaluation purposes. The indicator(s) should be selected from among the following:

- Caloric intake for children younger than 3 years of age and/or for reproductive-age women relative to recommended daily allowances.
- Dietary diversity scores for these same groups (see <http://www.fantaproject.org/publications/dietdiversity1.shtml>).
- Weight-for-age or height-for-age for children younger than 3 years relative to World Health Organization standards.
- Vitamin A or iron intake, or hemoglobin or serum retinol levels relative to standards for children younger than 3 years of age and/or for reproductive-age women.

Utilization of the indicators within an evaluation plan: Specify how the indicators will be utilized in the project’s overall evaluation plan; e.g., through difference-in-differences analysis using pre-post measurements in the project and comparison areas.

Introduction of activities to support nutrition objectives: Achieving nutrition objectives usually requires the introduction of activities that affect non-food causes of malnutrition, like public health interventions or the promotion of improved child feeding. The IYCN document *Combating Malnutrition: What can be done?* (www.iycn.org/agriculture) provides an overview of some common nutrition interventions and the nutritional problems they address, and links to more detailed guidance on nutrition programming.

The Household Food Insecurity Access Scale is presented on the following page.

Household Food Insecurity Access Scale generic questions

Each of the following questions is asked with a recall period of four weeks (30 days). The respondent is first asked an occurrence question; that is, whether the condition in the question happened at all in the past four weeks (yes or no). If the respondent answers “yes” to an occurrence question, a frequency-of-occurrence question is asked to determine whether the condition happened rarely (once or twice), sometimes (three to ten times), or often (more than ten times) in the past four weeks.

Example:

In the past four weeks, did you worry that your household would not have enough food?

No = Go to the next question

Yes = Ask: How often did this happen?

Circle one of the following:

1 = Rarely (once or twice in the past four weeks)

2 = Sometimes (three to ten times in the past four weeks)

3 = Often (more than ten times in the past four weeks)

Occurrence question		Yes/No		If yes, frequency
1	In the past four weeks, did you worry that your household would not have enough food?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	1 2 3
2	In the past four weeks, were you or any household member not able to eat the kinds of foods you preferred because of a lack of resources?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	1 2 3
3	In the past four weeks, did you or any household member have to eat a limited variety of foods due to a lack of resources?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	1 2 3
4	In the past four weeks, did you or any household member have to eat some foods that you really did not want to eat because of a lack of resources to obtain other types of food?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	1 2 3
5	In the past four weeks, did you or any household member have to eat a smaller meal than you felt you needed because there was not enough food?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	1 2 3
6	In the past four weeks, did you or any household member have to eat fewer meals in a day because there was not enough food?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	1 2 3
7	In the past four weeks, was there ever no food to eat of any kind in your household because of a lack of resources to get food?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	1 2 3
8	In the past four weeks, did you or any household member go to sleep at night hungry because there was not enough food?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	1 2 3
9	In the past four weeks, did you or any household member go a whole day and night without eating anything because there was not enough food?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	1 2 3